

CREATING INTERESTING CHARACTERS!

By: Amy Sowers



If you remember the old Andy Hardy movies with Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland, you can't forget Andy's line, "Let's put on a show!" As a child, I lived by that philosophy. Being the oldest grandchild, I would coerce my brothers and cousins to be a part of the productions I created. We would hang quilts and blankets on the clothesline in the garage to form our stage.

I, of course, filled the roles of director and star. Today, I am still drafting kids to put on a show, but now I don't have to drag all the blankets out of the house. Never would I have dreamed I would be directing children on the stage of the magnificent Crighton Theatre. If only I could have had access to a theatre like the Crighton. I

wish I could have taken the kind of theatre classes that are available to the children in my community now. Bravo Company Performing Arts School provides those theatre classes at the Crighton Theatre in downtown Conroe and is the educational wing of Stage Right, the residential theatre company of the historic Crighton Theatre.



Classes are offered for children ages 5 years through high school. Class size is limited which provides more personal instruction. Bravo Company students will have the opportunity to perform onstage in the lovely Crighton Theatre. Students will learn basic theatre vocabulary, voice projection and auditioning techniques. Characterization, structured improvisation and scene studies are included as well. Game type activities are utilized to teach these skills in a creative and entertaining manner.

Why study theatre arts? Dramatic arts or theatre classes allow a student to explore new and various roles, try out and experiment with a variety of personal choices and solutions to problems in a safe environment. This develops creative problem solving abilities that carry over to everyday life. The center of all acting is communication. Drama allows students to communicate with and understand others more readily. This can impact a child's life in many positive ways. They may be less likely to have difficulty with public speaking and may become more persuasive in their communications, both verbal and written. Theatre classes enable a person to be better able to put themselves in others' shoes and empathize with them. After all, the dramatic arts is the study of the way human beings interact. Through that dramatic interaction, children learn collaboration and teamwork along with self-control and discipline.

Bravo Company's newest instructor is Melody Montez. Melody studied theatre at Sam Houston State University. She performed as Savannah in Stage Right's world premiere production of *Mama Won't Fly*, Mrs. Paroo in *The Music Man* and as Rhonda Lynn in *Christmas Belles* as well as many other roles. Melody served as director of *Red Velvet Cake War* and is currently directing *A Christmas Story*. She has studied Shakespeare extensively and has di-

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rected *Macbeth* and *Taming of the Shrew*. Her talented son Ian, a Bravo Company student, has followed in her footsteps and has his own impressive resume including *Winthrop* in *The Music Man* and *Jackie* in *Cheaper by the Dozen*. Melody will be a great asset to Bravo Company.

Amy Sowers, founder, director and instructor of Bravo Company is a speech pathologist and holds a master's degree in Communication Disorders from the University of Houston. She has worked with children for more than twenty years and has been acting for nineteen years. She

most recently directed the Bravo Company production of *Shakespeare Comes to Calamity Creek*. Amy is also familiar to Stage Right audiences, having portrayed Auntie Em in *The Wizard of Oz*, and Gaynelle in *Red Velvet Cake War*. Other favorite roles include Honey Raye in the trilogy of plays *Dearly Beloved*, *Christmas Belles* and *Southern Hospitality* and Diana in *Lend Me a Tenor*. She serves on the board of directors of Stage Right and of the Crighton Theatre Foundation.

Tuition is \$50.00 per month for one child and \$35.00 per month for the second child in a family. Class times: ages 5-10 years on Tuesdays from 5:00-6:30. Class for ages 11 and up are on Wednesdays from 5:00-6:30. For more information, call Amy Sowers at (936)520-7525 or email amybsowers@msn.com. For more information onstage Right productions, visit our website: www.stage-right.org.

Although now I have an elaborate red velvet curtain on stage, cushioned seating and big spotlights, it is still as much fun as it was creating my own stage with quilts and blankets! Come join the fun! Let's put on a play! ♦



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