

## Theatre group allows students to take show on the road

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EMC Entertainment A Metcalfe theatre group is allowing the show to go on for high school students interested in being on stage.

Just Kiddin' Theatre, a drama program that offers dramatic arts to students, is expanding their program for the 2009-10 season.

The theatre group's regular Mainstage program, for students aged nine to 13, focuses on skills development and theatre games, culminating in the performance of an original play in March.

The new addition is a program called Stagecraft, aimed at students 13 years of age and older.

"Many of our participants from the past are growing up and want to continue and we want the opportunity to challenge them a bit more," said Andrie Nel, program director for Just Kiddin'.

Stagecraft participants will take a more hands-on approach in creating a production that they will eventually tour at local elementary schools, said Ms. Nel.

"They might choose a theme or a message and develop a story around it," she added.

Participants will be in charge of writing their own scripts, deciding how many performances they wish to mount and at which schools to perform.

"We'll let them decide as a group for the program to be as demanding as they like," said Ms. Nel.

Stagecraft developed from a desire of some participants who wanted to work in an older group setting, Ms. Nel explained.

"We're finding there's a stronger diversity of age in the original group."

Additional resources in the form of volunteers will also help the new program along. A co-director who is also a drama and history teacher will join Ms. Nel in facilitating Stagecraft.

Ms. Nel, who writes the scripts for the yearly productions herself, said some students have expressed an interest in writing and that this new program will give them the opportunity to explore that.

"I think I've modeled for them that anyone can do it," she said.

Due to the extra academic pressures and commitments that older students have to contend with, Stagecraft is less strict than the Mainstage program.

If the group feels they are ready to tour sooner than March, they can begin organizing performances earlier. However, if they do not feel they can take the time out of school to perform more than two shows, for example, that is also their call.

Although the program is recommended for youth with prior theatre experience anyone who is interested in joining is welcome, as there are no auditions to get in.

"Any child who wants a chance to perform will have a chance, regardless of their ability," noted Ms. Nel.

In fact, the desire to give everyone the opportunity to perform is what inspired Ms. Nel to begin writing the scripts in the first place.

"There weren't a large enough set of parts that were meaty enough that weren't just one lead and the chorus," she said.

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