

***CHILDREN'S EXPERIMENTAL THEATRE  
CLASSICAL THEATRE ARTS  
CONSERVATORY  
PROGRAM  
&  
SUMMER INTENSIVE***

***PARENT HANDBOOK  
2009-2010***

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***(Revised 4/09)***

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# **Children's Experimental Theatre**

## *History, Mission & Philosophy*

### **History & Mission**

**CET began in 1960, in the Old Golden Bough/Circle Theatre, as Marcia Hovick filled in temporarily for a girl's theatre class teacher ... What was temporary became permanent and Children's Experimental Theatre was born. CET spent its infancy at the Golden Bough's Circle Theatre. Soon, so many students wanted to participate, that CET had to move to its present home at the Indoor Forest Theatre in 1969.**

**CET began through the vision that its founder, Marcia Gambrell Hovick, had of a children's theatre program that emphasized both physical, intellectual and performance training. She saw involvement with great theatre classics as audience members and appreciation as participants to be crucial to the student's development of skills. This meant that working in historical period was a necessity.**

**From period dance to fencing, speech work to research of historical events and periods, mime and stage combat, character work and improvisation, a students' skills would be developed in a classical and "renaissance" manner. In order to focus this classical training it was necessary to produce period productions, and that required period costumes! Mrs. Hovick had done costumes during the first two years, with the help of some CET parents. As CET grew however, this became more than a little problematic.**

**In 1962, Loel B. Shuler joined CET with her considerable skills as Costumer and Associate Director. She produced her considerable magic of costuming all CET productions as well as Traveling Troupe and Staff Players' productions over the ensuing four decades. What looked like Goodwill donations would become period costumes for 20, or 50, or 100 characters! Equally as important, she brought her invaluable skills in speech work and, through her considerable humanities education, her incomparable gift of insight into both children and character development, a substantial patience, and a nurturing good humor.**

**As there has always been a lack of classical material scripted expressly for children, Mrs. Hovick wrote the scripts to be used for the year-end productions. Still the playwright for all the children's productions, many are either adapted from mythology and fairy tales, or historical events are carefully researched and scripted for presentation at the Spring Play Festival. Older students can also produce classics from Moliere, Shaw, Shakespeare, Euripides, Giraudoux or other classical playwrights. Mrs. Hovick continues to be the resident playwright for all Children's Theatre and Traveling Troupe productions.**

As CET grew in popularity, it became obvious even in the 1960s that there was a void to be filled in the arts programming of public schools. Mrs. Hovick believed that for children to receive a fully rounded education, they needed to be exposed to the gifts that classical theatre could impart. And so Traveling Troupe was born in 1965/1966. The idea was to tour the same classical production, with four or five casts of children from the regular CET classes, to county elementary schools free of charge. Up to 25,000 children a year get the opportunity to see classical theatre performed by other children. Children performing for other children does more to convince children of their own limitless possibilities than almost any other form of presentation.

It became obvious that for CET students to see the full impact of their training, there needed to be an adult vehicle for production. And staff members, in order to maintain their own skills, needed to be able to perform in classical works on a regular basis. Staff Players Repertory Company (SPRC) was formed and produced its first season in 1969/1970. Composed of staff and a variety of local acting talent, it has produced classics from Shaw, Euripides, Sophocles, Betti, Moliere, Barrie, Goldoni, Shakespeare, Ibsen, Udall, Synge, Pirandello, Lorca, Chekhov, Giraudoux, as well as original works from Pakistan, Hungary and Ireland, and many others. The performers contribute their work and all proceeds go to help support the children's programs. More than even a fundraising arm for CET, SPRC is the second level of training for CET students; it gives a crucial example to our students of what their work can become. A picture is truly worth a thousand words, and a performance is worth a thousand pictures!

All through the development and evolution of CET, SPRC and Traveling Troupe, the constant in philosophy and essential vision emphasized the ensemble process – everyone is crucial, everyone has some talent, everyone has a sense of creativity to be developed, everyone has something to contribute and is needed in the interpretation of this experience we call life. And most especially, all children have these unique gifts and need to be supported in their explorations of those gifts.

