

About Hannah Epling

Hannah Epling started acting in community theater when she was eight years old. Her first role was Rizzo in *Grease* in Jacksonville, FL. Upon entering Middle School in Houston, TX, the theater became a second home to Hannah. Her roles included a Munchkin in *The Wizard of Oz*, Amaryllis in *The Music Man* and Adelaide in *Guys and Dolls*. She moved into high school and worked backstage on the hair and makeup crew for *Arsenic and Old Lace*, and various other productions. She acted in the roles: Betty Parris in *The Crucible*, Susan in *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe*, Mary MacGregor in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, and a dancer in *Anything Goes*. She also was the Communications manager and member of *Comedy Sportz High School League Improv Troupe*.

She attended Louisiana State University and Studied Public Relations with a Theater and Business minor. While in Louisiana, she started working in film in local commercials, as a battered wife in the pilot episode of *Law and Justice*, and an extra in *Breakout Kings* and *Never Back Down 2*. She also wrote and performed in the monologue show *Meanwhile, Back at Cafe' Du Monde...* by Peggy Sweeney-McDonald and was published in the coffee table book.

Hannah graduated from LSU in 2012, and moved to Dallas to pursue Project Management, but dreamt of pursuing theater as a full time career. In 2013, Hannah trained in Improvisation at *Dallas Comedy House* and in 2015, acted and assisted as a buddy in Highland Park United Methodist Church's *Jester's* program - a company for those with special needs. Her time with *Jesters* was the catalyst that Hannah needed to start her career in theater. Her teaching philosophy started developing as she watched the adults with disabilities grow in confidence and autonomy as they brainstormed, wrote, produced and acted in their own show. She learned the importance of every character having a name and a background, not just "Dancer #3, etc." To have a part in creating a story gives purpose, meaning and collaborative joy to those involved. Hannah had a lot of experience with friends with special needs through *Best Buddies* and individual caretaking, but to enrich their lives with theater was something she knew she needed to do.

In 2016, Hannah and her newly wed husband, Stephen, moved to Chapel Hill, North Carolina. She started a job as an Assistant Teacher for the middle schoolers at *UNC Playmakers' Theater Quest Camp* a week after moving across the country. It was here that she learned to use theater as a tool to help draw out emotion in those who are just beginning to understand emotions themselves! To teach children entering into adolescence about the human condition through

acting onstage was a gift and a privilege. She mentored under David McClutchy, and continued on to Assistant Direct *Little Women* and *The Wizard of Oz* under him at St. David's Episcopal School in Raleigh, NC. She started making connections all over the research triangle, assistant directed *Attack of the Zombies* at The Duke School, and taught the Access Theater Class - a class of young boys with Autism - in Apex, NC through Raleigh Little Theater.

In 2017, Hannah started working for Theater Delta: An Interactive Theater Company for Social Change. This company introduced her to Augusto Boal's *Theater of the Oppressed*, Forum Theater, and how this art form can educate people and encourage empathy in difficult conversations. In Spring of 2017, Hannah had her first child and moved with her small family to Norman, Oklahoma. There, she taught theater classes for kids 4-10 at Imagine Music and Arts, specializing in script development and performance. She assistant directed *42nd Street* and *Into the Woods* at Norman High School, before taking on a full time teaching job as the Middle School Drama Teacher at The Academy of Classical Christian Studies. She was at the Academy from 2018-2020, where she directed *The Diary of Anne Frank*, and a series of student-written scenes based on biblical passages, student-written forum theater vignettes on difficult topics (i.e. bullying and teacher advocacy) and *Oliver Twist*. The stage production of *Oliver Twist* came to an abrupt halt right before tech week, when the world stopped with the rise of Covid-19. It was a confusing time - not knowing if she would be able to lead her kids back onstage after a two-week hiatus, or cancel the show completely. These students had worked for six months preparing for the show, and it devastated Hannah to take this away from them. So, she encouraged her students to move in a slightly different direction and produced a Radio Play version of *Oliver Twist* in June 2020! The students rehearsed and recorded solely over zoom, and assisted in curating sound effects and re-writing scenes to fit a radio show. It was incredible for her to see the students voluntarily engage in the show during a chaotic, stressful and confusing time. This was another project that shaped her philosophy that theater teaches students in far more ways than just how to act onstage.

During Covid-19, Hannah taught theater camp and workshops with *Center Stage* until she, her now two children and husband moved to Athens, GA in August 2020. Hannah continues to work for Theater Delta as the Director of Talent Management and Marketing, and travels back to Oklahoma each semester to guest teach drama for kids ages 6-13. As soon as her family decided to make Athens a forever home, she felt it was time to bring her passion of teaching to the Athens community. Hannah has a strong desire to grow lasting relationships and influence her students (both young and old!) in innovative, atypical ways. She believes theater is a beautiful way to grow and share the gifts we were born with. That being a part of a production is

LITTLE
CHARACTERS
THEATER TROUPE

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a way to be a part of a team, of a community of people that support each other. It is a way to experience emotion and develop empathy. To learn history and promote social change. To study why and how humans act the way we do, and bring out the best in each other.