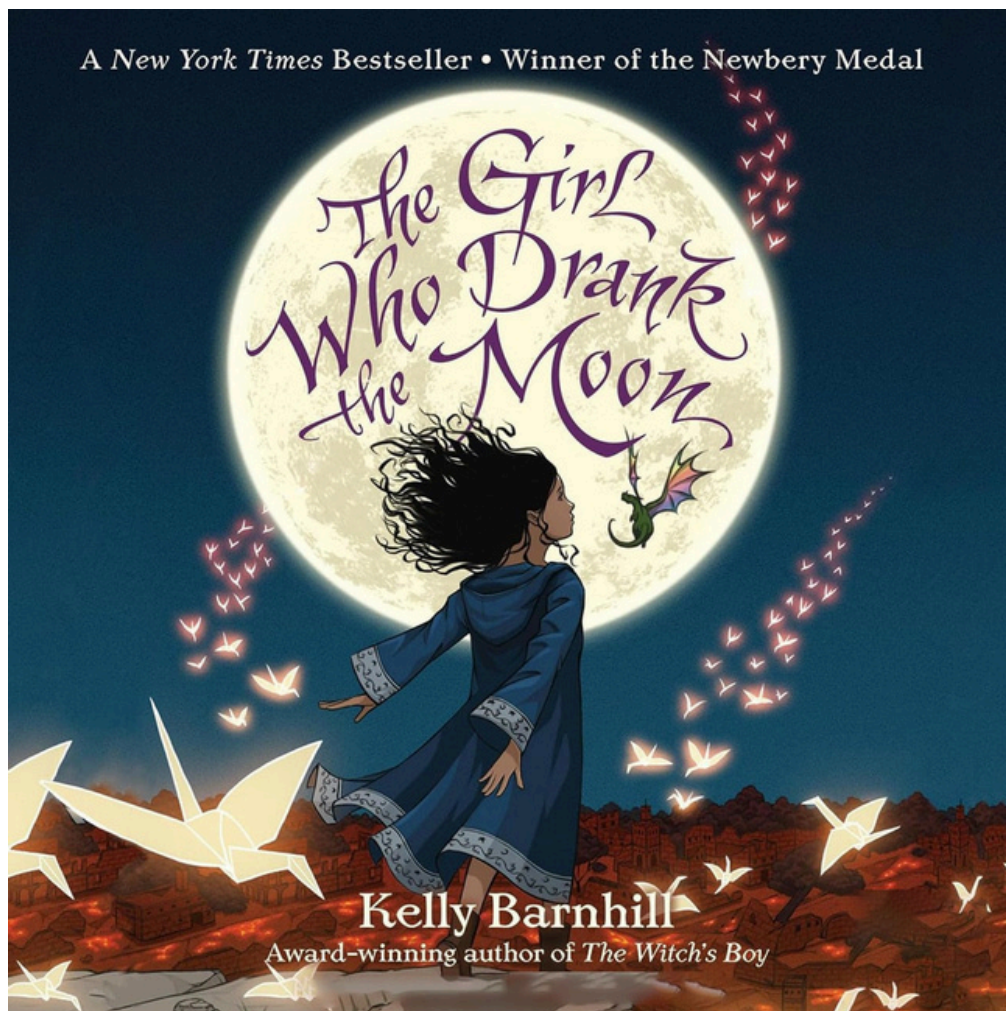


RESOURCE GUIDE



THE GIRL WHO DRANK THE MOON

March 27 -April 19, 2026

Adapted by Melissa Leilani Larson

From the book by Kelly Barnhill published by Algonquin Young Readers

Directed by Nora Montañez Patterson

ABOUT STAGES THEATRE COMPANY



Since our founding in 1984, Stages Theatre Company has put the well-being and growth of youth at the center of everything we do—on stage, backstage, in the audience, and in the classroom. When a youth enters any of our spaces, they are the center of not only why we do what we do, but how we do it.

Through our Productions, our Education Programming, our Fundraising Initiatives, the Development of New Work for the TYA Stage, and our Mentorship Programs we strive to center youth in the stories we tell, the plays we create, the curriculum we develop, the activities we initiate, and the decisions we make. As a company and a community of artists and teachers, the youth and families we serve drive what we do first, last, and always.



