

HOUSTON FAMILY MAGAZINE

**2019 FAMILY
ARTS & CULTURE
GUIDE**





secret ingredients OF THE HIDDEN MAGIC IN THEATRICAL ARTS

written by **Kelly Moynahan of HITS Theater**
photos by **Gulf Coast Shots**

Your child comes home after school and tells you they want to audition for the school play or take a musical theater class with a friend. They know it will be fun but do they know there is a hidden magic in there too?

We have all experienced the magic of theater. The theater is dark and the lights come up slowly as we begin to hear the music play. Beautiful sets take shape and create the scene. Characters in costume come alive. We are drawn in, it is magical. It is theater! There is also theater magic that is not quite so visible, it is the hidden magic of the theater. It

is powerful and can be life-long. It is the magic that is hidden within the process of making the art and can make a profound impact on your child with skills they will take with them as they grow.

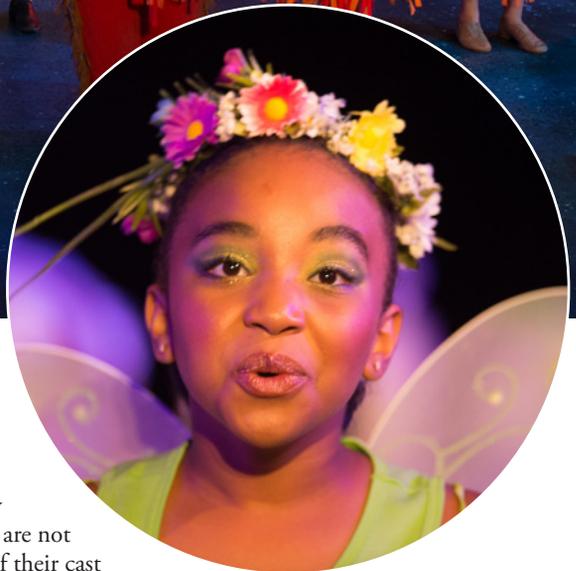
SECRET INGREDIENT #1-REASONABLE RISK

Magic can feel like a tingle or for some like butterflies in your stomach. Risk can feel the same way. The first day a child enters the theater for a production, or a school play they are taking a risk. They are making themselves vulnerable in front of a large audience. "What if I am not good enough?" What if

someone laughs?" Looking around the stage, they will quickly realize they are not alone. All of their cast members are with them on stage. Everyone is taking the same risk and while the fear may not go away at first, it becomes manageable with a few more secret ingredients.

SECRET INGREDIENT #2-RESPONSIBILITY

Theater will take your child to new and magical places and they will need their script to get there. It is their map and it is important. They will not know how to get where they are going without it, they must be responsible with it. They will also need some tools to create their magic, like costumes and props. They will learn the importance of checking for all their costume parts and placing their own props in advance of the performance. They will understand the need to put their props and costume pieces back where they belong



so they are ready for the next performance.

SECRET INGREDIENT #3-PREPAREDNESS

In stories where magic plays a major role, good seems to win over evil when everyone can count on each other and work together. In theater, the entire cast counts on each other. When a cast member does not know their part they hold the rest of the cast up. Children learn quickly that to be prepared for formal rehearsals they will need to spend extra time rehearsing their lines, songs and dances at home so they do not let down the other cast members.

SECRET INGREDIENT #4-TIME MANAGEMENT

Magic has a time limit and if a cast member is not on time

the magic can fade. A child will learn the importance of being on time and know exactly how much time they have to accomplish the task at hand. Timing is critical for entrances, exits, and costume changes. Even when on stage, a child begins to gain a sense of timing when they learn to pause and wait for the laughs or applause.

**SECRET INGREDIENT
#5-QUICK THINKING**

Magic can be tricky and when not done exactly correct a cast member will learn to be quick thinking. It can happen when a child forgets a line, misses an entrance, or spins the wrong way. In early rehearsals, the director will stop the scene and let everyone practice the magic again. As opening night approaches, rehearsals are not stopped and your child will learn how to improvise and think quick on their feet. They will figure it out on their own or with the help of their fellow cast members.



