

The Academy Theatre, from the Beginning

Imagination running wild, he spent night after night pounding away at a typewriter. Yes, a typewriter. It was the '80s, after all, and he was a young man writing stories in his bedroom within the family home. Over the years, that typing grew into a body of work, producing 4 screen plays, a published book, thirty three showcases, and ten full length plays. Now his plays are performed in the heart of Arizona. His name is Angel P. Arredondo – Storyteller, Screenwriter, Playwright, Administrator and Director at Phoenix' own Academy Theatre.

With many enterprising accomplishments under his belt such as successfully reinstating the Knights of the Altar program for the youth of his church, launching a graphic design business, establishing a book publishing company and most importantly, starting a family, there was another dream that continued to call Angel as a young man. He had the itch to start a creative outlet that would appease his unrelenting, imaginative and fantastical mind...an organization that would muddle society's conventional views of youth hood and raise young men into respectable adults, outwardly and inwardly, in the form of art.

In 2004, the Junior Drama Club Academy was born in a ten by twenty foot tent with six boys, ready to conquer the world with the motto "Nihil Obstat" - Nothing stands in the way. Soon, it became a place where boys training to become young men could learn how to act, mimic characters they had seen in television and movies, how to read lines, improvise, laugh at themselves and sing current and timeless songs of the twentieth century from Frank Sinatra to the rock ballads of John Lennon. Not to mention learn a little ballroom dancing! The club would help its members discover their strengths and weaknesses, encourage the growth of their peers, learn the trade skills of theatre arts and, most of all, break the stereotypes of the roles of males in society. A club that teaches kids....responsibility!

After sending the audience to their feet in applause with the performance of their first play, the "Homey Ghost of the Cineplex", the JDCA soon spawned the formation of the Girls Drama Club Academy, the Adult Drama Academy and the Summer Drama Club Program. Incredibly, they signed a lease that would move the organization from tent to stage, and The Academy Theatre was born! With the help of set builder and dance choreographer Bob Gates, voice coach and fundraising assistant John Manier, Angel's wife Karen and the Theatre's supporting staff, soon came countless plays, programs, live entertainment, bingo, karaoke and arts shows. Of course there were also headaches and at times back breaking labor to upkeep the aging facility. But love and passion kept the Academy Theater alive even though the Theatre began to outgrow its dwelling. But after 3 years through the unfortunate sale of the property, the Academy Theatre was forced to leave behind what was once called "home" in search of a new one.

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Nihil Obstat!

Nothing could get in the way of their aim for excellence, growth and continued artistic expression. The players continued to meet weekly, soulfully delivering their voices and improvisation once again in Angel's back yard, where it all began. Later, a multicultural church welcomed the boys and girls to use their facility as a temporary place for their meetings and practice until the Theatre found a permanent building. After months of indomitable search, Angel spotted his gem! In February 2015, he drafted the layout of a new theater and demolition and construction began in a neighborhood in the heart of Central Phoenix. With the help of Vice-Administrator Bob Gates, love from the community, and a sizeable donation of lumber and building supplies from several companies, the previous medical-office interior underwent a major transformation.

On May 23 of that same year, The Academy Theatre was reborn complete with box office and soundproof 40 seat theatre with a traditional operatic stage on West Van Buren Street. The new facility even included a parlor, kitchen, two cast rooms, a classroom, a lobby and a Director's office. Die-hard fans of the old-fashion theatre delighted in such touches as the ornately designed curtains, Greek columns, rustic old world furniture and multiple chandeliers.

The Academy Theatre has subsequently birthed the Children's Drama Preparatory Academy, reinstated the Adult Drama Academy, and constantly gains new members. With much excitement, it has recently showcased now many entertaining acts and productions and sensational First Friday musical lineups featuring different artists every month. From humble beginnings to current performances, the Theatre remains a solid, valorous and ever growing youth leadership presence in Phoenix. This work of dedication and commitment is evident and emanates from its walls; a must see to any who treasure the traditional essence of theatre.

For more information on Academy Theatre's productions, events and activities, for interest in enrolling in the Boys, Girls, Adult, Children's or Summer Academies, or just to make a welcome donation to this non-profit charitable organization for performing arts, arts education, life building and leadership skills, visit www.academytheatre.net or email academytheatre@cox.net.

And while you're there, remember – Nothing stands in the way!

The Academy Theatre
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