Because the staff believe so strongly in the child's right and even mandate to explore themselves and this world through the creative process, CET will always be open to any student without audition. All students will perform because all students are a crucial part of every creation. This is where a student can develop and explore him or herself, without any more parameters than the self-discipline necessary to make an ensemble production work. And once they have tasted this freedom to develop and explore, they are changed into thoughtful, responsible, and contributing members of a society. Like any commitment, the student retains what he has put into the experience. These skills will stay with them through their entire lives in the larger adult community.

CET staff has seen this miracle of personal development happen over and over again. Both CET and SPRC have had a strong and significant impact on live performance and performers on the Central Coast. At least 2 major, local theatres

**have been founded by CET/Staff Players graduates. Other graduates have carried the skills they learned at CET into their careers in law, medicine, international relations, film, stage, business and education. We know this because they have told us so; the skills they learned with us have benefited them in every area of their lives!**

**As CET forges ahead into the millenium, new levels of challenge will be offered and new staff continue to work at creating a strong center for study of the classics and performance skills for both children and young adults.**

**The Young Actors Company revived itself into performance in Spring, 2003. This special company, made up of senior CET class students and young adults, is sometimes available to tour to confined populations in area residential homes, Juvenile Hall, Boys Ranch, and area high schools, upon request.**

**For adults, CET/SPRC continues to offer various opportunities for the adult actor, newcomer or stage aficionado to learn or hone their craft in classical theatre arts. Sampling from Stage Combat, Improvisation, Reader's Theatre, Classical Theatre Literature, and Acting are just some of the opportunities for area adults to expand their horizons – or merely keep the machine well-oiled – that SPRC has offered. More offerings for adults in classical theatre arts training will be offered as it is available– continued training options offer serious classical theatre arts study for the serious local working actor as well as the novice. Check our website often for listings at [www.cetstaffplayers.org](http://www.cetstaffplayers.org) or contact us for further information.**

**With a wealth of local, talented and experienced instructors in theatre arts, CET and SPRC offers a renaissance education and succeeding levels of challenge in the classical theatre arts for all ages.**

**We are grateful for your participation and happy to welcome you to the CET family! We hope your child finds the experience to be one that lasts a lifetime!**

***CHILDREN'S EXPERIMENTAL THEATRE, INC.***  
***HISTORY OF THE SUMMER INTENSIVE & BREAK SESSIONS***

It became apparent in 1987 that there was a need for additional programming to serve students unable to attend during the regular CET school year program. The Summer Intensive also needed to provide different content from that offered during the Year Conservatory program.

The then development director, along with staff members, designed a series of classes over four weeks to include Bodywork, Movement, blends of Aikido and other physical conditioning disciplines, Stage Combat, Dance, Music and Voice, Mime, Storytelling, Properties Construction, Scenic Artistry and Design, Maskmaking, Makeup, Playwriting, Costuming, and some basics in Technical theatre – design and construction.

Using a variety of gifted and experienced teachers, many running their own full-time businesses in their chosen field, CET launched The Summer Intensive in 1988. It has grown and developed over the years and offers an opportunity to both the novice and experienced student to learn about areas of knowledge in theatre arts not often experienced in general performance training.

We intend that the Summer Intensive give an introduction to the novice and a taste of new areas of interest to the experienced student. For the parent looking for an opportunity for their child not only to enjoy their summer break but learn some new things about themselves, it is a wonderful chance for the parent to enjoy *their* summer break, as well!

After almost two decades, we have decided that the idea is a hit! We intend to continue this adjunct to our regular year programming and have elaborated on it by offering Break Sessions and Special Topics Classes whenever the calendar allows. See our website for announcements during the year at [www.cetstaffplayers.org](http://www.cetstaffplayers.org).

The Break Sessions were designed and first offered in 2000/2001. These five-day intensive immersions in period theatrical cultures are designed to take a student through the variety of sub-disciplines that compose the panoply of theatre arts training – but with a twist. Each session focuses on several contrasting cultures at particular time periods from around the world through the eyes and experience of the actors, playwrights, designers, performers and artisans of the times.

