

## **Children's Theatre as a Creative Learning Tool**

By Lizanne Eastwood

Every parent wants their child to succeed, to grow up with the tools and skills necessary to lead a happy and productive life. In my own experience children's theatre has provided the following skills in abundance; increased self-esteem and confidence, empathy for others, the ability to work in a group and also to take the lead, heightened awareness of how to solve problems, improved reading, listening and speaking skills, ability to take direction, an awareness of how to stay focused and in the moment, strengthened powers of concentration and improved memory, a breaking down of shyness and inhibitions, improved physical fitness and mostly a development of the creative process.

Living in the Boundary area we are blessed by the number and quality of theatre experiences available to both children and adults. Jean Pinto and Liz Mason, director and musical director of the 11<sup>th</sup> St. Theatre Company, work miracles with children between the ages of 7-14. I have watched my children blossom under their tutelage and grow to want to pursue theatre in all its many forms. River's Edge Theatre Company, the newly formed Boundary Musical Theatre Troupe, the Greenwood Youth Summer Theatre School, the Monashee Mountain Players and our local schools all offer opportunities to contribute both on and off stage. Remember, these skills are important to foster at any age, so if you've always harboured a desire to be part of a theatre troupe, its never too late to learn.

Whenever an adult asks why my children appear so confident in their dealings with the world, I rave about the value of children's theatre and the nurturing of the creative process. Their early years also consisted of lots of shared storybooks and story tapes, huge rough totes full of dress-up clothes and no television. When a child has an active imagination they are never bored. So start collecting pieces for your own "tickle trunk" at garage sales, thrift store and the back of your closet and then wait for your children to excitedly say "Let's put on a show!"