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*Photos by
Amy Rondeau Photography*

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Synopsis

Each year, the people of the Protectorate leave a baby in the forest as an offering to the Witch they believe terrorizes them. Grand Elder Gherland takes his nephew, an elder in training to take a baby into the woods. Antain questions why they are doing this but is shut down. He is haunted by this moment.

In truth, the Witch, Xan, is kind. She rescues the abandoned children and delivers them to loving families on the other side of the forest in the Free Cities. This year, she accidentally feeds a baby moonlight instead of starlight, enmagicking the child with extraordinary powers. Realizing the girl's magic is too powerful and unpredictable, Xan decides to raise her as her own, naming her Luna. To keep Luna safe, Xan locks the girl's magic away until her thirteenth birthday.

Meanwhile, back in the Protectorate, Antain visits the woman whose baby he took who is now said to be mad and imprisoned by Sister Ignatia. She sets paper birds on him and he runs, scarred and terrified.

Luna grows up in a loving, unconventional family alongside Xan, a wise Swamp Monster named Glerk, and a Perfectly Tiny Dragon named Fyrian. As Luna approaches thirteen, her magic begins to stir, manifesting in dangerous and wondrous ways. Xan is growing old but knows that she must go and rescue another baby. Glerk worries about her and tries to persuade her not to go. She does go, and in her absence, Luna's magic is restored and discovers the truth. Luna rushes off to find her grandmother, Xan, leaving Glerk and Fyrian behind. Glerk and Fyrian are furious with themselves for letting her go! They head out after her, but not before Glerk has to tell Fyrian that he is not Simply Enormous, but in fact very small.

Now thirteen years older, Antain has just become a father. His son, Luken, is the youngest in the Protectorate and he knows he will be sacrificed. He asks Gherland for help but is denied - Antain resigns from the Council of Elders and sets off into the woods to kill the witch and save his family. Gherland rushes to Sister Ignatia to tell her Antain's plan - to maintain the notion that there is a witch and her power over the Protectorate, Ignatia heads into the woods to kill Antain.

In her prison cell, the Madwoman's hope has transformed into magic and she is able to create paper birds that can fly. She uses them to fly out and try and find her daughter. With Sister Ignatia in the woods, she is able to fly with the paper birds to the swamp where she learns her daughters name. The birds lead her from there into the woods where Luna is.

Xan is exhausted from traveling and magics herself into a swallow to fly to the grassy knoll where the babies are left each year. Antain hears her in the woods and mistakenly shoots her down - distraught that he has hurt a bird, he carries her with him on his journey. Meanwhile Luna encounters the Madwoman and Sister Ignatia in the woods. Sister Ignatia tries to intimidate Luna but Luna sets paper birds on her and she flees.

On his journey through the woods, Antain comes across Luna and mistakes her for the Witch who wants to take his son. He pulls his knife on her but is stopped by the Madwoman who lunges between them. Luna realizes that the swallow is her grandmother, Xan and uses her magic to transform her back to human form. Antain is shocked to see the Madwoman whose baby he helped take 13 years ago. Together they realize that Luna was that baby and the Madwoman is her mother.

Sister Ignatia appears and Xan reveals her as the Sorrow Eater who preyed on her as a child. Ignatia is depleted and tries to draw out sorrow from the group but there is only hope. Fyrian and Glerk appear but now Fyrian has finally grown and is enormous! Fyrian sees the Sorrow Eater and wants to hurt her for killing his mother. Xan and Luna preach forgiveness and peace and he cries and relents.

This love and hope is too much for Ignatia, the Sorrow Eater and Luna uses this against her using the magic to force her to finally feel. When she does, it is too much and she vanishes, eaten by her own sorrow. Although the Sorrow Eater is gone, they realize that the danger now comes from the volcano that is about to erupt. Together, Luna, Xan and the Madwoman hold hands and create a powerful dome of magic to protect the cities. Once saved, Luna gives her mother a name and they begin the process of learning about each other.

Meet the Creators



Kelly Barnhill

Author

Kelly Barnhill is an author and teacher. She won the World Fantasy Award for her novella *The Unlicensed Magician*, a Parents Choice Gold Award for *Iron Hearted Violet*, the Charlotte Huck Honor and 2017 Newbery Medal for *The Girl Who Drank the Moon*, and has been a finalist for the Minnesota Book Award, the Andre Norton award, and the PEN/USA literary prize. She was also a McKnight Artist's Fellowship recipient in Children's Literature. She lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota with her three children and husband.



