



Joseph Oliveri, Vivienne Claire Luthin and Molly Burris performing in Piknik Theatre's 2023 Summer Season production of "A Year with Frog + Toad."

## All of Steamboat is a Stage

COURTESY OF KATIE EARIXSON



Vivienne Luthin

» Vivienne Luthin has seen her share of magic in Steamboat Springs.

Luthin, a professional actor, came to Steamboat Springs in summer 2019 when a friend invited her to join Piknik Theatre, a professional, nonprofit theater company that has been presenting plays in the Yampa Valley since 2008. Most of the company's productions are staged outdoors.

"The community in Steamboat is really unparalleled in their generosity and enthusiasm," Luthin says. "I kind of fell in love with Steamboat and the community – and the botanic park is so magical, so it was a great summer."

Recently named Piknik Theatre's artistic director, as well as its director of educational outreach, Luthin is well prepared for the job. She holds a BFA in acting from Webster University in St. Louis, Missouri. After her first stint in Steamboat, she spent seven months performing and directing choreography in the fellowship program for the Alabama Shakespeare Festival.

One day in 2021, she got a phone call from Stewart Handloff, executive director of Piknik Theatre. He invited her back to Steamboat to act, as well as to take control of the educational aspect of Piknik Theatre's summer program. She took him up on his offer and when summer turned to fall, she stayed to direct plays and put on workshops with students at Steamboat Springs High School, Middle School and Montessori school.

"I absolutely love teaching. I've been doing it since I was a junior in high school. It's something that has become a calling for me. Watching students discover their own imagination and voice (really inspires me)," Luthin says.

In her new role as artistic director, when she's not working on plays, she also works on graphic design, social media, casting and figuring out what shows the theatre will present.

She has picked a key time to take on an expanded role in Piknik Theatre, which is preparing to build Steamboat's first outdoor amphitheater in collaboration with the Strawberry Park Elementary School this summer.

"It's a really exciting collaboration for a lot of reasons," Luthin says. "Having a home base that is Piknik Theatre's home is very exciting for the future of the organization."

The 200-seat, acoustic-only amphitheater is being built near Strawberry Park Elementary School, where it will be well-positioned for art education. The outdoor stage will also be available to other arts organizations. ■