Thus far, CET has offered The Ancient Ones in the Fall (the Celts, Romans & Greeks), The Middle Ages (Russia, the Middle East – the Sufies - & The Guilds of Britain), and The Renaissance (the European tradition – Britain, France Italy, the Americas and China) ~ both in the Spring.

These introductory sessions are appropriate for either experienced CET students, many of whom don't have the time to delve with any depth into the sub-

**disciplines – juggling, costume history, swordplay, and more - or the new student wanting to learn about all the diversity of theatre arts from different times and places - all the richness that makes theatre arts such a wonderful and diverse life study! And there's a lot of fun to be had in the learning of it all!**

**Although we have had to temporarily postpone our Break Sessions, we hope to again offer them to students during the coming years. We hope you will be there to join us!**

## Teaching Philosophy

**CET's philosophy of classwork and stagework is based on four convictions: First, that children of all ages are seeking to know the truths about human beings – what makes them tick, how they relate to one another, and what goals they may pursue. Just as toddlers copy everything from shaving to lipstick, so all young people need to play lots of roles, improvised and scripted, in perceiving their relationship to themselves and one another.**

**Second, that sharpening perceptions sharpens one's humanity: seeing, rather than looking, focused listening, smelling, touching, and tasting clarifies one's space in the world. Awareness and concentration, when harnessed to the intent to communicate something, make speech, movement, intellect and posture powerful.**

**Third, through centering ourselves in where we are and what we want to express to others, there is no medium more inclusive than drama. It helps one develop the strength and expressions of the body, it teaches articulate speech and vocal color, it allows each of us to experience the lives of others using the self as instrument.**

**In CET we work with historical period, dance, stage combat, language, on the principal that to know who we are, we need to know where we came from --- Theatre games, improvisation and finally, creating the world of a script, lends confidence to each child. The arts connect young people to the real world, to their passions, to what it means to be alive.**

**Lastly, the emphasis at CET is on working in the ensemble. So much of what we do in this world depends upon our ability to work with different kinds of people in groups, that it is critical to a person's success in life that CET focuses on this crucial part of our human development. This emphasis prepares children to work together towards a common goal, setting aside their own position in the spotlight for the ultimate good of the entire group's accomplishment. To focus on the creation, and not simply on their part of the creation, allows each child to foster their own self-discipline and self-esteem as well as that of their fellows'.**

**No production is strong when parts of it are overlooked, and no performer is better than the newest or weakest in the group. It's a process that prepares the students to be leaders in their chosen fields later in life. It prepares them to resolve differences based on the variety of human accomplishment and ability that is part of the fabric of our lives as adults. To learn that it is the trip, not always and not only the destination that matters – is a beneficial lesson they can take into their lives anywhere they choose to go. To learn to assist all members of one's group – to learn to step back from the limelight when necessary to foster a strong sense of accomplishment amongst the entire group - will stand them in good stead no matter their chosen field of endeavor. It is a brave and sometimes strange new world our children will inhabit out there – theatre experience will help them confirm honesty, observation and enthusiasm as indispensable tools for living ...**

## *Parent Participation & Volunteer Activities*

We want to welcome parents into the CET family and familiarize you with the many ways you can participate in activities along with your young people. One of the most significant financial and ideological supports of CET is Staff Players Repertory Company. SPRC offers a full season of classical and original plays with adult performers from our very active theatre community ~ and sometimes experienced and capable students of CET. One of the important aspects of SPRC is that it offers our young students a chance to see where their work can lead, and often an opportunity to sometimes see their teachers in performance.

We encourage parents to see the shows. It supports CET and provides you and your family a wonderful “night out” of good classical theatre! With the parent Two-Fer, you can enjoy a performance for two for the price of one person! We welcome our students as ushers and to see the plays for free; as CET students, they can get \$1 off regular child prices – they can see a show for only \$5! We also welcome parents to audition for parts if they are interested in performing themselves. If you have always harbored an urge to try your hand at acting or volunteer in theatre production - even if you have little experience, this is a great chance to give it a fling!

