

Art Seen: Stadium Theatre Performing Arts Center — the Pride of Woonsocket

At the start of my professional life I had the opportunity to work at Trinity Square Theatre, building scenery designed by a world-renowned set designer: Eugene Lee. Lucky me! Theater offers so much in the way of great positive interaction with other *creatives* all working toward one common goal. It's a vast soup poured into a funnel leading to opening night. Just great. Theater is second to none as an educational experience, and Rhode Islanders are very fortunate to have so many different performing arts facilities, studios and classes to choose from. On the top of my *new* list is the pride of Woonsocket, the Stadium Theatre Performing Arts Center, and there's a bright future ahead with the passing of Question 5 on the recent ballot.

I decided to pay them a visit as there are great rumors circulating about the theater, its terrific team, and what looks to be more major renovations to add to their already beautifully restored theater and facilities. What a glorious place to visit. First an introduction by executive director, Cathy Levesque, and the seasoned president, Armand Desmarais; then a red carpet tour by the building manager, Jim Keegan, all before interviewing Lisa Surette, the educational director who I was there to meet and interview. What a great team of friendly, warm and articulate folks. These impressive folks are proud and positive in their mission.

Lisa Surette is a sparkling example of the people you hope to meet in theater and especially in education. Still with a twinkle in the eyes, she offered impressive numbers of the summer and year-round enrollment and the ongoing productions, performances and activities (too much to mention here), and we chatted about shared experiences in teaching and her role as the education director at the Stadium. Amidst many distractions (she's a busy lady) she graciously toured me through a class in progress and showed me some of the tech-people working on stage, all spiced with joyful facts she shared. Soon we were joined by a member of their staff, 20-year-old Adam Landry, who, among other roles at the Stadium Theatre, is currently directing this fall's *Willy Wonka...* production as part of the Stadium's Young Actor's Academy. The young director is already deeply immersed in the life of theater and while sharing a few smile-filled sentences, I felt one of those *Zen* moments in life; seeing the young me, while he was speaking to the older version of himself. It was wonderful.

A society can be appraised by its treatment of its own youth. As a lifelong creative and active participant in the arts, I cannot stress how important this gem of an organization is to the area and community at large. This is a remarkable place for great things to happen for young people. With its expert team of terrific professionals, selfless volunteers and the overall community support, we can expect only good things can come from the Stadium Theatre, which boasts a colorful lineup of professional productions and first-rate entertainment. If you haven't already, you should visit them at 28 Monument Square in Woonsocket or online at stadiumtheatre.com. And most of all, **please support the local arts.**