

Broadway star Caitlin Abraham inspires students at Steamboat Arts Academy

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Caitlin Abraham works with Steamboat Arts Academy students on a new Pan production.

Courtesy photo

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS — Students at Steamboat Arts Academy had the opportunity last week to train under Caitlin Abraham, a seasoned Broadway dancer and singer. Abraham is collaborating with Celina Taylor, owner of the academy, to create “Pan: Neverland and Beyond,” an all new theatrical production written entirely by Taylor, based on the relationship of J.M. Barrie, Peter Pan and Tinker Bell.

This new work explores Barrie's characters considering modern norms.

"Children today are much savvier and more skeptical," Taylor said. "I wanted to create a Neverland that my students could relate to. I wanted a Peter Pan with a heart and a tiny fairy with big grit and guts."

The play, which will debut at Steamboat Springs High School on Jan. 10 and 11, will feature original choreography by Abraham and original songs co-written by Taylor and Steamboat Arts Academy music teacher Mike Martinez. Taylor, Martinez and Abraham began working together last fall during Camp Broadway.

Martinez has a music theory degree from Oberlin and a background teaching musical theater in upstate New York. A Steamboat resident, he performs locally with partner Hayley Berg, teaches music at the academy and serves with Taylor on the board of Piknik Theatre.

In order to create a new and magical Neverland, Abraham has created two large production numbers and multiple solos and duos for Peter, Tinker Bell, Wendy, Captain Hook, the fairies and the pirates. Putting in 15-hour days, she and Taylor worked with over 65 dancers last week.

"This is a big ballet set for students ages 6 to 16," Abraham said. "It took flexibility from both sides to make this work, and I am so honored to have the opportunity to work with this group of young people."

Abraham began working with young artists from Steamboat in April 2017 when local dancer Helena Maynard traveled to New York City to work with Abraham privately.

"I was looking for a dance teacher that could provide Helena with more than ballet instruction," Taylor said. "I wanted her to work with a strong woman who has successfully navigated the performance industry, someone who knew how difficult the road to the top could be but wasn't jaded."



Celina Taylor with Steamboat Arts Academy Dancers, Jacey LaRock, Zeylia Jacobi, Jessa Harris, Lillian Yamashita, Emma Teachout, Olivia Golaszewski, Carsen Gerstell, Reed Anstine, Caitlin Abraham and Delaney Parker.

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Taylor is an actor, playwright and professional figure skater who also serves as director of the Steamboat Skating Club. She and husband, Jeremiah Jackson, a professional figure skater and former ballet dancer in his own right, opened the academy in 2018 to provide high level musical theater and ballet training to children living in the Yampa Valley.

“I knew I had to find a way to bring Caitlin to Steamboat, so that children other than my own could work with her,” Taylor said. “From the moment we met, our creative partnership took on a life of its own. She has a fierce passion for dance and a dedication to craft that instantly elevates her students in the studio.”

“What she is doing for the performing arts in this small community is special,” Abraham said of Taylor. “Her level of investment in her students is rare, and her work is changing lives. I am thrilled to have the opportunity to create new pieces for these dancers. They have grown so much in just one year.”

Abraham has had an illustrious dance career, spanning from ballet to Broadway. She has performed with Kelsey Grammar in “La Cage Aux Folles,” held the role of Liz in the cast of “Chicago,” Cassie in “A Chorus Line” and was part of Christopher Wheeldon’s “An American in Paris” cast performing both on Broadway and at the Tony Awards.

A veteran teacher, Abraham has a long list of star students, including Ariana De Borse, the original Bullet in “Hamilton;” Sarah Pippin, two-time NYCDA National Champion; and Ms. Lauryn Hill, of the Fugees. In addition to her theatrical credits, Abraham is also a well-known instructor, teaching at Broadway Dance Center, Joffrey NYC, Marymount College and Alvin Ailey.

“I enjoy Caitlin’s style of teaching because she demands a lot from you,” said academy student Lillian Yamashita. “She is a strict teacher, but she shows us what it takes to be a professional.”

Yamashita, a Steamboat Springs Middle School student, gave up competitive hockey this year to pursue her dream of becoming a professional ballet dancer. She now trains six days a week at the academy under the direction of Ballet Mistress Jordan Logelin, a pre-professional ballerina who moved from Raleigh, North Carolina, to Steamboat two summers ago.



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