Melissa Leilani Larson

Playwright

Melissa Leilani Larson (she/her) is a mixed-race Filipino American writer from Salt Lake City whose award-winning work has been seen on five continents. Her current work in progress, *A FORM OF FLATTERY*, is a BAPF 46 Honorable Mention Finalist and a Portland Center Stage JAW finalist. Recent productions: *PERSUASION* at Snow College; *LITTLE HAPPY SECRETS* at Middle Tennessee State; *THE EDIBLE COMPLEX* at Wayne Theatre (tour); *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE* at CenterPoint Legacy Theatre, Grand Theatre Co., and Texas Shakes; *BITTER LEMON* at Plan-B Theatre; *GIN MUMMY* at Utah Valley University; *RELATIVE SPACE*, a new musical, at Creekside Theatre Fest; *MESTIZA, OR MIXED* at Lift Every Voice Festival (American Stage); *SWEETHEART, COME* at Pygmalion Theatre; *THE POST OFFICE* at schools across the country. Honors: AATE Distinguished Play Award; O'Neill semi-finalist; IRAM Best New Play Award; Mayhew Award; four AML Drama Awards; two Salt Lake City Weekly "Best of" Awards. Mel is a member of the Plan-B Theatre Lab, Honor Roll!, and the Dramatists Guild. MFA, Iowa Playwrights Workshop

Meet the Characters

LUNA (Female, 13). A powerful witch in the making—she just doesn't know it yet. Loyal, curious, impetuous.

XAN (Female, 500+, though she appears closer to 60s/70s). A powerful witch, and Luna's adoptive grandmother. Has a healing touch. Determined, selfless, wise.

IGNATIA (Female, 800+ but should look like 30s/40s). The intellectual leader of the Protectorate. A master manipulator with the heart and appetite of a tiger. Impervious, hungry, cold.

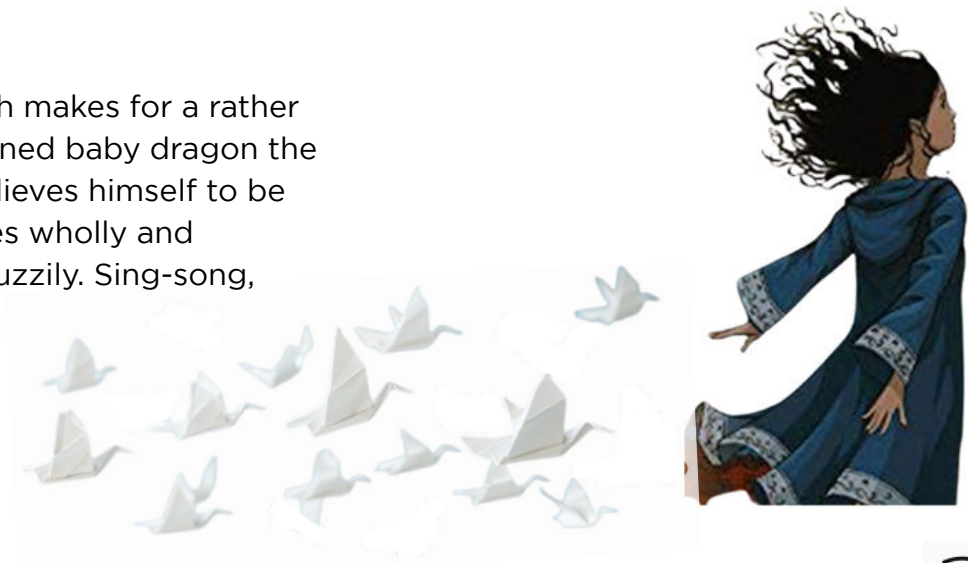
GLERK (Male, 2000+). A swamp monster of indeterminate age with the soul of a poet. As clean as a slimy fellow can be—even edging on the preppy. Anxious, thoughtful, unchanging.

FYRIAN (Male, 500, which makes for a rather young dragon). An orphaned baby dragon the size of a breadbox; he believes himself to be simply enormous. He loves wholly and completely and warmly-fuzzily. Sing-song, guileless, trusting.

THE MADWOMAN (Female, late 20s/early 30s). Society has declared her mad (and probably drove her to it) but she is smarter than others understand. Adaptable, tenacious, damaged.

ANTAIN (Male, 20s). An elder-in-training who will do anything for his wife and infant son. Tends to the self-deprecating. Clever with his hands. Awkward, honorable, excitable.

