

Camp Arena Stage to Hold Open House

BY: SHEILA WICKOUSKI

Put a bit of June in January! The Camp Arena Stage Open House, which will take place on Jan. 13, is just the ticket to get a taste of summer.

Camp Arena Stage Co-Director Rebecca Campana came here in 2004, from a tiny town near Buffalo, NY, for a four-month internship. She worked on the initial research about starting a camp, along with Anita Maynard-Losh, co-founder and director of community engagement.

This is the 14th summer of Camp Arena Stage and Campana has been there for all of them. As she says, “It’s our teenager now!”

At Camp Arena Stage, each camper creates a schedule of five daily activities. At the Open House, campers-to-be can sample many of these workshops. (And while the older set is sampling, their younger siblings can participate in face painting and craft projects throughout the day.)

There are 75 possible choices at the camp. “There would be a mutiny on our hands” says Campana, “if we did not have classic activities every summer like hip-hop dance, sports, filmmaking, improvisation, solo voice, rock band, newspaper, and improvisation—but the final activity list is decided when the staff is hired.”

The teachers are working artists, many



of whom have their own companies and have been nominated for Helen Hayes Awards. “All are great at working with kids,” but, as Campana explained, sometimes they also have an unusual specialty to teach. “For example, our painting teacher also teaches Chinese brush painting and calligraphy. Because of instructors’ specialties we’ve been able to offer silent movie, pop/rock voice, electronic dance music, clowning, mime, brand design, and weirdism.”

One story that Rebecca shared—and what many campers have experienced—is how artists grow over time when they do not have the pressure to perform. She mentioned one young lady who started coming when she was nine years old. “She loved to sing but had terrible stage fright. For four years, she couldn’t perform her solo, even though she wanted to badly

and her parents were in the audience. Then, when she was 14, she did it, and the expression on her face was triumphant! Her voice teacher and I stood in the back and cried. This young woman is applying to colleges now and sent me her college admissions essay. It was about her time at Camp Arena Stage.”

So what are the campers like? Campana explained that there are about 175 kids in each session who come from all over the DMV area for a diverse community in every sense of the word.

At Camp Arena Stage, Campana says, everyone is an artist: “creative, sensitive, loud, introspective, caring, insightful, smart, and sometimes silly. Every day campers can share what they’ve been working on at camp, a talent from home, or an act they’ve made with a friend. They form the most supportive arts community I can imagine, because they all love art.”

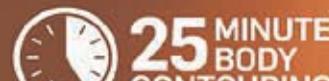
One camper said it best: “By far the most beautiful piece of art to come out of camp this year, in my opinion, was the masterpiece of a com-

munity we built together, painted with the people of all shapes, sizes, and personalities, all brought together in one place by one simple thing: a love of art.”

The Camp Arena Stage Open House will take place from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, Jan 13. The event is free and children ages eight to 15 are welcome to participate in sample workshops and classes. No reservations are required.

Camp Arena Stage at Georgetown Visitation Preparatory School (1524 35th St. NW) will have two runs. There is a four-week intensive from June 25 to July 20, and a two-week session from July 23 to Aug. 3. The sessions run Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., with early drop-off and extended days available for an additional fee.

Summer registration details are available at arenastage.org/education/camp-arena-stage/. There is also a need-based scholarship program, details for which can be found at www.arenastage.org/camp. Scholarship applications are due by March 19.



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