

One in a *Ver* Million Meet Jen Dickenson

By David Lias
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Thursday evening, Jen Dickenson spent nearly an hour working with dozens of young girls, running them through exercises designed to make them aware of what, on the surface, seems to be very simple things.

Different ways to walk, for example.

By the end of the session, all spent on the stage of the Vermillion High School Performing Arts Center, she had her young troupe delving into deeper stuff, thinking about not simply their physical presence there, but also the qualities of the characters they are now striving to become.

The young girls are playing the roles of orphans in the upcoming Vermillion Community Theatre's production of the Broadway musical "Annie." And it's clear that Jen, in her role as director, expects anyone who has a presence on the stage during the performance to do more than simply recite lines.

They are expected to do what all actors do - act.

Jen's time in Vermillion this summer marks the latest stop in a personal and professional

journey that has brought her full circle. Years ago, while a child growing up in the community, she learned a bit more about herself simply by stepping on to a stage.

"Vermillion Community Theatre was how I got my start in theatre," she said. "The very first play I was ever in was "Fiddler on the Roof," which I think was about 22 years ago."

She was immediately bitten by the acting bug.

"It was really exciting for me as a kid to get positive reinforcement for acting out in really healthy ways," Jen said. "I was always that loud kid ... but me being loud and getting attention was so exciting."

Those experiences as a youngster in Vermillion have strengthened her commitment to seeing that young people in South Dakota have the same opportunities.

"It was very difficult for me to learn how to read ... but when I was able to take those words and put them into my body (while acting), they started to finally make sense. All of the words and stories started to come alive."

"Especially with my path in my career and as an artist, while I was

growing up in Vermillion, I had all of those arts experiences, which were great," she said. "I left, and I went to school in Minneapolis, because I wanted more experiences. And then I studied performing arts in India because I wanted more experiences."

"I moved to Washington for a time, and I've just finished my masters in fine arts in Hawaii. I kept thinking to myself, 'why am I getting all of these experiences?' And I think it's because I wanted it as a kid in South Dakota," Jen said. "I'm on this track right now trying to bring all of the experiences that I've gotten back to rural youth in the Midwest."

Her master's thesis, in fact, focuses on how to create high quality, powerful arts programming for kids in rural areas.

The past two summers, Jen has toured the state with the Dakota Players - an experience that helped her realize that Vermillion youth are fortunate, compared to young people in some South Dakota communities, to still have several opportunities to experience the arts.

After graduating from Vermillion High School



in 2001, Jen attended the University of Minnesota, majoring in theatre and global studies. While a student there, she spent a year in India.

"I did research on how street theatre is used as a catalyst for social change in south Asia," Jen said. "I was then an AmeriCorps volunteer for two years. AmeriCorps is like a domestic version of the Peace Corps."

While involved in AmeriCorps, she ran a rural Washington theatre for one year, and spent her second year in Bellingham, WA, working professionally in the arts.

She then attended graduate school at the

University of Hawaii, and earned her master's degree in Theatre for Young Audiences just last month - just in time to step into the director's role for the VCT's production of "Annie."

"It's absolutely perfect," Jen said. "I've directed some productions with similar budgets, but never with a cast this big. I love how Vermillion Community Theatre tries to cast everyone who comes out to audition. That's totally inspiring, and really makes this into a community-building, cultural happening."

There are approximately 70 people cast in various roles in

the musical.

"It's so much fun; there's so much energy," she said. "I will feel that I have succeeded if I create a moment for every one of these wonderful actors to be featured, and to have a moment where everyone feels special, and everyone feels they are getting positive attention."

Performances of "Annie" will be held Friday, July 20, Saturday, July 21 and Monday, July 23 at 7 p.m. along with a matinee on Sunday, July 22 at 2:30 p.m. All performances will be at the Vermillion High School Performing Arts Center.

