

# ARTS for Youth SPOTLIGHT

## Hahna Kaleigh Bowyer: A performer since a child

Theater brought Hahna Kaleigh Bowyer's parents together and has been a part of her entire life.

"My parents met through doing theater together, and so I've been involved with or surrounded by theater my whole life. I started doing community theater when I was a toddler, and I've never stopped participating in theater since.

"My interests in theater predominantly stem around this question: How can we, as theater artists, reach as many diverse audiences as possible and bring them the stories they need to hear? Theater is such an interesting and intricate art because it has the inherent ability to move people — to laughter, to tears, etc. — and theater companies have the ability to bring audiences representative stories and stories that one particular audience member may have truly needed to hear that day.

"I have performed with two professional theaters thus far. Last summer with Barter Theatre and this summer with Wohlfahrt Haus Dinner Theatre. Last summer's opportunity with The Barter Players was truly life-changing. The Barter Players is theater for young audiences, and they strive to bring stories to children all over Appalachia. Everyone I worked with during my time there trained me and shaped me in incredible ways. This company solidified my love for children, theater and service-based art," she says.

Some of her influences are Caissie Levy, Justin Baldoni, Leonardo DiCaprio, Natalie Weiss and Brene Brown. Some of her current dream roles include Carrie in "Carrie the Musical" and Amalia Balash in "She Loves Me." Some of her favorite plays include "Twelfth Night" by Shakespeare, "Boy" by Anna Ziegler, "Long Day's Journey Into

Night" by Eugene O'Neill, and "The Wolves" by Sarah DeLappe. Her favorite playwrights include Shakespeare, Eugene O'Neill and Lillian Hellman.

"Theater is the art that brings together all arts, all people, all backgrounds. Theater is the opportunity to speak to people about social change, representation, love, loss and all other basic human emotions that make life richer. Theater is also the chance for performers to step into another person's perspective — every role brings me a new understanding of human beings while also making me want to learn more and more about them. Theater is curiosity and a reflection of human nature.

"I always approach a work first by reading it over and over. I want to get as familiar with the work as I can so I can understand the world of the play, the circumstances surrounding the action onstage and my character. I try to use rehearsal and performance time as a time to explore and discover the characters and the play itself. I approach theater by being curious about it and opening my mind and physicality to what the play needs from me and what I need from it," says Hahna.

Hahna is from Blacksburg, Virginia. She is the 20-year-old daughter of Tonya Hall and Andy Bowyer. She is a rising senior studying musical theater at Emory & Henry College. *A!*

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