GHERLAND (Male, 60s/70s). The Grand Elder of the Council that governs the Protectorate. Antain's uncle. All he really cares about is himself and the life of comfort he deserves. Has a considerable beard. Selfish, elitist, cantankerous



The World of the Play

The Girl Who Drank The Moon takes place in a magical world. Use this map to explore the different locations within the book and the play.



In Kelly Barnhill's Words

We tell stories because we yearn for larger truths, larger experiences, larger worlds, and larger selves. We tell stories because we wish to contain multitudes — and we do. We see the world through a wider and more complicated lens, and we can, for a little while, feel as another feels, think as another thinks, and breathe someone else's precious and magical breath.

But.

There is another power of stories, one that well-meaning, bookish people don't always like to talk about. Stories can reveal, analyze, and dissect, yes, but they can also conceal, obfuscate, and distract. Stories can break down barriers and reveal the nobility in ordinary people and things, but they can also turn nice old ladies into fearsome witches and neighbors into fiends. Stories can create empathy, kindness, connection and antipathy, hatred, and division. Stories are bridges and walls.

I wrote this book intending to wrestle with the notion of false narratives. The stories that turn neighbors into scapegoats. The stories that perpetuate intolerance. The stories that encourage us to notice the splinter in our neighbor's eye while ignoring the two-by-four in our own. While we have all seen how minds can be opened through stories, we also have read our history, and we know the other side of that coin. We know that tyranny and intolerance are also built on stories. We know that systemic oppression is rationalized through stories. We know that atrocities are justified through stories. And that's what we see on a macro scale; on the micro scale, we see the same thing. Self-hatred is narrative. Self-doubt is narrative. Heck, even anxiety is just a story we tell and tell ourselves, again and again, and can't turn off.

Stories are powerful. For good or ill. They can literally rewrite a person's sense of themselves, and they can rewrite the world around us.

This is what I was trying to do in *The Girl Who Drank the Moon*. To show how a story, when it is cynically told, can twist the truth. I wanted to show how a cynical story can become a wall, a prison, a weapon. And it is only by subverting the narrative, by re-inventing and re-imagining and re-telling, that we can replace that which is harmful with stories that enlarge, ennoble, and expand.

I believe this is possible. I've seen it happen, and I know that you have seen it, too. We live in interesting times. And we have kids who, right now, are deeply in need of books that will give them the tools they need to think critically. To ask questions. To break down assumed narratives — both about ourselves, and about the world. We need stories that are mirrors so that any kid can see herself clearly. We need stories that are bright lamps, shining hope and light in a troubled world. We need stories that are bridges and roads, connecting that which we know to that which we do not; stories that are safe harbors and welcoming sanctuaries; stories that are armor and shield, friend and companion; stories that free prisoners, heal the harmed, teach the ignorant, and feed our aching souls.

Once upon a time, I was a lonely kid, an anxious kid, burdened with a false narrative — the story about myself that I told myself. It took me a long time to learn how to subvert that narrative. As book people, we are all experts in subversion. We know that books teach us to transgress, to stand up, to listen, to connect, to analyze, and to understand. With books, we are more than ourselves. With books, we contain multitudes. I have often said that reading is an act of radical empathy, and I do believe it, but a shortened version of that is also true. Reading is radical, full stop. Which is why every kid deserves a library stacked to the rafters with radical reads — books that enlarge us, ennoble us, books that remind us to be brave and bold and kind and righteous. Books that challenge us to face the narratives in our culture that twist, that divide, that tell us lies about ourselves — and to break them down, look inside, analyze their working parts, and ultimately write something new. Tell a new story. Rewrite the world.