**SECRET INGREDIENT
#6-BEING RESPECTFUL**

Theater magic is powerful and should be respected. It is important not to talk over someone else's lines. A child learns that everyone has to be heard and be able to do his or her part uninterrupted. They learn to respect their cast members time, space, and talents so when it is their turn they get the same respect. That is no easy task and it

requires good listening skills, concentration, patience, and practice.

**HIDDEN INGREDIENT
#7-SELF-CONFIDENCE**

This last bit of magic is the most beautiful and it comes at the end of a performance when the final bows are taken and your child realizes they did it! There is no doubt in their mind they could do it again. Your applause and big smiles tell them they



succeeded and should be proud of what they have accomplished.

This magic is hard, it takes practice, and it builds character. Your child will use these magic ingredients wherever they go. They may not realize they have this magic, but it will come out when they need it most. Maybe at a school presentation, when telling a family story, or simply putting their backpack by the door for school tomorrow. Now that is some magic!



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Production classes at HITS Theatre offer students the chance to explore and

sharpen their singing, dancing and acting skills through a traditional rehearsal process. Each production is supported by a professional director, choreographer, music director, stage manager and designers. As part of an ensemble, the students each play an important role in telling a story for a live audience by learning music, choreography and staging. Our professional creative team guides students through character development, proper vocal technique and dance technique.

This fall, HITS' kids will be joining in on the greatest adventure of all as we find our place in the circle of life. Join us this fall as we explore Africa with Disney's The Lion King, KIDS for grades K-5, and chilly Norway with Disney's Frozen JR for grades 6-8 as our holiday show. Workshops and Master Classes are also available year-round. Classes start September 4, 2019 and performances will be held in November and December.



Lizzie Tyer

HFM KID AMBASSADOR

Learn more about joining our Kid Ambassador program by visiting houstonfamilymagazine.com.

Photo by Traci Ling Photography | Location: Sawyer Yards, Houston

HFM recently caught up with Lizzie Tyer, one of our 2019 HFM Kid Ambassadors to discuss her love of all things theater and how it's brought joy to her life. Here is what she had to say.

TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF.

I'm a 15-year-old Sugar Land resident. I am beginning my sophomore year at the virtual school, iUniversity Prep. Besides theatre, I enjoy playing my ukulele, spending time with my friends, and watching movies. I live with my parents and my dog, Ginger.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN DOING MUSICAL THEATER?

About six years, I started in 4th grade. I've been in 24 full productions and am currently in

two productions, Mary Poppins JR. and Into the Woods JR, both at Inspiration Stage.

WHAT GOT YOU INTERESTED IN MUSICAL THEATER?

In 3rd grade, our homeroom put on a short play. Since then I've been passionate about the performing arts.

WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE ROLES THAT YOU'VE PLAYED?

Jovie in Elf, Spider in James and the Giant Peach, but my all-time favorite role has been Mrs. Wormwood in Matilda.

DO YOU FEEL THAT WORKING IN THEATER MADE YOU A BETTER PERSON?

I believe theatre makes anyone a better person. Besides gaining an appreciation for the

arts, theatre teaches life-long skills such as public speaking, memorization and teamwork. I believe it's made me the confident person I am today.

WHAT DO YOU ENJOY MOST ABOUT PERFORMING?

I love the feeling I get from performing in front of people. I love to make the audience laugh. I also enjoy seeing the audience reaction to all the hard-work put into each performance.

WHO ARE YOUR THEATRICAL ROLE MODELS?

Caissie Levy (Elsa in Frozen on Broadway), Taylor Louderman (Regina in Mean Girls on Broadway) and Mandy Seymore-Sensat (Artistic Director of Inspiration Stage).

HOW MANY DIFFERENT PRODUCTIONS DO YOU PARTICIPATE IN PER YEAR?

It's different every year, but at least four.

HOW DO YOU BALANCE YOUR SCHOOL LIFE WITH YOUR THEATER LIFE?

