

ANNIVERSARY

Act Up

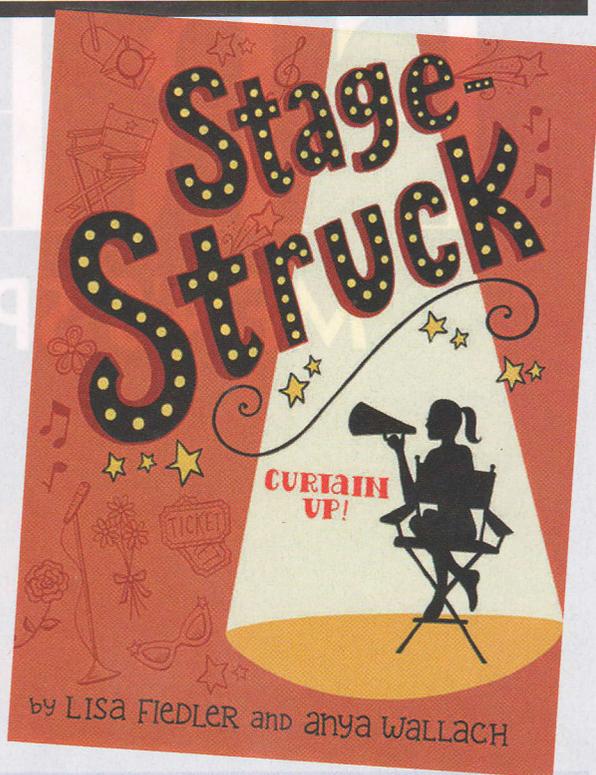
A local children's theater celebrates its 20th anniversary this year.

Twenty years ago, Anya Wallach, then 16 years old, formed a theater in her parents' basement as a reflection of her love for the arts. Having dreamt about putting on plays since she was in third grade, Wallach soon went on to found the Random Farms Kids' Theater: a nonprofit organization that connects young people with the arts.

What started out as a one-woman show has grown into a team of devoted directors, lighting and sound engineers, set designers, costumers, and others who work with the kids. "Every year it changes so much — we are constantly striving to grow," says Wallach.

Since its founding, the theater has grown to include more than 1,200 kids each year who rehearse with the organization in the Random Farms Performing Arts Center in Elmsford and perform in musicals at the Tarrytown Music Hall and Yorktown Stage. Random Farms serves as a launch pad to stardom: More than 100 of its alumni have gone on to star on Broadway, appear on television and in commercials, and play important roles in film.

We checked in with a few of the theater's alumni to see what they had to say about their time at Random Farms and what they're up to today.



Alumna:

Dahlia White

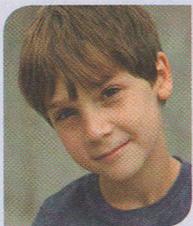
Age: 12

Has appeared in: Nickelodeon's *100 Things to Do Before High School*; Hulu's *Difficult People*

How she started out: "Theater was always something I had been looking to do. I saw a couple of shows and decided I wanted to do it as a hobby."

Her biggest challenge: "I was a bit shy."

She also says: "I had really good training at Random Farms. The directors and producers [I worked with at Nickelodeon] were very welcoming. The kids there were like the kids who would be with you at Random Farms, helping you and supporting you if you needed it."



Alumnus:

Zachary Unger

Age: 12

Has appeared in: *Big Fish* on Broadway; Showtime's 2016 series *Billions*,

playing actor Paul Giamatti's son

On his start in acting: "When I was younger, 5, I didn't want to be on the soccer team. My mom introduced me to acting at Random Farms. I went, and, when I started, I loved it."

On confidence: "When I'm filming, I'm not scared, because you do many takes. But onstage, you can't do several takes."

He also says: "I want to keep being an actor but also be involved as an athlete. I like basketball and football."



Alumna:

Rachel Resheff

Age: 15

Has appeared in: Netflix's *Orange Is the New Black*, as the young Alex Vause; Larry David's Broadway production

Fish in the Dark

On her time at Random Farms: "Most importantly, I learned the lesson of taking the rejection well and taking what part you get well. There are no small parts, only small actors. I learned to feel comfortable onstage and really the fundamentals of who I am as a performer."

On working with stars: "It was like being in a master's class [in *Fish in the Dark*], working with all these hysterically funny people. Larry David was so brilliant, relaxed, and naturally funny. Then Jason Alexander was in the show, and he was very different from Larry. Jason brought another dimension to the part."

—Gabriella Mangino