There is a true jewel in Upper Darby. A place where residents and neighbors have easy, affordable access to world-renowned entertainment. A place where orchestras come alive with lush harmonies. A place where the Sugar Plum Fairy is floating across the stage one minute and crouching down to meet a delighted audience member the next. A place where busloads of students can come to giggle and imagine and wonder. A place where hundreds of big kids can give of themselves . . . and a place where thousands of little kids can gladly receive it.

This is the Upper Darby Performing Arts Center and Upper Darby Summer Stage.

Upper Darby’s SENSATIONAL SHOWPLACE

The Upper Darby Performing Arts Center and Upper Darby Summer Stage share the magic of live performance with local audiences all year round.

And it is magic.

Every year, more than 60,000 audience members enjoy more than 75 live performances at the Upper Darby Performing Arts Center (UDPAC), housed in the auditorium of Upper Darby High School on Lansdowne Avenue. It is one of the most actively used community arts facilities in Delaware County.

The UDPAC show season always includes diverse programs, performed by — and for — people of all ages. Past UDPAC performances include seasonal productions of The Nutcracker by the Pennsylvania Academy of Ballet Society, with opportunities to talk with the directors and dancers after the show. The world-renowned Golden Dragon Acrobats have performed to sold-out crowds, as well as Tom Rudolph and the original Sentimental Journey Band, who perform a nostalgic recreation of a 1940s radio show . . . and even allow the audience members to dance on stage to authentic arrangements of great songs from the Big Band Era. The Performing Arts Center has presented The Philadelphia Orchestra on two different occasions.

In addition to hosting numerous professional performances, the UDPAC is home to the Lansdowne Symphony Orchestra, one of the oldest community orchestras in the Philadelphia area. Younger musicians also have ample opportunity to perform, as every year
Southeastern Pennsylvania is home to a number of theater programs in the community. Almost 40 performances take place every summer during six short weeks from July through August. Each of the six Children’s Theater shows, as well as the Mainstage Show, has its own production staff that includes a professional director, musical director, choreographer, set designer, costume designer and stage manager. It takes a cast of 100 professional staff members and more than 700 young people to make Summer Stage happen with each new season. Many Summer Stage graduates go on to careers in the theater, including writer and actress Tina Fey, the founders of Philadelphia’s Arden Theater, the stars of Broadway’s Mamma Mia, the National Touring Companies of Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat and Les Miserables, and a cast member of Everybody Loves Raymond. And those are just the graduates in front of the curtain. The Summer Stage technical program has produced professional technicians who are employed by The Walnut Street Theater, Flying by Foy and many other professional companies. Since its inception in 1976, the UDPAC and Summer Stage have been so successful and gathered so many rave reviews that founder Harry Dietzler recently received the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award at Philadelphia’s Barrymore Awards ceremony. Dietzler is also seeing the extent to which the program enthralls its participants.

“TINA FEY
BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
performance. Ticket prices are reasonable and to share that magic with audiences through outstanding performances for the entire family. Much of the Summer Stage magic happens when a shy child steps on stage, picks up a paintbrush or sews a costume.

“One summer we had a young lady spend a lot of time in ‘Mama’s’ office,” Dietzler remembers. “Mama is Kathy Moscotti, who is a nurse and part-time counselor employed actress with her Equity Card. “I meet many parents who tell me their son or daughter used to lay around all summer and do nothing but watch TV and play video games,” he continues. “They will say something like, ‘Then he joined Summer Stage and every morning he is getting up early to drive him so he won’t be late. He stays all day and can’t wait to go the next day. He’s cutting the lawn and

DID YOU KNOW?
Writer and actress Tina Fey (Upper Darby native) is a Summer Stage graduate. If you read her book Bossypants, the chapter titled “Delaware County Summer Showtime” is about her Summer Stage experience. Here’s what she has to say about the program:

“As a mom now, I look back on what Harry and Summer Stage offer the community and it blows my mind.

You don’t just perform, you worked in the box office, you worked in the costume shop, you taught what you were learning to the younger kids. Most of us Summer Stagers went on to careers in fields other than entertainment, but the life skills we learned from Harry’s program were invaluable."

Harry and Summer Stage offer the community and it blows my mind.

Thanks to theUDPAC, that star is Upper Darby County. Of course, every production in the world of theater has to have a star, and in the case of the UDPAC, that star is Upper Darby Summer Stage.

Summer Stage, as it affectionately called, is one of the most successful youth theater programs in the country. Thousands of Upper Darby School District students—from elementary to high school—take to the stage. Because of funding from Upper Darby Township and the Upper Darby School District, the UDPAC is a community resource unlike any other in Delaware County. Of course, every production in the world of theater has to have a star, and in the case of the UDPAC, that star is Upper Darby Summer Stage.

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It takes a cast of 100 professional staff members and more than 700 young people to make Summer Stage happen with each new season. Many Summer Stage graduates go on to careers in the theater, including writer and actress Tina Fey, the founders of Philadelphia’s Arden Theater, the stars of Broadway’s Mamma Mia, the National Touring Companies of Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat and Les Miserables, and a cast member of Everybody Loves Raymond. And those are just the graduates in front of the curtain. The Summer Stage technical program has produced professional technicians who are employed by The Walnut Street Theater, Flying by Foy and many other professional companies. Since its inception in 1976, the UDPAC and Summer Stage have been so successful and gathered so many rave reviews that founder Harry Dietzler recently received the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award at Philadelphia’s Barrymore Awards ceremony.

Dietzler is also seeing the extent to which the program enthralls its participants.