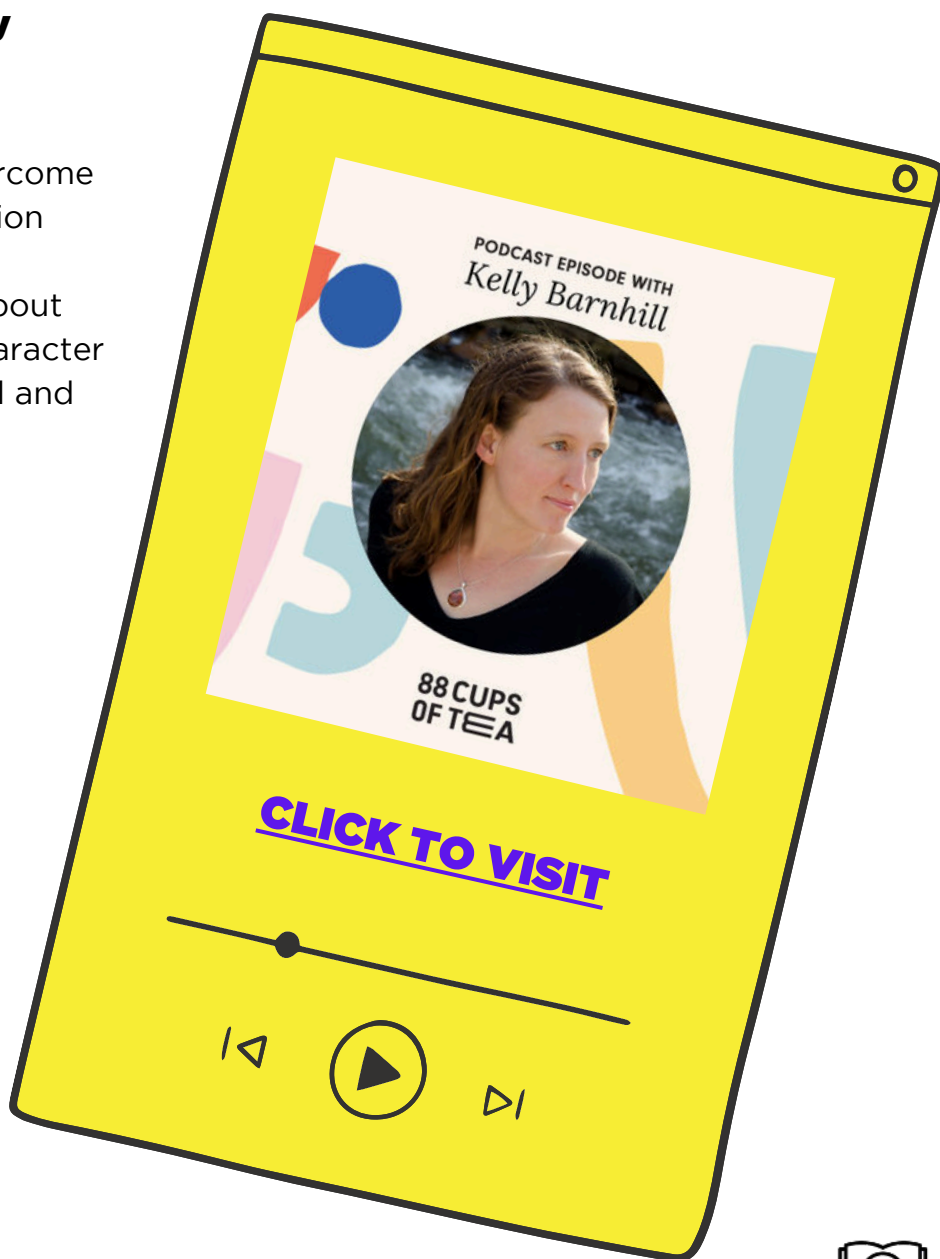
Books are magic, after all. Ask anyone you like.

2017 Newbery Medal Acceptance by Kelly Barnhill

Kelly Barnhill on Improving Your Craft By Centimeters

**From the podcast 88 Cups Of Tea
in conversation with Kelly
Barnhill**

Curious to learn how to overcome self-doubt during your revision process? Or ways to instill a creative headspace? How about tips for crafting dynamic character settings? We talk about it all and more with Kelly Barnhill.



Discussion Questions for after the performance

Or if you have read the book!



Why might the idea of a Witch be as powerful as, or more powerful than, the actual Witch?

Xan insists that sorrow is dangerous. Do you agree? What does Xan learn about sorrow by the end of the novel? How are hope and sorrow connected?

Many types of birds appear in the novel: the madwoman's paper birds, the sparrow Xan transforms into when she needs to travel, even the crow Luna befriends. Why do you think the author chose to feature birds? How do the different kinds of birds act similarly and differently in the story?



"A story can tell the truth, she knew, but a story can also lie. Stories can bend and twist and obfuscate. Controlling stories is power indeed." Why are stories powerful, especially when you control them? On the other hand, what happens when stories are shared? Can you identify an example of the effects of sharing a story?