FOR THE RECORD

Cases Disposed 05/25-31/2012
Mario Raze Reddest, 2

E. Cherry St., Vermillion;
Seat belt violation, \$25.00
Tiffany Johnson, 115

Franklin St., Vermillion;
Operator assure
passengers 5-18 wear seat
belts, \$25.00

Leopoldo Rodriguez,
400 Carr St. #611,
Vermillion; Speeding
other roadways, \$59.00
plus costs

Tyler F. Hacecky,
44185 303rd St., Mission
Hill; County speeding,
\$19.00 plus costs

Martin Weeks, 31551
S.D. Highway 19,
Vermillion; Seat belt
violation, \$25.00

Alex Cotton, 1117

West Main Street,
Vermillion; No drivers
license, \$54.00 plus costs

Ronny Christopher J.
Prothero, 1024 W. Clark,
Vermillion; Speeding
other roadways, \$59.00
plus costs

Kameron Riley
Gradert, 2333 450th
Street, Ireton, IA;
Speeding other roadways,
\$39.00 plus costs

Shawna Marie Gibson,
439 High St., Vermillion;
Speeding other roadways,
\$59.00 plus costs

David Hulse, 621 E.
Highway 50, Vermillion;
Seat belt violation, \$25.00

Weston Deberg, 1505
S. Rock Creek Dr. #208,
Sioux Falls; Speeding
other roadways, \$39.00
plus costs

Haleigh Kreber, 1416
8th Street, Manson, IA;
Speed on four-lane in
rural areas, \$154.00 plus
costs

Nathan Snoozy, 505
Meckling Street, Gayville;
Speed on four-lane in
rural areas, \$79.00 plus
costs

Nancy A. Losacker,
317 Prospect Street,
Vermillion; Seat belt
violation, \$25.00

Justin Neil Roetman,
309 W. Clark St.,
Vermillion; Exhibition
driving, \$54.00 plus costs

Fred G. Balleweg,
31496 S.D. Highway 19,
Vermillion; Exhibition
driving, \$54.00 plus costs

Robyn R.
Hoebelheinrich, 88906
551 Ave., Crofton, NE;

Throw match or burning
object from vehicle,
\$54.00 plus costs

Marc J. Mozak, 3030
Jennings Street, Sioux
City, IA; Careless
driving, \$54.00 plus costs
David G. Nelson,
44112 306th St., Yankton;
Seat belt violation,
\$25.00

Lindsey Jo Hunter,
1203 Rainbow Trout
Circle, Columbia, MO;
Speeding other
roadways, \$59.00 plus
costs

Bradley Scott Janssen,
4001 Ashworth Rd., West
Des Moines, IA;
Speeding other
roadways, \$59.00 plus
costs

Kevin R. McKinstry,
974 Cottage Avenue,
Vermillion; Seat belt
violation, \$25.00

Volodymyr Ivanov,
4600 3rd Street #4, Sioux
Falls; Speeding on state
highway, \$39.00 plus
costs

Jeremy Erickson, 113
Leneve Avenue, N. Sioux
City, SD; Speeding on
state highway, \$39.00 plus
costs


Brittney Bygness, 1011
Lincoln St. #2,
Vermillion; Litter
ordinance violation,
\$104.00 plus costs

Jixin Dong, 17122 V.
Street, Omaha, NE;
Speeding other roadways,
\$59.00 plus costs

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HOME FOR SALE



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This spacious home has a prime location being close to the elementary school, University campus, City pool, parks and bike path. A wonderful place for children to grow up! Bedrooms: 3 (master bedroom w/ walk-in shower and deck/Jacuzzi entrance); Baths: 2 full; main level laundry; Floors: 1.5; front covered open porch; Square footage: 1947; Lot size: 1.5. Amenities: Handicap accessible; beautiful gas fireplace w/remote; central heating (95% efficient); central air (13 Ser); energy efficient on demand water heater; carpeted, wood & tile floors; ceiling fans in most rooms; Rainbird sprinkler system; utility shed; attached garage (ac/& heated; floor drain; automatic door opener & running water). Upgrades: remodeled living room & dining room; kitchen floor; refinished wood floors; new wiring throughout. Fully furnished optional: Less than 2 year old appliances and furnishings; Jacuzzi.

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