“We have many performers who started out as children in our audience. And many of our staff were also performers in the program,” explains Dietzler, now executive artistic director of the UDPAC. “In many ways, Summer Stage and the Performing Arts Center become a lifelong activity for many of our participants. At the same time, parents, family and friends of each performer are able to celebrate the success of each person on our stage, and that builds a strong community around us. For Upper Darby and our neighboring communities, the Performing Arts Center is a point of pride that unifies people of many different backgrounds and cultures as they all experience the international language of music and the arts.”

Children’s Theater performances at Summer Stage are truly child-friendly. Shows last between 60 and 75 minutes and there is no intermission. Dietzler clearly explains appropriate theater behavior in a fun and animated way before each performance. Ticket prices are reasonable (UDPAC members receive discounts and can even return or exchange tickets up to 24 hours before a show) AND babysitting is provided FREE OF CHARGE in the lobby for younger siblings who can’t sit quietly through a performance.

Every aspect of Summer Stage is designed to encourage young people to develop the magic of their talents, personality and energy and to share that magic with audiences through outstanding performances for the entire family. Much of the Summer Stage magic happens when a shy child steps on stage, picks up a paintbrush or sews a costume.

“One summer we had a young lady spend a lot of time in ‘Mama’s’ office,” Dietzler remembers. “Mama is Kathy Moscotti, who is a nurse and part-time counselor to fearful Summer Stagers. Jackie Ostick was a timid and tearful girl who needed some coaxing to stick with her rehearsals and new friends. Over the next three or four years, Jackie became one of our most popular and dedicated Summer Stagers, was selected as a Shooting Star and was chosen as Summer Stager of the Year. She went on to become a theater major at DeSales University and is now a regularly

employed actress with her Equity Card.

“I meet many parents who tell me their son or daughter used to lay around all summer and do nothing but watch TV and play video games,” he continues. “They will say something like, ‘Then he joined Summer Stage and every morning he is getting up early to drive him so he won’t be late. He stays all day and can’t wait to go the next day. He’s cutting the lawn and
doing his chores and is like a different kid.’”
Cameryn Richards, a senior at Haverford High School, was one of those kids who recognized the magic when she was little.

A Summer Stager for seven years, Cameryn lists two of her most recent roles as Mitchie in Camp Rock in 2011 and Isa in Dora the Explorer LIVE in 2012.

“My mom started taking my sister and me to the shows when we were little, and I always said I’d be up there one day, so I did it,” she says. “I have definitely learned that nothing should stop you from being the person you want to be. The atmosphere in Summer Stage is beyond accepting and everyone feels loved. I have made lifelong friends through the program and I’m sad that this past summer was my last.”

A small number of Summer Stagers are selected to join the Upper Darby Summer Stage Shooting Stars — a group of up to 45 members who perform year round for the community. Their primary mission is to bring performances to those unable to travel to the Performing Arts Center, particularly senior citizens. They have also performed at Rose Tree Park, the Philadelphia Thanksgiving Day Parade, on NBC-10’s “Live from Longwood Gardens” and Disney World.

In addition to Summer Stage Children’s Theater, there is also one Summer Stage Mainstage production, which showcases Summer Stage at its best and is presented for an older audience. These productions feature young adults up to age 28, many of whom are pursuing professional careers in theater. Mainstage productions are Broadway musicals — with a full orchestra of professional musicians — at a very high-caliber level, yet with a more reasonable ticket price than downtown. (And free parking, too!) The News of Delaware County called Summer Stage “undeniably the county’s largest and finest summer theater program.”

All of the programs at the Upper Darby Performing Arts Center and Upper Darby Summer Stage exist to benefit the community. Whether it’s the neighborhood kids throwing themselves into committed rehearsals, the classrooms and summer camps of children who enjoy the shows, the families on a budget who are still able to enjoy high-quality theater together, or the community members who speak with pride of the tremendous organization in their backyard, the UDPAC brings the community together with a flash of razzle dazzle.

And that, my friends, is magic.

For more information on the Upper Darby Performing Arts Center or Upper Darby Summer Stage, visit www.udpac.org or call the box office at 610-622-1189.

JOINING UP

If your child is interested in joining Summer Stage, there are a number of options available. Participants do not need to be Upper Darby residents; however, program fees are less expensive for those residing in Upper Darby Township. Registration information is available on the UDPAC website, www.udpac.org. Programs include:

THE APPRENTICE PROGRAM (ages 11 to 12): Apprentices participate in one of two three-week sessions learning storytelling, creative dramatics, music and creative movement. Apprentices travel to local libraries to tell stories to preschoolers.

RISING STARS (ages 12 to 13): Rising Stars participate in one of two three-week sessions and culminate in the performance of a children’s musical.

CHILDREN’S THEATER (ages 13 to 17): Children’s Theater participants can be a cast member for one or two musical theater productions that are “for young people, by young people.” Casts rehearse for two to three weeks during the day and will have four performances of their show.

MAINSTAGE PROGRAM (ages 14 to 18): These are more serious performers who present a Broadway musical directed by local professionals. Rehearsals are in the evenings.

TECHNICAL THEATER PROGRAM (ages 14 to 18): Participants receive hands-on experience building and painting scenery, setting lights, operating spots and running state-of-the-art lighting and sound consoles, all supervised by a professional staff of designers and technicians.

There are also a number of programs offered to all Summer Stagers, including a Dance Troop, a Cabaret and a Director’s Workshop. These programs rehearse throughout the summer and end with live performances.

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