What do you think makes Antain finally stand up to his uncle? Have you ever had to stand up for what you believed was right? How did it feel?

The story's two main villains, Sister Ignatia and Grand Elder Gherland, are vanquished in the end but forgiven rather than punished. What does this story say about redemption and forgiveness?

Found Family in Literature

The Girl Who Drank The Moon is a fantasy novel with some very real relationships. An important theme in the play is that of found and chosen family. Glerk and Xan choose to be a family and to bring Luna and Fyrian in too. It is this bond that enables them to be brave!

In literature (and sometimes real life!) found family is a group of individuals who've forged a bond together that makes them more family than friends, usually through some danger or shared experience (sometimes multiple experiences) and in the absence of familial bonds. Often orphans, sometimes outcasts, these characters come together through necessity but also by chance. They would do anything for their new family and often do. The trope itself lends to protective moments because when one of them is threatened, they're all threatened.

The dynamics of the group aren't set in stone but there's usually a parental figure at the top (sometimes two) who guides the rest and there's always a "baby" type character, usually the youngest or weakest of the group who they'll rally around



**Can you think of some other found families in books that you have read?
Create a list below with one reason they become family:**



1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

A Story With No Words

Darkness.

The moon rises, large and full. Its blue and silver light illuminates a bed where 13-year-old LUNA sleeps.

Something disturbs LUNA's sleep. A bad dream, perhaps? She shifts but doesn't wake. XAN, an elderly witch, enters, watching LUNA sleep.

Opposite XAN in a separate space, a young mother (the MADWOMAN) enters. She also watches LUNA. It's a triangle: the MADWOMAN, XAN, and LUNA.

*The MADWOMAN and XAN look from LUNA to each other.
It's a knowing glance—respectful.*

The MADWOMAN begins to move toward LUNA but something holds her back. She looks back to see IGNATIA, prowling in the shadows. IGNATIA pounces, pulling the MADWOMAN away from LUNA. It's like the stripping of meat from bone.

XAN and LUNA disappear in the dark. IGNATIA's touch weakens the MADWOMAN. She collapses to the ground. The light around the MADWOMAN tightens, imprisoning her. The prison cell is empty except for sheets of paper, stark white, scattered on the floor around her.

Agitated, the MADWOMAN searches for a way to escape but IGNATIA holds up a hand and the MADWOMAN falls back.

The MADWOMAN holds a sheet of paper to the light. She grabs a handful of paper, crumpling it in her hands. She unties a scarf from around her waist, filling it with crumpled paper to form a bundle. She cradles the bundle in her arms as if it's a baby.

IGNATIA melts into the shadows.

THE MADWOMAN lies on the floor, her body curled around her paper baby, and sleep

These stage directions open the play. Why do you think it was done in this way rather than text?

Perform these stage directions in a group. What do you notice about the characters? What do you learn about the story?

Take the beginning of a book and create your own stage directions. What is necessary for your audience to know? How can you show them?

Creating Fantasy

Creating your own fantasy story can be daunting, complete the four exercises below to start creating the world of your play.

Focus

What is one element of the future or alternate universe for your story?

Character

Who are the main characters in your story? How do they fit in to the world you have created?

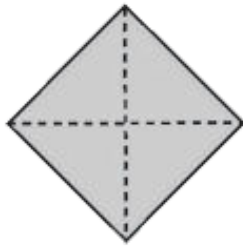
Want

What does your character want, and what stands in their way?

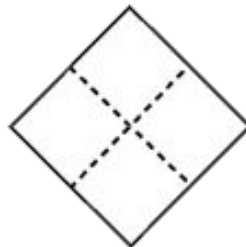
Message

Does your play have a specific message? Are you using a different reality to make a comment about the world we live in today?

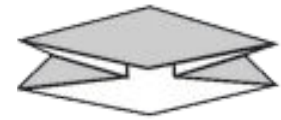
Create A Paper Crane



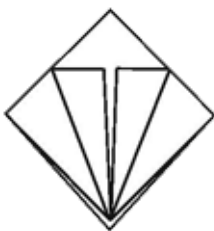
1. Using a square piece of paper, fold the paper in half to form a triangle. If using a piece of paper colored on one side only, begin with the colored side facing up. Unfold the paper and repeat to make the folds seen in the image above.