We welcome volunteers to provide refreshments for each night’s concessions for SPRC performances. Through doing so, you can see the shows for free! All SPRC volunteers receive free tickets for the year to be used any Sunday matinee. (Please see a staff member or email us your contact information to get your free tickets!)

Fundraising is an ever-present need for any non-profit organization like CET. Tuition only covers about 1/4 of the cost of running a theatre, a school and outreach programming. We encourage active participation by parents in all such areas and are always interested in suggestions for fundraising activities we haven’t yet imagined! Contact us for further information on how you can get involved in Fundraising and Special Events!

Other ways of participating include PR distribution & marketing, database entry, plant maintenance, special projects, Spring Play Festival, or Staff Players assistance – both backstage and making and serving concessions - and during Spring Touring. A more detailed list is indicated on the volunteer form included with this packet. We appreciate your filling it out and returning it to us so that we may contact you about participation in the area of your choosing.

We believe the more involved you are with what your children are doing, the more rewarding the experience will be for you, for them and for us. We hope this more extensive registration packet will help you to be better informed about and more involved in CET. For those parents interested in joining as a CET volunteer, helping CET to be a more effective organization, please leave a message for us at the theatre. Your support is crucial! CET has served our community’s children since 1960! We invite you to be an active partner in its future as it transits its 5<sup>th</sup> decade!

## ARTISTIC & TEACHING STAFF

### **Marcia Gambrell Hovick – Art. Director/Founder/Resident Playwright**

Earning a BA in speech and drama at Mills College, Oakland, CA, in 1945, she has performed since age 4. She has worked with children's theatres in Baltimore, Birmingham and Bakersfield, California, has a California Junior College Teaching Credential and has done graduate work at Johns Hopkins University & UT Austin. She founded CET 1960 and inaugurated Staff Players (SPRC) in 1969. She is the Resident Playwright of all children's productions, responsible for teaching, touring and acting for CET and Staff Players Repertory Company. She directs and supervises all artistic operations of CET, Staff Players, and CET Traveling Troupe. Ms. Hovick has written and produced many adult works for the stage, as well as performing her original one-woman historical shows. She has received numerous awards and recognition including an Eminence Credential, acknowledgment of her artistic contribution by the Cultural Commission of Carmel, Leadership Monterey, and many others groups.

### **Jane Press – CET Associate Instructor**

Jane received formal training from Estelle Harmon (former head acting coach, Paramount Pictures). Jane heralds from a stage and performance family and has been a journeyman theatre practitioner for over 30 years. With a deep desire to assist students in developing their inner voices and theatre skills, she brings her expertise and enthusiasm to Children's Experimental Theatre programs. She has performed in many local productions including at SPRC in readings of Kaufmann and Giraudoux and in *Misalliance*, at the Unicorn Theatre in Sideman, Western Stage's *The Philadelphia Story*, *The Laramie Project* at the former Magic Circle Theatre. Jane is very pleased to have the opportunity of working alongside Marcia Hovick at CET. She considers it a great honor and privilege to participate in the children's discovery of the magical life of the theatre.

### **Mark Shuler – Stage Combat Instructor**

Mark holds a BA in Interdisciplinary Humanities, with a Psychology specialty, an MA in Clinical Psychology from John F. Kennedy University and is a Licensed MFT Counselor, addiction and family systems Therapist. He holds a Junior College Teaching Credential in Theatre Arts and Photography, is a CET graduate and has been a CET Theatre Arts Instructor since 1971. He has been the premier Tour Master of the CET Traveling Troupe, and the singular Choreographer of Stage Combat for area theatres for over 25 years. Mark is also a pivotal Summer Intensive Instructor. Mark maintains his private therapy practice, does technical theatre for several companies and occasionally acts in area theatre.

