

BROADWAY BABIES

State College kids showcase musical talents

By **Brittany Horn**
FOR THE COLLEGIAN

Whether it's the familiar lines of "Africa" or spelling out the word "supercalifragilisticexpialidocious," the kids know it all.

Singing Onstage Studios will present "Broadway Showkids" at 7 p.m. Monday at the State Theatre, 130 W. College Ave. The production features students age five through 12. Admission is \$10, including the box office fee. The show will run a little more than an hour in length with one intermission.

The production features music from "Rent," "Guys and Dolls" and "Glee," along with several others. The children will also perform monologues between songs to break up the singing and provide the children with some acting opportunities, said Heidi Bieber, owner of Singing Onstage Studios and director of the show.

"The kids are really enthusiastic," Bieber said.

"They have the desire to be here."

The show choir, featuring elementary and middle school students, operates on a no-audition necessary policy, with sign-ups occurring before the start of each school "semester," Bieber said.

"Broadway Showkids" is the last show of the year for this particular group of students, but they have performed at other venues such as Barnes and Noble and the Nittany Mall.

Kristy Cyone, marketing director of the State Theatre, said the theater normally covers the professional productions put on by Singing Onstage Studios, but this is a fun way to incorporate the younger kids.

"Their faces light up doing [productions] on that type of stage," Cyone said. "It encourages them to keep performing."

And most of the students do just that, Bieber said.

A majority of the students at the studio have been members for numerous years, she said.

Garrison Pote, 7, of State College, is entering his third year of performance with Singing Onstage Studios, and said he loves the variety of music and shows.

"I really like singing, dancing and acting, and theater has all of that," he said.

His mother, Nicole Pote, said she views the theater as an opportunity to learn more than just acting.

"[Theater] has brought out a whole new side of [Garrison]," Nicole Pote said. "It's given him self-confidence and life skills."

Nicole Pote said her son said he could never imagine himself not being a "Broadway Showkid."

Aside from the talent that students enter

the studio with, Bieber and her husband and co-owner, Richard, also play a huge role in the development of the young stars, Nicole Pote said.

"Heidi has the patience of a saint," she said. "What she can bring out in these kids and their level of talent is amazing."

The studio produces about 20 shows a year, all with students ranging from four through 18 years old. Bieber, along with her husband, both have significant backgrounds in performing and directing, featuring many shows and musical endeavors.

While this is the first year younger performers will perform at the State Theatre, the show promises to be a fun time, Bieber said.

Cyone agreed.

"It makes it more fun for the kids, to get to be on the same stage as these big artists," she said. "It's pretty neat."

Aladdin Jr. flies into Theatre with Singing Onstage

By **Karina Yucel**
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

With Singing Onstage, children are transformed from everyday performers into classic Disney characters.

Singing Onstage will perform "Aladdin Jr." at the State Theatre, 130 W. College Ave., at 7 p.m. Friday, Dec. 17. Tickets are \$10.

Kristy Cyone, marketing director for the State Theatre, said the theater has been working with Singing Onstage since it began, but has just started bringing its children's shows to the theater.

"Singing Onstage asked us if we could bring more performances to the State Theatre," Cyone said. "We have helped them with eight performances this month."

Other plays include "Alice in Wonderland" at 2 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 18 and "Once On This Island" at 3 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 19. All three plays will be performed at the State Theatre, and each includes children from different age groups.

While the show is open to the State College community, Cyone said most of the attendees

If you go

What: Singing Onstage presents "Aladdin Jr."

When: 7 p.m. Friday, Dec. 17

Where: State Theatre, 130 W. College Ave.

Details: Tickets are \$10

are parents and grandparents.

"Aladdin Jr." features children between six and 12 years old, and Heidi Bieber, director of Singing Onstage Studios, said the show was adapted for these younger performers.

"Usually it's older kids, middle and high school, that get to perform," Bieber said.

Bieber said there is no audition process for students who want to perform. Instead, Singing Onstage interviewed potential students and asked each student what show they would like to be a part of.

"If they have an interest, and they are willing to put in the work and come with a great

attitude, we want them," Bieber said.

Bieber said the kids enjoy performing in "Aladdin" because they know the movie.

"It's special to be able to recreate something that you have seen so much of," Bieber said.

"It's just really special to see them doing what they have watched many times."

Paola Ferreri has two children participating in the production of Aladdin.

Katrina, 9, was in a previous performance of Aladdin, so this time, she gets to be a helper to the director, Ferreri said. Christopher, 7, is a part of the performance, she said.

"They love it. They love Heidi. She is a positive, uplifting person. She turns them into performers by the end. It's wonderful to see," said Ferreri, of State College.

For many of Singing Onstage's other productions, there aren't that many chances for performers to wear elaborate costumes, Bieber said.

But the kids in "Aladdin" get to wear costumes and represent a part of a culture different from their own, she said.

"The kids are really enthusiastic," Bieber said. "It's fun to see how much they bring to each rehearsal. They sing from their hearts, stand up in front of a group of people and sing from their toes. It's really inspiring."

Ferreri said her children's favorite part of rehearsals is getting the chance to see the costumes.

"The kids were running around seeing who gets to wear what," Ferreri said.

Ferreri said she is looking forward to seeing the performance at the State Theatre because the previous performance was at Mount Nittany Middle School.

At the State Theatre, more effects are available, like a strobe light and fog, Ferreri said.

In the beginning of the rehearsals, parents are skeptical of how the performance will turn out — but the shows are always a success, Ferreri said.

"In the beginning you are looking at them, going, 'Really?'" Ferreri said. "And Heidi pulls it together wonderfully."

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