

Irene Buckle

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IN SMALL CITY THEATRE

I grew up in a small town in the South Okanagan, where the closest thing to live theatre I experienced was reading plays aloud in English class. When I arrived at Simon Fraser University, I was introduced to the magical world of stage and attended every production my limited student budget allowed.

I began teaching in Kamloops in 1972 and was delighted to find thriving theatre programs in the high schools and an active community interest. The founding of The Western Canada Theatre Company seemed a natural and logical next step. By this time I had two children with another on the way, so money for theatre tickets was not always a priority, but I went when I could.

As my children grew, I began taking them with me to special productions. I worried they might become bored and disruptive but they surprised me. My shy eldest daughter was fascinated by the sets and costumes, as is her daughter. My son loved by the technical side of things. I was barraged with questions. How do they make that move? How do they create that sound? He continued this interest as a stage hand through school. Even though he no longer has any involvement, he became an electrician and he now takes his sons to the theatre and can actually answer all their questions.

My two youngest daughters were performers through and through. If they had had their way, they would not have missed a single production. Public speaking, debating, creative writing, in elementary school, and then high school drama: they did it all. From the day each walked on to the Sagebrush Theatre stage at about age four, she was hooked. One went on to major in English and minor in theatre at university and now teaches at Georgian College in Ontario. The other uses her performing skills to work with youth in trouble; she leads workshops and speaks to groups of student about the choices they make.



If none of us had ever seen a live production, I'm sure my children would have all grown up to become happy and successful people. However, the theatre influenced our view of the world, enriched our experiences and, in at least two cases, guided our choice of profession.

Now I take my grandchildren with me. My eldest granddaughter is off to university this fall, hoping to follow in her aunt's footsteps. My youngest daughter's son came with me to be interviewed as part of the *It's your Cue* study. While he has always like watching plays, the look on his face when he stepped on that stage said it all: another one is in love with the theatre.