



When Spring Mason teaches children to act, she emphasizes three rules: "The first is have fun, the second is be brave and the third is encourage others."

Child's Play

Buckhead resident Spring Mason teaches children the art of acting

STORY: Amanda Morris

Spring Mason never wanted to be a star, but she has headlined in many theater productions around Atlanta. These days, she prefers to stay behind the scenes, teaching acting to thousands of Buckhead children. "I truly love teaching," says Mason, the artistic director and owner of the Buckhead-based Atlanta Children's Theatre Company.

When Mason started high school, her family moved from Miami to Conyers. She wanted to shake her homesickness and decided to join a drama club. "I almost accidentally fell into the theater," explains Mason. "This lady handed me a piece of paper and asked me to read it. I didn't even know enough to be afraid or nervous. I just started reading, and my mind immediately went into that imagination." This started her life-long love of theater. After Mason graduated from high school, she acted in her first professional production, *OklaHoma!*, at the former Peachtree Playhouse.

Mason performed in theater productions during college summers while attending the University of Georgia. She earned a bachelor's in journalism with a major in radio-TV-film and a minor in acting. In Mason's last semester, she made a pivot in her career path. On the advice of her professor, she auditioned for a part in the MFA graduate students' thesis play. She was cast in a lead role as an undergraduate, and the head of the drama department offered her a full acting scholarship for a master's degree. "Other than an internship at CNN, I never worked in journalism. The theater has always pulled me back in," she recalls.

The Buckhead resident has performed throughout Atlanta, including at Horizon Theatre, Theatrical Outfit and Theatre Gael. She was also a performer in the Resident Acting Company at the Academy Theatre in Midtown, where she was first asked to teach an adult acting class. She continued work as a teaching artist for the drama department of the Governor's Honors Program, where she taught gifted and tal-

ented high school students. She then shifted into directing, first with GHP and then at Peachtree Presbyterian Church, where she directed the Vacation Bible School program and large group worship services for elementary and pre-school children.

In 2007, Mason launched Atlanta Children's Theatre Company. "It is a culmination of two great loves of my life: acting and teaching," says Mason of starting her business. "I was following my heart."

Mason's company travels to many Buckhead and city schools, and teaches theater in after-school programs. "My motto is: have drama, will travel!" says Mason, who also has a small studio in Little Five Points. "I'd love to expand our ability to do full children's productions closer to Buckhead."

The company holds summer camps at The Lovett School, Pace Academy and other locations. The camps typically range from a week-long option for first through sixth graders working on their musical theater skills and rehearsal techniques to a two-week advanced course for fifth

to ninth graders that culminates with a full musical production. Additionally, Mason offers coaching, classes, workshops, casting help and a partnership with the Horizon Theatre in Little Five Points for the annual production of *Madeline's Christmas*, which she directs.

In her limited free time, Mason enjoys singing, doing voice-over work and painting. But her true joy is seeing children's eyes light up when they learn something new. She believes theater gives children confidence, teaches them to move forward after rejection and to face their fears.

"I'm so grateful that I've had this opportunity to mix these two great passions—theater/storytelling and children. It's a blessing and a privilege," says Mason. ■

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