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2017-2018 SEASON

Summer Camps Unmasked: A Behind-The-Scenes Look at our Physical Comedy and Mask Making Camps

June 20, 2018

Welcome to your very own backstage look at Triad Stage's brand new summer camp program! This past week, June 11th-15th, we kicked off our summer with two exciting and engaging camps for our students. One of the camps, led by the innovative Cameron Prevatté, taught students ranging from seventh to ninth grade the exciting possibilities of mask making and exploring creative mask work. Cameron is a local actor, educator, puppeteer, and a resident member of the Chapel Hill company Paperhand Puppet Intervention.

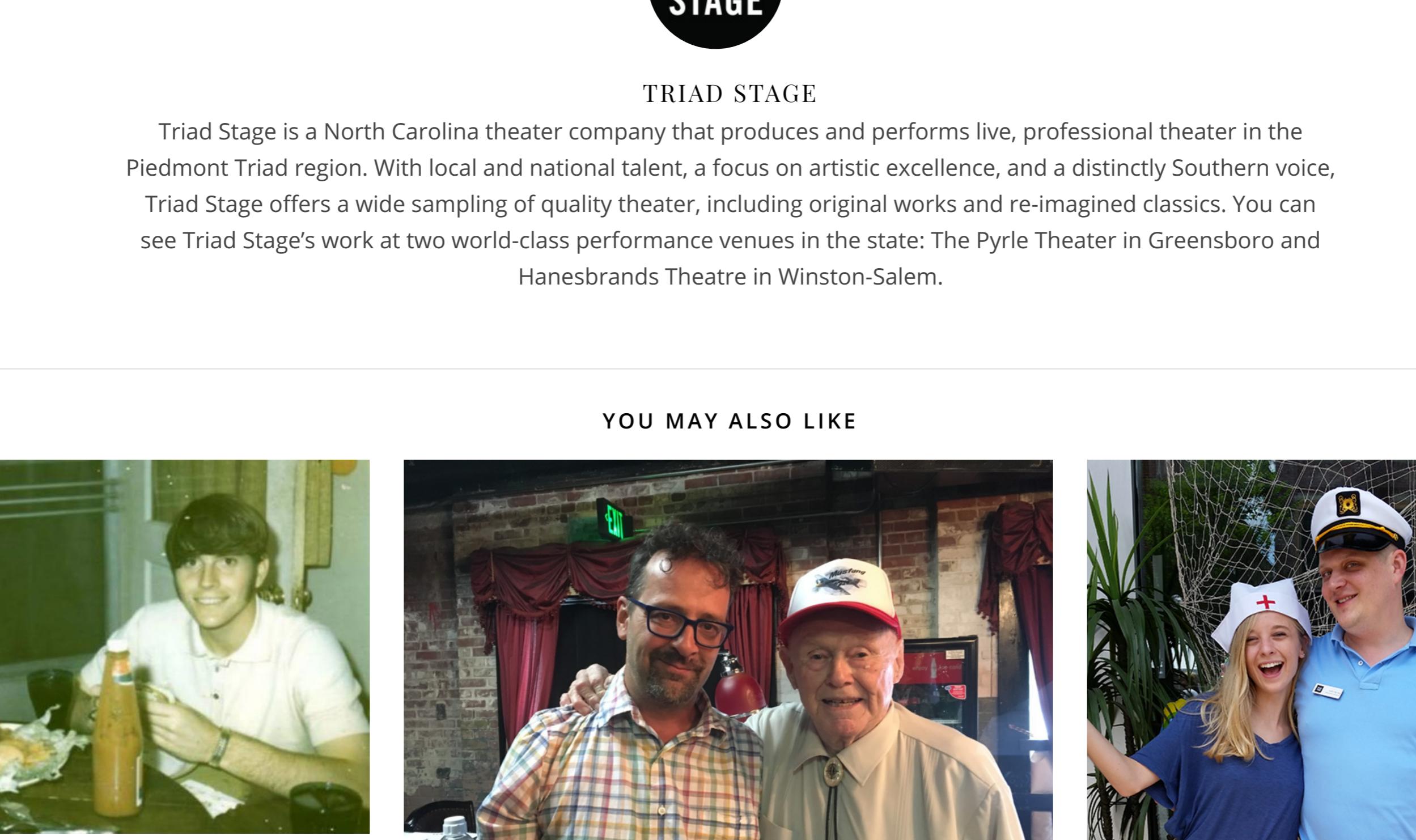
The second camp, geared towards students in tenth through twelfth grade, was led by the lively Mark Donnell and sought to explore the wonders of Physical Comedy including circus tricks, clown work, and commedia dell'arte practices. Mark is a mask maker, comedian, director, and clown who specializes in teaching the wonders of physical comedy and comedic timing in a group. The entire theatre was buzzing with excitement early Monday morning as we awaited the arrival of our students and by Friday, we were sad to say goodbye to our new friends and wrap up all of the week's dynamic adventures.

In the Character Masking camp, students learned how to make character masks and props with paint and papier-mâche techniques. All of the masks and props were sculpted from scrap material such as cardboard, newspapers, and found objects the students brought from home. The students reimagined these simple materials as part of the characters they created. In order to begin their creative process, the students spent some time sketching their desired character. Then, when it was time to create their masterpieces, the students started with a cardboard base and added layers of papier-mâche to sculpt the faces of their characters. Once the masks were dried, they played around with painting techniques and even explored color gradients. On top of crafting their amazing masks, the students also made realistic props and Bunraku puppets to use for their end-of-the-week sharing! Bunraku puppets are used in traditional Japanese puppet theatre and the students were able to use their own puppets to perform scenes with one another. Overall, the students had a blast creating and showcasing their work with Cameron and got to keep their creations once camp concluded!



The students in the Physical Comedy camp spent their week learning how to take creative risks, perform circus tricks, safely execute comedic stunts, and discover the hilarity of commedia dell'arte characters and mask work. Students learned fun and innovative ways to deliver comedy, including studying famous clowns and silent film stars, practicing new and creative ways to move for various characters, experimenting with Zanni masks used in commedia dell'arte, and doing improvisations as unique commedia trope characters. Every morning, Teaching Artist Mark Donnell would lead the students in a variety of warm-ups, usually including a couple rounds of nonconventional tag games, such as Zombie Tag. These warm-up games were both fun and practical for the students, as the games helped them physically warm up, raise their energy level, and bond with the other students over seemingly silly activities.

Throughout the week, the students learned about specific commedia characters that originated in 1550s Italy. These characters represent comedic tropes and are often portrayed while wearing masks and costumes. After many movement, improv, and masked activities, the students were each given a character to fully explore and encompass. Their adopted character was then used in a group sketch done for the camp's end-of-the-week showing. Family members and Triad Stage employees gathered for the performance and were in stitches by the time it was over! The students could hardly contain their laughter and joy too- so it's a good thing their masks helped cover their chuckles and smiles. The only part of the entire week that wasn't laugh-out-loud funny was our goodbyes, as the students were disappointed to see their side-splitting week come to an end.



Do you want to get in on the action? Triad Stage is offering a wide array of summer camps for students in fourth through twelfth grade! [Check our camp schedule](#) to find a week that catches your eye! If you have any questions, contact Learning Director Lauren Smith at lauren@triadstage.org.

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