

## *Cynthia (Cindy) Ripley*

**The Great White Way:** I live in Hamburg, New York, a suburb of Buffalo. Yes, we have a lovely spring, summer, and fall!

**Dress Rehearsal:** I wanted to be a fashion designer until the ripe age of 12, than music dominated my life as a participant, performer and – the best job of all – as a teacher.

**What Goes on Backstage...Stays Backstage:** The most memorable stories are always behind the scenes!

**Sugar Daddy:** My father was a salesman for Welch's candy. We all remember Sugar Daddys.

**Perfect Attendance:** In 33 years of teaching, I never missed a concert or performance. Any illness, surgery, or any other unforeseeable circumstances never stopped the curtain going up. It's too important for all the young artists involved.

**We Got Annie:** One of my career highlights was being able to pilot the first Broadway Junior musical, *Annie Junior*. The first time can never be repeated.

**Musical Mentor:** Mr. John Markarian was a music director who shared his love of making music and challenged me as a student accompanist, which empowered me to venture further into the field

**All the World's a Stage:** This past year I have led iTheatrics' educational workshops across the nation and have worked with teachers from every type of school: rich, poor, public, private, charter and home schools. Their commitment to what theater can do for kids and the sacrifices they choose to make to help make art happen are incredible. Two teachers that I met decided to do an exchange program with their students. One was teaching Katrina survivors outside New Orleans and the other was from a school in San Diego. Both teachers directed the same Broadway Junior Show as a healing process, with the California school contributing emotional and financial help. It was simply awesome.

**Always a Student:** One of the thrills about educational musical theatre is that it teaches us ALL something new every rehearsal. The joy of "the process" is indescribable to me.

**Behind Every Great Woman...:** My husband Al and daughter Sarabeth motivate me to do my best. If I don't pass their standards, I know I have to keep working!

**Favorite Revival:** One evening I bumped into a 30-something man in a parking lot. He was driving a large pickup with two baby seats in the front. He yelled, "Hey Mrs. Ripley, remember me?" He got out of the truck and started performing his song and dance from his 6th grade show. I knew in a second it was Scott!

**Of Thee I Sing:** I have always admired Beverly Sills, the opera singer who recently passed away. She had tremendously high standards, a wonderful sense of humor, and was selfless about her charity work for many causes.

**Tugs at Her Heartstrings:** I had a 4th grade student who was cast as Nicely in *Guys and Dolls Junior*. He had tragically lost both of his parents within three months of each other. Needless to say, his part in the musical meant everything to him. Once, when I asked him what his plans were for the weekend, he told me he was going up to visit his mom's grave, as he always did. This time he was not only going to sing his part, but dance the new choreography for her too. He said she would love it. There was no doubt in my mind that she did.

**Playing a Part:** Many people look at productions as daunting, so I try to provide a user-friendly model to teachers, students, administrators, and communities. It is my job to help them realize that every moment creating a team that achieves one common goal is well spent. Developing creative thinkers should be a goal for everyone!

**Directing Notes:** My advice to directors is to tell them to trust their instincts, and remember that there is a place in a production for EVERY child, even making buttons, running a light or doing a jazz square. It is always the kid who played "a tree" who tells you that it was one of the most memorable experiences in his life.

**In Her Rehearsals:** The iPod and little speakers certainly have changed the world of the portable rehearsal!

**Fancy Footwork:** I love to go shoe shopping.

**Props:** Folks who are exceptionally passionate about being involved in theater with kids are not always Drama teachers. Mark Myers, my former school custodian, was a thespian at heart and a wonderful supporter and role model for all of our students. He would spend hours mentoring kids building sets and exhibiting eternal patience.

**Words of Wisdom:** My advice for young artists hoping to break into the business is to use your strengths and strengthen your weaknesses.

**Fan of:** I love so much music, but Diana Krall is the nuts!

**State-of-the-Arts:** Emphasizing standardized testing and focusing on just a few parts of a complete curriculum, pushes arts into the background – or out in many cases. Theater is one of the most complete ways to include and teach ALL the curriculum to EVERY kind of student in a fun a cooperative way. It has been proven to improve attendance as well as grades and self-esteem.

**Her Green Room:** I enjoy the water garden and fish in my backyard. After a long winter, my yard starts to grow into a new “set design” every year, each more beautiful than the last. Mother Nature is a great director.

**Guiding Light:** I have always believed that if you set high expectations – combined with love and humor – students will achieve them. I have never been disappointed.