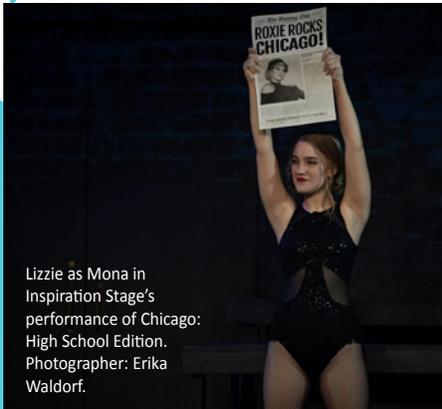
It's challenging balancing school and theatre. I have rehearsals and classes most evenings. I attend online school to have more time and flexibility for training and opportunities that arise.

WHAT TYPES OF EXPERIENCES HAS YOUR ACTING CAREER OFFERED YOU?

I've gotten to travel all over the US and even Edinburgh for festivals, competitions and training. Some of the places



Lizzie as Elsa in Inspiration Stage's "Frozen, Jr." performed at the Junior Theater Festival in Sacramento, California. Photographer: JW Baraker Photography



Lizzie as Mona in Inspiration Stage's performance of Chicago: High School Edition. Photographer: Erika Waldorf.



Photo by Traci Ling Photography

YOU JUST RETURNED FROM ATTENDING THE EDINBURGH FESTIVAL FRINGE IN SCOTLAND, CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THE TRIP AND HOW YOU PARTICIPATED?

This summer, I went with the George Ranch High School Longhorn Players theatre program to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival where we performed a play, Sometimes Just a Second, written by our director, L. Jay Edenmeyer. We had three performances where we got to share our work with people from around the world. It was one of the most amazing experiences of my life. We first spent several days in London sightseeing and attending performances at West End and a workshop at the Globe Theatre.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO OTHER KIDS INTERESTED IN ACTING AND THEATER?

Don't be afraid to go for it. Be yourself. It's not about being the most talented person there, it's about having a good attitude and being a team-player. Remember that at an audition, the director is on your side and wants you to do well.

CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THE THEATER COMPANY YOU PERFORM WITH?

I perform with my local community theatre, Inspiration Stage. iStage started six years ago at the historic Sugar Land Auditorium. I was Shanti in iStage's first production, Jungle Book KIDS. Most recently, I was Mona in Chicago: High School Edition. [Check out www.inspirationstage.com for more information]

IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE WITH OUR READERS?

One of my favorite things about theatre is the friendships I've made with people of all different ages. There is something about being around people that have the same passions – it brings out the best in each of us. We become a family and consider the theatre our home away from home.

I've gotten to visit are New York City, Los Angeles, Atlanta, London and Edinburgh. I've been to programs at The American Academy of Dramatic Arts, International Thespian Society, the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Junior Theatre Festival and Texas Nonprofit Theatres. One of the most exciting experiences I've had so far was this past February. I played Elsa and got to sing "Let it Go" in the New Works Showcase of Frozen JR. at the Junior Theatre Festival in Sacramento.

WHAT TYPES OF CHALLENGES HAVE YOU FACED DOING THEATER?

I think the biggest challenge I've faced is learning to overcome rejection. It is difficult to not get a role that you want and prepared for. I've learned to be proud when I do my best at an audition, then to leave the decision with the directors. Even though I've had disappointments, I know I can make any part challenging and fun.

WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE CAREER ASPIRATIONS?

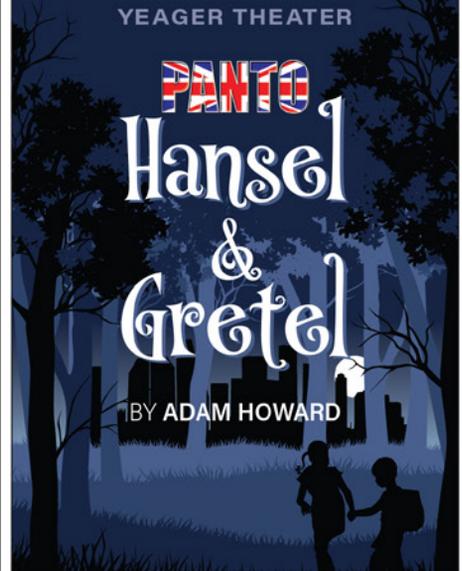
I plan to get a musical theatre degree from a performing arts program. I want to continue performing in musical theatre, but I also dream about starting my own community theatre company. I would love to share my passion for theatre with others.

