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Michigan State Theatre alumna Sarah Goeke came to MSU to pursue her Master of Fine Arts in Theatre, but she received so much more than just a degree. During her time here, she started a nonprofit theatre organization, worked one-on-one with professors, and honed her skills on stage.

Now, she is taking her talent on the road as a cast member in the national Broadway tour of *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*.

The play follows the life of American composer and singer-songwriter Carole King from age 16 to her Carnegie Hall debut at the age of 29, which also marked her first concert performance in front of an audience.

Goeke plays King's best friend, Cynthia Weil, an American songwriter who is trying to find her place in the world and music industry and who wrote hit songs, alongside King, that changed the pop music genre.

"I feel like I've learned a lot from playing Cynthia Weil; she is so confident in her abilities," said Goeke, who actually got to meet Weil. "I love playing strong women, and I think it's such a gift because I get to learn so much from each of them."



Sarah Goeke and a fellow cast member in "Beautiful: The Carole King Musical."

This Broadway tour experience has given Goeke the opportunity to work with director Shelley Butler, to perform in big cities like Chicago, and to work and make connections with the rest of the crew.

"I love working alongside the cast. They are all so talented and excited to be working on this show," Goeke said. "There is not a day that goes by that I don't think about how lucky I am."

At MSU, the Master of Fine Arts in Theatre program allowed Goeke to combine both her interests of performing and teaching.

"The Michigan State program is incredible because it is 50-percent teaching and 50-percent acting," Goeke said. "I was able to get everything I wanted out of one program and more."

“There is not a day that goes by that I don’t think about how lucky I am.”

During her Master’s program, Goeke worked closely with many of the faculty in the [Department of Theatre](#).

“[Rob Roznowski](#) (Professor of Theatre) was essential,” Goeke said. “He did an independent study with me so that I could get ahead and catch up with everybody. He wasn’t just there to teach classes, he was there to make sure that we changed. He helped me see what I had to contribute, what I had to say that was different.”

[Kirk Domer](#), Professor and Chair of the Department of Theatre, helped Goeke find her way through the business side of theatre, a side that is often overlooked.



Sarah Goeke with the rest of the "Beautiful: The Carole King Musical" cast.

“I wanted to create a free summer camp that was in conjunction with Summer Circle Theatre,” Goeke said. “So I worked on this grant all year, but I didn’t get it, and when Kirk heard he came up to me and said that I should still do it anyway and that whatever I needed help with to ask him. He taught me how to fund and run a program.”

As a result of Goeke’s efforts, the Department of Theatre now offers a free summer camp for kids in 1st through 6th grade, which is held in conjunction with MSU’s Summer Circle Theatre. This summer will be the 4th annual Free Summer Circle Kids Camp.

Another mentor Goeke gives credit to is Associate Professor of Theatre [Ann Folino White](#).

“When I was learning how to be a professional woman in theatre and finding my place and my voice in a space that is typically male dominated, Ann Folino White is the person I think of,” Goeke said.

"She's the person I try to emulate when I'm trying to be a smart, headstrong person in theatre."

Some of this can be found in her portrayal of Cynthia Weil for *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*, which opens today and runs through Sunday, February 18, at [DeVos Hall](#) in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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