

New Cultural Centre camp introduces kids to magic of theatre

By Brock Weir

Mandy Roveda felt herself grow more confident with every step she took.

She was a shy child, but felt herself open up more and more every time she stepped out onto the stage as a youngster.

Now an actor and director, she hopes to instill this theatrical magic in local youngsters, leading the Aurora Cultural Centre's inaugural Theatre Camp.

Complimenting the Centre's wildly successful Visual Arts camps, the curtain will open on the theatrical programming July 16, running through July 20, focusing on musical theatre. A second week long session, focusing on plays rather than musicals, will run August 13 ? 17.

The theatre camp is the brainchild of Suzanne Haines, the Centre's Executive Director.

?'Suzanne had the idea already and was really wanting to bring the camp to the Aurora Cultural Centre,?' says Ms. Roveda. ?They already have their successful visual arts camp and she really wanted to bring a theatre camp to life. She wanted it to be taught by professionals in the industry who were working. We sat down and started talking about ideas and where I come from and my experience, and we made a good fit. She brought me on.?'

Together, they hammered out the fine details.

The result is a program of two very different weeks giving participants exposure to very different worlds while, at the same time, keeping things fresh for returning budding actors.



Each camp will culminate in a short performance. Of course, as the camps are each one week long, they can't put on full-blown musicals, but the finale will showcase all the work the kids had been doing over the session, including short scenes, songs and songs with choreography. The second session, dubbed ?Acted Out? will end with the performance of a short play.

?'I was lucky to start doing theatre quite young and really took to it, just because it was super fun,?' says Ms. Roveda. ?Then as I got older, I started seeing opportunities to get into it professionally and I jumped at that opportunity. I definitely found it very helpful in other aspects of my life as well, with public speaking, with confidence, with communication skills, and that is really what I like to impart with the kids. We're not teaching them to be trained professional actors at the age of six. What I am really focusing on are these life skills they can use in all aspects their lives.?'

First and foremost among these are confidence and communication, she says.

?'I was a very shy child and still have that shy child living inside of me,?' she says. ?Through theatre, I learned how to acknowledge that shy child and be able to acknowledge it, say, 'thank you, you're there,' and be able to work around it and put forward the confidence I have learned through theatre.?'

Along the way, Ms. Roveda says she wants to impart these lessons through fun and games, allowing kids to explore themselves creativity and interact in a way they might not otherwise be able to do in any other environment.

This is, in part, what keeps her coming back to the theatre.

She says she loves the team-oriented, production-oriented environment that comes out of theatre.

?'It fosters creativity, but within a group in a way that you always feel supported. I don't know where else, other than organized sports, you can get that feeling of being on a team and working towards that end goal ? but with a more creative side to it,?' she says.

?It is a really important time in this very digital age to kind of get out from behind the screen and have kids be in a very safe environment that promotes self expression. Things like empathy through role playing and through team building, and these wonderful life-skills that I think in this digital age it is hard to do with the phones and computers. It is very isolated and solo. At this camp it will be about team building and working with others in a really fun environment.?

For more information on the Aurora Cultural Centre's new Theatre Camp, visit their website at www.auroraculturalcentre.ca or call 905-713-1818.