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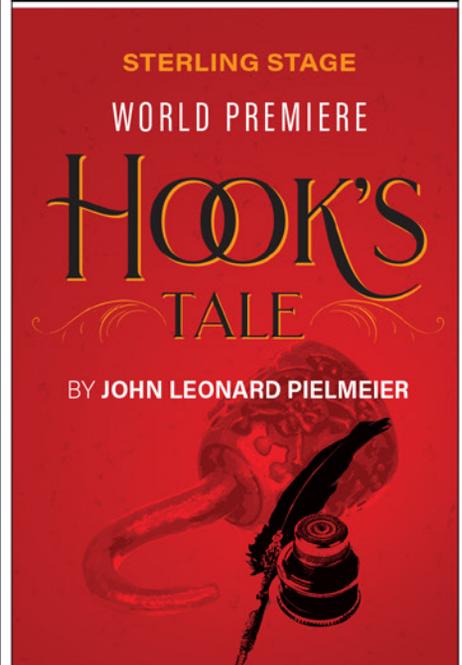
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Niccolo S. is filled with excitement at his London Debut at the Royal Academy of Music, July 15th 2019

MARLI IS STILL TAKING PRIVATE LESSONS FOR A YEAR AT THE BELLAIRE LOCATION AND, “STILL GOING STRONG, HER PROGRESS HAS BEEN INCREDIBLE! HER MUSIC ABILITIES HAVE GROWN SO MUCH, BUT THE POSITIVE IMPACT THE MUSIC LESSONS HAVE HAD ON HER OVERALL DEVELOPMENTAL GROWTH HAS BEEN THE ICING ON THE CAKE.”

The benefits of music lessons are seemingly endless. Read how Marli began music lessons at Vivaldi Music Academy and the benefits she still enjoying: <http://www.abeautifulrawr.com/2018/09/05/benefits-of-learning-music-with-vivaldi-music-academy/>

Pavlovic, who is a violinist and father said, “One of the greatest lessons in life is recognizing your own self-worth. When our students step on stage in a venue that has hosted a menagerie of talent, something happens. They allow themselves to recognize that they belong here, and that they can make it anywhere.”

Vivaldi Music Academy has been on Inc Magazine’s 5000 fastest growing companies in 2018 and most recently 2019! In addition, Vivaldi Music Academy is one of Houston Business Journal’s 100 fastest growing companies in 2018 and 2019.

Begin helping your child make the most out of music! Call or visit one of our three locations in Houston

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5+ reasons every child needs music lessons

by Vivaldi Music Academy

You’ve seen the joy in your child’s eyes – that light that shines when they’re in awe of something new, or they understand a fresh concept. We see it too – in Vivaldi Music Academy students! Creating music has an incredible way of inspiring growth and joy in children, but those aren’t its only benefits.

So how can music lessons benefit your child?

1. IT OPENS UP A WHOLE NEW WORLD OF SOUND:

Children who spend two or more years practicing and creating music develop the ability to distinguish sounds their non-musical peers can’t. These abilities can help children develop expansive language and reading skills.

2. BOOST MEMORY:

Practicing an instrument helps boost memory performance and harnesses pattern recognition skills. This allows children (and

adults!) to focus and learn more efficiently.

3. BUILDS CONFIDENCE:

Children who perform in front of crowds develop greater self-confidence and get to enjoy that incredible feeling of having accomplished a goal.

4. BENEFITS ARE MAINTAINED THROUGHOUT LIFE:

Practicing helps develop new and stronger pathways for communication across hemispheres, which improves cognitive abilities. Those benefits are maintained into adulthood. In short, the music lessons you provide for your child now will give them long lasting advantages.

5. DISCOVER THE JOY OF MUSIC:

Children develop skills that can take them to new heights socially. Music gives children the

confidence to connect well with their peers, friends and family.

ABOUT VIVALDI MUSIC ACADEMY

Vivaldi Music Academy opened its first Houston location in 2013. In under six years, the company has faced tremendous growth – teaching thousands of music students of all ages throughout Houston. With three locations in West University, Bellaire and Memorial, Vivaldi Music Academy offers private music lessons and classes to over 1800 students. As the largest music academy in the nation, Vivaldi Music Academy students thrive from high quality music education and garner opportunities to perform in some of the most highly recognized music halls in the nation. In 2019, students had the opportunity to perform in London at the Royal Academy of Music.

