

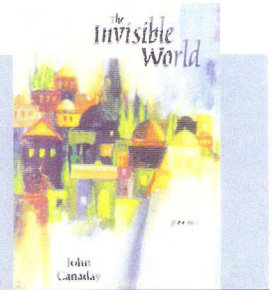
Arlington arts

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Poems of Jordan

John Canaday recently published a book of poetry inspired by his time in Jordan.

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A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF ARTS NEWS AND EVENTS AROUND ARLINGTON

Improv takes hold in Arlington

StageCoach wants people to laugh, expand their minds

By Les G. Masterson
STAFF WRITER

There is an improv troupe that regularly performs on Maple Street that may not have the vocal ability of Whose Line is it Anyway's Wayne Brady, but brings humor, energy and spontaneity to the Senior Center.

"In pure improv, you're always trying to come up with 'what's next, what's bigger' and it kind of builds," said Larry Jay Tish of StageCoach.

StageCoach is comprised of Arlington, Cambridge and Belmont residents, ranging in professions from social worker to salesman and everything in between.

StageCoach rose from Wig Kitchen, another improv group. The foursome spun off to form StageCoach two years ago.

"Wig Kitchen was mostly a laboratory for theater artists who wanted to experiment with improv," said Arlington resident Nancy Capaccio of StageCoach. "We were interested in theater in the moment."

Wig Kitchen wanted scenes of dramatic interest that might include current events and human dynamics.

"We were interested in seeing what happens when you really present something to another actor and build and create something together," she said.

The four StageCoach actors (Tish, Capaccio, Belmont resident Jen Ulin and Arlingtonian Felix Treitler) also wanted to combine their love of improv with their business experience.

"We decided we like to do this... We said 'wouldn't it be great if we could make money doing this?'" said Tish of Cambridge, who grew up in Brooklyn. "All of a sudden we were born."

While Wig Kitchen was done more for the actors, StageCoach is about performing for an audience.

Similar to Whose Line is it Anyway?, the actors will ask the audience to help build scenes. For the "Scene You've Never Seen" segment, one audience member might suggest a different movie ending or request Spiderman having a bad day and getting stuck to everything.

Other vignettes come from everyday life, such as "The Electrician From Hell."

"They are very common stories," said Capaccio. "(The audience) would like to see them really done over the top."

Whose Line is it Anyway? has shined a light on improv, but Capaccio said the art form's popularity was on the rise before Wayne Brady became a household



STAFF PHOTOS | KAREN SPARACIO

StageCoach performers Maria Pinheiro, Larry Jay Tish, Jen Ulin and Rob DiNinni rehearse at the Senior Center. Based in Arlington, StageCoach is an improv troupe that was established two years ago.

"Theater and live performance is something that can really get under your skin."

Larry Jay Tish

name.

"People are so accustomed to scripts that if someone does a brilliant monologue or a great scene, the audience thinks they rehearsed it," said Capaccio.

In addition to performances at the Senior Center, StageCoach also hosts corporate and classroom workshops. In these settings, the actors want the audience to not only enjoy and partake in the performance, but learn something too by improving listening skills, decision-making, problem solving, team building and self-confidence.

The actors have been hired by Blue Cross Blue

Shield, Archbishop Williams High School, The New Law Center and Children's Hospital.

"I think it carries over into people's lives," said Tish. "It gets them to see things differently."

StageCoach also teaches theater classes for actors that go through the principals of acting, mime, storytelling, improvisation, playwriting, directing and critical response.

StageCoach held a performance at the Senior Center last Thursday and will host its annual auditions tonight, Thursday, Sept. 25 from 7:30 to 10 p.m. at the Senior Center.

The group also holds open improv jams on the first Thursday of every month at the Senior Center. Through these events, StageCoach has added five actors.

"That's great for us to get to see new faces," said Tish. Tish said improv both entertains and lets an audience expand its mind.

"I find people are yearning to laugh. Not just chuckle, but laugh down deep," said Tish. "Theater and live performance is something that can really get under your skin."