### **Carey Crockett – Scenic Instructor – Tech & Set Design, Scenic Artistry**

A CET graduate, he designed for the Seattle Opera and worked with Mother Goose Theatre for 4 years. He is a graduate of the Seattle Art Institute and degreed in Graphic Arts & Design. His stage designs for area theatres span over 25 years and he has won awards for his work with The Forest Theatre Guild. He has designed sets for many community and professional theatres from Santa Cruz to Salinas to the Peninsula. He has taught high school & middle school students in acting & technical theatre through the Forest Theatre Guild's Intern Program, Monterey, Carmel & Pacific Grove ROP, CET/SPRC and Pacific Grove's City Historical Society. He is Co-Founder/Artistic Director of 16 year-old Unicorn Theatre, and does extensive touring and outreach of both adult & children's productions. He is also a Summer Instructor.

### **Dakota Witt – CET Associate Instructor**

Dakota Witt is a graduate of CET's Conservatory Program and The Traveling Troupe. She went on to attend college and gained her Bachelor of Arts degree in Theatre Arts; she is now back in the area and working with Children's Experimental Theatre as a Associate Instructor in its various programs. Alumni are crucial to carrying on the traditions of CET's teaching philosophy and CET is thrilled to have Dakota back and working with our youngest actors to enlarge their skills and inspire them to widen their scope of knowledge and enjoyment of the many benefits of classical theatre arts. Dakota is also a member of SPRC.



**INDEPENDENT INSTRUCTORS:** Richard Myer ~ Magic; Donna Greenfield ~ Dance – Modern/Yoga; Tai Chi Chuan, Stage Combat, Fencing & Advanced Acting ~ Nick Hovick; Playwriting ~ Lee Brady; Ingrid Tyson ~ Dance; Shannon Miller ~ Voice; John Weiderander ~ Music & Others.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF**

### **Gwyneth Hovick – Managing Director/Assoc. Instructor/Director**

Majoring in Theatre Arts and Anthropology at Monterey Peninsula College, she earned her BA in Forensic Anthropology with a minor focus on Mesoamerican Studies from University of California Berkeley, CA. A founding member of Staff Players, she was a CET graduate in 1973 and has served in all areas of theater production including as CET Instructor/Directorial Assistant 1975-1985, Production Stage Manager SPRC/CET, 1981-85, Acting Technical Director 1984-85, 1985-86 seasons CET/SPRC, Designer of the Summer Drama Intensive as Development Director, 1986-87 & 1987-88, Designer of The Break Sessions, 5-day historical intensive programs in theatre arts, was ET Business Manager since 1991 before becoming the Managing Director in 2000. She has been an Independent Paralegal since 1988, is bilingual in Spanish, and is also the director, teacher and producer of the Young Actors Company, revived in 2002-2003.

## **TECHNICAL STAFF**

### **Nick Hovick – Technical Director/SPRC Director/CET Instructor**

Nick holds a BA, Theatre Arts & Psychology, Lone Mountain College, 1973; Theatre Arts Major, Monterey Peninsula College, Monterey, CA; Theatre Arts Major, UT Austin, TX; Graduate Studies Antioch University; California Teaching Credential, Junior College, in Theatre Arts & Related Technologies; California State Contracting License; Master Carpenter/Master Electrician; CET graduate; Independent Technical Director, Director & Designer for a variety of both community and professional companies locally, in Los Angeles, and in Austin, Texas. Has performed since age 15; has directed numerous productions both locally and in professional companies in Los Angeles, from Shakespeare to Coward, to Moliere and Brandon. Has performed professionally in a variety of mediums for a variety of companies in the Los Angeles area, including voiceovers, stage, film and TV; has taught stage combat, acting, fencing, English, mythic literature, psychology, Tai Chi Chuan, and dialects on the elementary, high school and college level; is an accomplished singer, songwriter and musician on the cello, guitar and piano.

### **Norbert Kammer – Box Office**

Norbert has worked for CET and Staff Players for over 3 decades. As former Business Manager, he is intimately aware of the purpose and mission of both CET and SPRC. He runs our box office with aplomb and genuine appreciation for our audiences and the mission of bringing classical theatre to adults and positive self-awareness to our students. He is an integral and important member of CET & Staff Players!

**CHILDREN'S EXPERIMENTAL THEATRE  
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