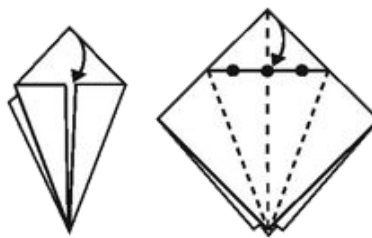
2. Flip the paper so the colored side is facing down and fold the paper in half forming a rectangle. Unfold the paper and repeat to make the folds seen in the image above.



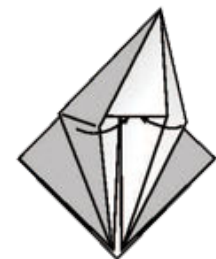
3. Now fold along all four creases at once to form a square with the open end facing you.



4. Fold two edges in, to form a kite shape on top. Repeat on the other side.

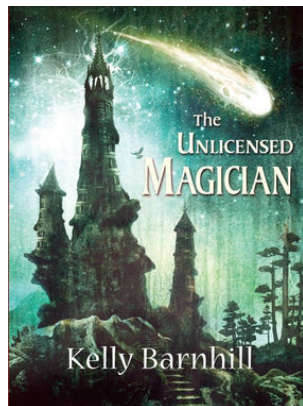


5. Fold the point down and crease above the other two folds. Flip the paper and repeat the fold. Undo the folds you made in steps 4 and 5.



6. Pull the bottom corner (top layer only) up above the top corner. Fold along the creases you made in steps 4 and 5. Repeat on the other side.

Recommended Reading



If you liked *The Girl Who Drank the Moon*, you might also like the following:

The Girl, The Gate, and the Dragon

 by Grace Lin

Maizy Chen's Last Chance

 by Lisa Yee

Hello, Universe

 by Erin Entrada Kelly

The Last Cuentista

 by Donna Barba Higuera



General Information

Ticket Policy: Ticket orders will not be processed without full payment. We do not issue refunds. Exchanges can be made up to 24 hours prior to a scheduled performance. Exchanges can only be made for another performance of the SAME TITLE. Subject to availability.

Box Office Hours: Tuesday through Saturday, noon to 5 p.m. and one hour prior to all performances.

Mainstage: Unless otherwise noted, performances take place in the mainstage theatre. Seating is reserved and begins 30 minutes prior to showtime.

Jaycees Studio: All performances of *Señorita Mariposa*, *When You Trap A Tiger*, and *Tell Me Your Dreams* will be in the Jaycees Studio, a versatile space located in the Hopkins Center for the Arts. Seating is general admission and begins 30 minutes prior to show time. Come early for the most seating options!

Land Acknowledgment

Stages Theatre Company acknowledges with respect and gratitude that the land on which we live and work is the unceded, traditional land of the Dakota Nation. We are committed to learning from the past and critically examining the implications of colonial histories in our day-to-day lives.

To honor the traditional custodians of this land, complimentary tickets to every performance are available specifically for our indigenous community. We hope these resources can move us in taking collective action towards land repatriation.

Please call our box office at (952) 979-1111 to secure these complimentary tickets.



This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a Minnesota State Arts Board Operating Support grant, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund.

Accessibility

At Stages Theatre Company we believe that theatre experiences are for everyone! We are working towards a fully inclusive environment where all programs and performances are accessible to all.

Sensory-Friendly Performances

Relaxed performances designed for people with Autism Spectrum Disorder, Sensory Processing Disorder, or others with sensory sensitivities.

American Sign Language (ASL)

Interpreted Performances

American Sign Language interpretation by certified interpreters for patrons who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Audio Described (AD) Performances

Audio Description services are intended to enhance the understanding of and access to visual information, primarily for but not limited to people who are blind or have low vision.

Pay What You Can Performances (PWYC)

These performances have no minimum price, and patrons are asked to “pay what you can” the day of the show to support the theatre’s programming.

Open Door Program

The Open Door Program provides free and reduced-cost tickets, bus subsidies, and tuition assistance to families, schools, and social service agencies. An application and further information can be found on our website: stagestheatre.org/access

Additional Services Available

- Assisted Listening Devices are available for all Stages Theatre Company’s Mainstage productions.
- Wheelchair Accessible Seating is available at every Stages Theatre Company performance.
- Accessible Parking and Accessible Restrooms are available at the Hopkins Center of the Arts.

Accessibility Performances are available for all season subscription options.



A
SEASON
THAT BRINGS US
TOGETHER

JOIN US
THIS
SEASON!

2025-26 SEASON

