

IN SOUTH WINDSOR

A little bit of Broadway

with the Performing Arts Summer Project



Performing Arts Summer Project students rehearse a scene from "Once on This Island, Jr." at South Windsor High School. Shown from left are: Thomas Neal, 11; Michael Arias, 10; Connor Madsen; and Kate Marchesseault, 11. The actors will present the play on Friday.

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Journal Inquirer

By Kory Loucks
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SOUTH WINDSOR — It's lights, camera, action, and loads of fun for almost 80 youths who are participating in the Performing Arts Summer Project offered for the first time through the South Windsor Parks and Recreation Department.

Although the program has been offered for years at the Bushnell Performing Arts Center, this year it moved to South Windsor.

Michael Lamb, whose teaching studio is in town, is the event's director, and said he is thrilled to bring the program to South Windsor.

"Their energy is unbelievable," Lamb said of the participants. "They leave here singing songs."

About 70 percent of the youths come from town, while the others attend from neighboring towns and as far away as Massachusetts, Lamb said.

The participants range in age from 6 to 17.

The one-week program runs from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, and is open to all youths, while auditions are required to participate in the two-week program, which runs from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. during the week.

Participants in the weeklong program will present scenes and perform songs at the end of the week, and those in the two-week program will perform the musical "Once on this Island, Jr." on Friday, July 29.

"Our goal is for them to have a lot of fun and learn," Lamb said. Their days are highly organized, with multiple groups rehearsing concurrently in what can only be described as controlled chaos.

In addition to the rehearsals, Lamb brought two Broadway guest artists to perform for the students, answer questions, and tell them what it's like to make a living on stage.

Sherry Boone and Andrew Shipman, 13, from Glastonbury, a student of Lamb's who played Michael Banks in "Mary Poppins" on Broadway last year, visited on separate days during the first week and shared their experiences as professional actors.

Last week, Boone burst onto the South Windsor High School auditorium stage, singing "I Could Have Danced All Night" from "My Fair Lady," one of her favorite roles.

She then engaged the students with stories of her theatrical career, telling them stories about having worked with actors such as

Gregory Hines and Ruby Dee.

Micaela Powers-Mesite, 10, and Eythan Jiang, 11, are participating in the two-week program, and having a terrific time.

"I love to dance," Powers-Mesite said. The articulate and confident South Windsor resident already does tap, jazz, and ballet, and holds a black belt in karate.

Powers-Mesite said she was excited about the afternoon schedule, where they were organizing the show's special effects and participating in games that would help them with their characterizations and singing.

"The teachers are really nice and they know what they are doing," Powers-Mesite said.

Jiang, who also lives in town, is enjoying his experience with the summer arts program.

"I love it because the teachers teach me new things," Jiang said, adding, "It's a good place to make new friends."

"Once Upon an Island, Jr." will play at 1:30 and 6:30 p.m. on Friday, July 29. Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$10 for children 12 and younger.

For more information and to purchase tickets, call 860-432-9890 or visit:

www.lambtheatricals.org