Vivaldi Music Academy’s CEO and Founder, Zeljko

family arts & culture guide



River Oaks Chamber Orchestra
photo credit Joel Luks

A.D. PLAYERS AT THE GEORGE

A.D. Players is one of Houston's oldest and largest resident theatre companies, located in the heart of Houston's Galleria. A.D. Players seeks to produce compelling theatre, from a Christian world-view, that engages a diverse audience.

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Located 20 minutes from downtown Houston at Ellington Airport, the Lone Star Flight Museum is all about the wonder of flight. Visit LONESTARFLIGHT.ORG for tickets, discount offers and more museum information or follow us on Facebook and Instagram.

GET TO KNOW THE OWNERS OF HOUSTON'S

Young Rembrandts



Cecilia Pena



Federico Pena



Sonja Nwabuko

While simultaneously trying to balance busy careers and raise a family, husband and wife duo Federico and Cecilia Pena felt like they were being pulled in every direction, so, they decided to make a career change. They wanted something that would allow them to create their own schedules and spend more time with their family, but most importantly, they wanted an opportunity that would have a positive impact on the community in Houston.

Similarly, entrepreneur Sonja Traxler Nwabuko worked in the corporate world for many years, but she found herself drawn to the idea of working with children. She wanted an opportunity that would put her business skills to the test while also making an impact on the lives of children.

While this seemed like a tall order for both, the Penas and Sonja found everything they were looking for in Young Rembrandts.

Young Rembrandts is a national leader in art education and offers programs for children starting as early as 3.5 years to 12 years. With a unique step-by-step process, Young Rembrandts curriculum is based on the philosophy

that ‘anyone can draw’. The program uses simple shapes to break down complicated pieces, creating masterpieces worthy of Rembrandt himself.

The Penas opened their first location in August of 2016 in North Houston. Sonja recently opened her Southwest Houston location in October 2018. Following the success of the Penas’ first location and the fulfillment they received day in and day out from running their Young Rembrandts business, the Penas decided to open a second location in West Houston in 2019.

“Our goal is to provide art education for as many children as we can,” said Federico, who formerly worked in the oil and gas industry. “The success of our first location coupled with the joy of making art more easily accessible to children in the area has reminded us just how important cultural enrichment is to the community. We’ve seen kids make great strides – cognitively, developmentally, and artistically. There is nothing more satisfying than seeing a child excitedly showcase their artwork to their parents and proudly state they created the piece from start to finish.”

The Penas and Sonja bring their classes to schools and park districts in the

area. Their busiest season is during the school year, as Young Rembrandts serves as a popular after-school program. Cecilia, Federico, and Sonja believe Young Rembrandts is an essential part of a child’s growth because it provides them with an activity that makes them eager and motivated to go to school. After-school art programs like Young Rembrandts provides a number of benefits for children, such as heightened social skills, safety and supervision, boosted confidence and a sense of belonging.

“I love the idea that we’re doing something to bring more joy and beauty to the world,”

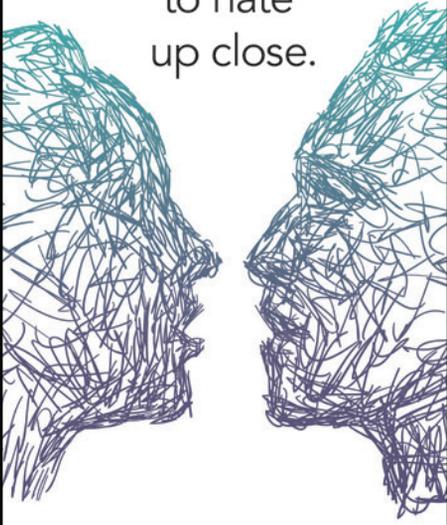
added Sonja. “It’s extremely rewarding to be able to empower these kids and show them that they can do whatever they set their minds to by staying on task, organizing their minds and following a process.”

For more information on the program, visit www.youngrembrandts.com.



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