

Cultivating young thespians: MCAP brings back summer kids' camp (6-16-21)



During the summer months, you can expect to find kids at the parks, on the baseball fields, at the library and the list goes on.

You can also find some kids at the Corson Playhouse, too.

For the 10th year, the Playhouse is the host site of the Summer Mighty Corson Art Players (MCAP) Kids' Camp—designed to teach kids the basics of theatre.

Brian Schipper, MCAP's board president, is leading and directing the camp for the first time, along with the help of his assistant director, Logan Leavitt.

The camp returns after a one-year hiatus due to the pandemic.

"It's really nice to bring it back and see that even though we've been gone for a year that there's still that base of people who really value, not only the theatre, but getting these initial first steps for their kids," Schipper said.

The camp—which hosts kids who have completed kindergarten through sixth grade—runs for two-and-a-half hours Monday through Friday, with a performance for family members on Saturday. There are two different sessions.

"The camp itself is just a crazy, fun time because you step into, essentially, tech week of a show the minute that they walk in the door," Schipper said. "It's a crazy mad dash, but they're all just rising to it."

With the wider age range, Schipper says that it allows the younger kids to learn from the older campers.

“It’s great because you get some experienced people in here who can take the kids who’ve never stepped foot on stage or spoken in front of a podium before and bring each other through in a way that a director can’t,” the director said. “I can tell them what to do, but they’re experiencing it together. That’s so much of what makes this a success.”

“It’s my first time as well and being able to see them working together and helping each other is just amazing,” Leavitt added. “We don’t have to help with the lines because there are people on stage that will say, ‘OK, this is your line now.’ You have them helping each other out—if one person doesn’t know where to be, they make sure that they’re there.”

Schipper says that even with the assistance of the older kids, working with the inexperienced ones is easy.

“It could be hard, but it hasn’t been,” Schipper said. “Kids are so quick, they’re so sharp on everything. We do have three or four who have probably never done anything like this before—it’s hard to pick that out because they’ve put hours into this but it’s like they’ve been doing this for three weeks.”

This year’s play is called *The Gingerbread Girl*.

“It’s basically a fairytale mash-up of ‘The Gingerbread Man’ and ‘Bride of Frankenstein,’” Schipper said. “We have a mad scientist baker who’s already made one gingerbread man that’s sort of running amok. And, it’s like, ‘Nope, I’m going to create the more perfect creature now.’”

Performances like this and the ability to practice their acting skills in the summer is important, Schipper says.

“You can do the school play during the school year, but just like riding a bike or catching a football, there are kids who really like to do this stuff,” he said. “It’s using a muscle just like anything else.”

Schipper and Leavitt say that the parents have been incredibly supportive and that even from one day to the next, they’re seeing “miles of progress.”

Schipper hopes to grow the kids’ camp in the future and offer additional sessions—including more extensive performances for the more experienced thespians.

“It’s community theatre, and community is not just adults,” said Leavitt, who has a history with MCAP shows. “So, we have to build a community in the children and through the adults.”