

Business Focus

Talent soars at Oconee Youth School of Performance

The Oconee Youth School of Performance is moving to bigger and better things this fall.

The award-winning local performing arts school opens its new facility, at 1050 Jamestown Blvd., just off Ga. 53 near Oconee County High School and Civic Center, Aug. 19.

The 10,000 square foot building has vast amounts of space, with four studios, including one that can be converted into a "black box" theater space.

OYSP features classes in all aspects of performing arts, for students of all ages, from 18 months to 18 years and beyond.

So what do you do if your child wants to take an acting and dance class? Don't bother searching for more than one place to enroll — just sign up at OYSP.

Now in its eighth year, OYSP offers dancing, singing and acting, and this year has an acrobatics class taught by a former University of Georgia Gym Dog. Other exciting classes are hip hop and jazz dancing, acting and dancing classes just for boys, and a "mommy-and-me" type program for mothers and children ages 18 months and up.

Shane and Terra Hannon, the husband-and-wife duo who founded OYSP in 1998, urge students of all ages, regardless of experience, to join a class in their new facility.

"We have students who just want to take a class for fun, and others who come through with the intention of pursuing theater or dance as a career," says Terra Hannon. "We're open to all levels, from recreation to Broadway."

OYSP is familiar with building a strong performing arts program. It was named "Best Studio" in 2004 at the Access Broadway National Finals in Orlando, Fla. OYSP will compete again in 2007.

Terra Hannon developed OYSP on her



Shane and Terra Hannon, with 1-year-old son Jack, open the new Oconee Youth School of Performance 10,000 square foot facility Aug. 19, on Jamestown Boulevard near Ga. 53.

extensive drama and theater background. She majored in drama at The University of Georgia, and toured the U.S. for a year as director/performer with the Missoula (Montana) Children's Theatre.

Shane Hannon also possesses a strong theater background, having been cast in the title role of the musical "Oliver!" at age 10. He and Terra each performed professionally with the Jekyll Island Musical Theater Festival. The two also worked together when Shane played the lead role in "Bye Bye Birdie" in the Highlands (N.C.) Playhouse production, and Terra served as choreographer.

The Hannons also run the Oconee Youth Playhouse, a nonprofit organization that presents high-quality musical theater productions with large casts of local young people. Those who participate range in age from 6 to 18, and some college-age

students and adults participate in special roles.

The Hannons have big plans for their beautiful new facility near OCHS. Although major performances will still take place at the Oconee County Civic Center, the new building has a room that can easily be converted to a black box theater. Smaller shows, plus camp performances and voice recitals, can be held there. The room features high ceilings, stage lights and windows that may be drawn shut with curtains to complete the "black box" effect.

Throughout the facility is one feature the Hannons are most excited about: the "sprung" dance floors.

Sprung dance floors are the newest technology in dance. The floors have a sub-floor system, which provides more of a cushion to protect the dancer.



Dance is just one of many classes offered at the Oconee Youth School of Performance. Whether its jazz, hip hop or tap, OYSP has a dance style suitable for your student.

"This is just an extra step we're taking to make this place exceptional," says Terra Hannon. "The new flooring will be in all four studios."

OYSP has a long list of students who have studied there and gone on to professional opportunities. Laura Slade Wiggins, a rising senior at OCHS, played a major character in the recent Lifetime movie, "Not Like Everybody Else."

Kelsey Duttlinger, a rising freshman at North Oconee High School, had a featured role in "Fiddler on the Roof" at the Highlands Playhouse in North Carolina earlier this summer.

And India Bolds, another OYSP student, is interning with the Alvin Ailey Dance Company in New York.

Not sure if the performing arts are just

right for you? Then, check it out for free.

OYSP is hosting its Grand Opening and Open House Aug. 19. The Hannons and their staff of 10 instructors will be hosting free classes and workshops in the morning from 10 a.m. to noon with advanced sign-up.

"The wide variety of classes we offer makes us different. Students can try a little bit of everything here," Shane Hannon says.

"We're in a great community that supports the arts, and we want to continue to expand the opportunities we can provide to children."

For additional information about the Oconee Youth School of Performance and classes offered, call 706-769-2677 or e-mail oconeeyouth@gmail.com.