

Registrations for theater camp open until Monday

By RACHEL COLEMAN

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Young theater fans flocked to the first session of Liberal's Broadway Academy of Performing — BAP — earlier this summer. In just 10 days, a second session is about to begin, with a one-week whirlwind of dance, drama and singing to produce Rodgers & Hammerstein's musical Cinderella.

"We're still accepting applications until Monday, July 14," said director Alison Bridget Chambers. "The camp begins at noon on Saturday, July 20."



Chambers, a former BAP camper herself, said the second session is a dream come true for young theater fans.

"When I was a student, BAP was always the first week of June, and when it ended, that was very sad. We'd all go home and spend the summer getting together with friends we made at

BAP, and wishing we could go back,” Chambers recalled. “So the second session — that’s wonderful for the kids.”

BAP opens enrollment to students ages 11 to 20, and Chambers produces musicals that are role-rich and age-appropriate. Cinderella should be a hit, she noted.

“It’s a beautiful story that everyone can relate to,” she said, “and there are lots of roles. Last summer we produced another Rodgers and Hammerstein work, “The Sound of Music,” and it was a big hit. We want to give people more of what they enjoy.”

With a cast of about 20 campers, Chambers plans to stage a lush and entertaining, full-version production of the play that recently reopened on Broadway.

“We have the talent for it, we have the voices for it, we have the technical side covered — a company donated a carriage for us to use, which is really, really great,” she said. “I’m really excited.”

That adrenaline-fueled passion is a requirement, because BAP “is kind of like Broadway boot camp,” said Chambers. “It’s the closest thing to professional experience I’ve been involved with, or that these kids are likely to experience.” On the real Broadway, Chambers pointed out, “with professional work, the show is your life. That’s what you do. You rehearse all day, you perform at night, you eat, breathe and sleep theatre.”

BAP replicates that experience, holding auditions just hours after campers check in at noon on Saturday. By 5 p.m., the newly-assembled cast is reading through the script, and rehearsals begin after breakfast the next day. Students must learn their lines in three days, as the show goes “off book” on Thursday. Dress rehearsals run through Friday, and the final performance takes the stage at 2 p.m. July 27.

“This is very intense, immersion-type work,” Chambers said, “but it’s also a lot of fun. If you end up not liking theater, it’s only one week of your life. But it’s my experience that everyone gets hooked. The kids are bitten by the theater bug, and they want more.”

Evidence that she's right? More than half the campers registered for Cinderella are return "BAPers" and new names are still arriving in the mail and via the website.

Chambers hopes to see more by the time the young actors line up to register on June 20.

"Exposing your kids to the arts in this way teaches team effort, leadership, obedience — very important stuff for individuals and the community. What makes Liberal thrive, what makes it the well-rounded, vibrant community it is, involves the arts, and this is a way to value that," Chambers said. "Plus, it's just so delightful. We're exposing the kids to music, dance, theater, the art of costuming and visual arts. It's all the work of people who love what they're doing, and I love that. Who wouldn't want to set aside all the everyday problems, and go live in this world of Cinderella for a week?"

BAP registration closes Monday, and the camp begins the following Saturday, July 20. Those interested can visit the camp's website at www.broadwayacademyofperforming.com. Or they may email Chambers at gypsytheatercompany@yahoo.com. Cost for the camp is \$400. Tickets for the performance at 2 p.m. July 27 are \$5 for children and \$10 for adults.