

Taking Center Stage

Written by LeiLani Ochoada



In the Limelight students (l. to r.) Brendan Rothman, Paige Pedersen, Julia Corrie, Parker Wallace, Niki

W hat started three years ago as an acting studio offering n

“One of the reasons we started with a focus on straight plays is because there are many kids who don’t

In her more than 22 years of experience working with youth actors, she discovered that many were not r

“They were reading the lines and pretending, but they weren’t becoming the genuine character,” Corrie s

By employing what is known as the “Method,” students use a mix of the five senses and their emotional

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“We strive to choose plays that are based on books, because the educational component is very important.”

She also served as a faculty member for YMCA’s USA Arts and Humanities program, traveling the nation.

In Orlando, she has taught and directed at Orlando Repertory Theatre, Orlando Youth Theatre and L.A.

When she began the acting school, Corrie would rehearse her students at community centers and perform.

“We had props, costumes and other stuff spread around in storage all over the place,” she said.

Today, In the Limelight occupies an expansive 3,500-square-foot facility that houses storage, a stage, music room, and classrooms.

“I wanted my students to make the decisions as to how the studio would appear,” Corrie said. “From the beginning, we wanted it to be a place where students could feel ownership.”

Throughout the years, Corrie has collected lights, sound systems and other equipment essential to operating a theater.

Though there is not a formalized theater technician program as of yet, Corrie will teach interested students about the technical aspects of theater.

“We hope to offer a tech class soon,” she said. “Not everyone who loves theater wants to be onstage.”

“Some people may have the misconception that youth theater will not be high quality. They choose an activity that is more structured and less creative.”

Students do a lot of research on the characters, time periods, cultures, geography of the settings, props, and costumes.

Though In the Limelight’s foundation stays true to traditional theater with play performances during the school year, it also offers musical theater.

The staff at In the Limelight is committed to longevity and building relationships with the students. According to Corrie, “It’s about the people.”

“Our instructors bring a high level of experience and professionalism, but also are able to connect with the students and make it fun.”

Elisabeth Drake serves as music director, teaching piano and voice, as well as directing the music for all productions.

Beginners and intermediate classes cover the theater basics and focus on skill development. Advanced classes focus on character development and stagecraft.

Musical theater-focused tap and jazz dance lessons are available for those age 3 and older, and hip-hop classes are available for those age 10 and older.

If there is one thing Corrie wants to stress it is that In the Limelight is an anti-bully zone.

“From the first time a kid walks through our door, they know it is a safe place where they won’t be made fun of or bullied.”

Her students presented *Secret Life of Girls*, an anti-bullying play about middle school girls, to a local public school.

“I don’t have any discipline problems,” she said about her students. “Everyone realizes that we are creating a safe space for everyone.”

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***In the Limelight* is located [at Levin Stein 101 at 555 S. Kirkman Ave. in Orlando. For more information](#)**
