

It Takes a Community to Raise the Curtain

By Stephanie Styons, Contributing Writer

Untitled Theatre Productions

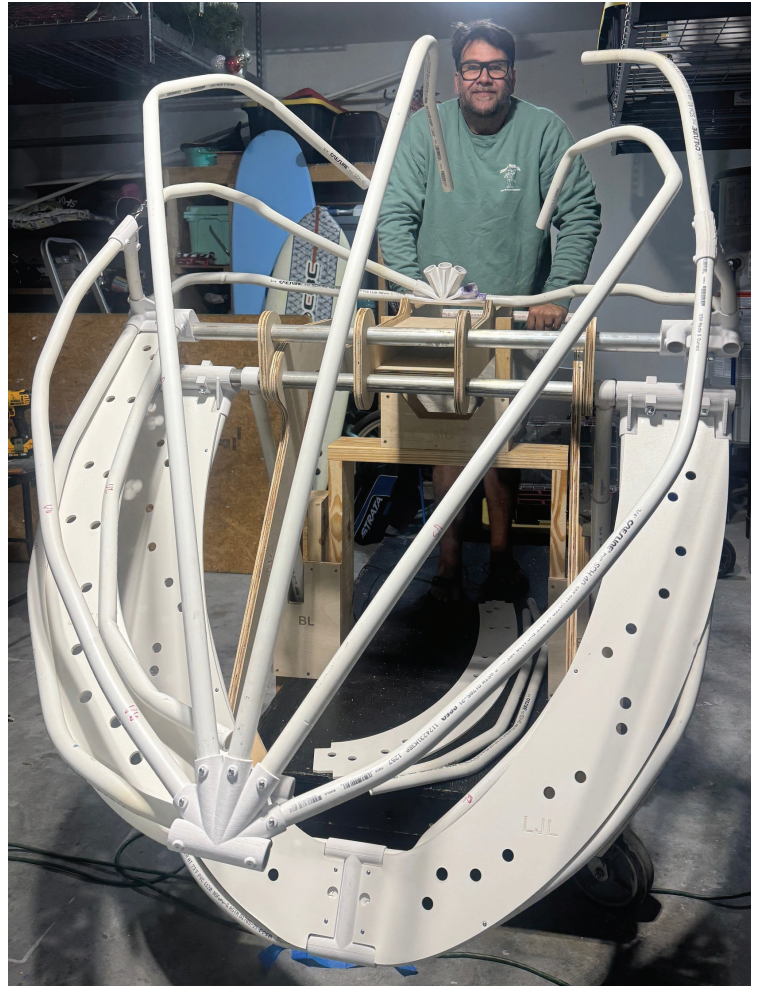
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In Hampstead, putting on a theater production is about more than the performers on stage. It's

about the whole community pitching in to make something special happen. That spirit is at the heart of **Untitled Theatre Productions**, a local nonprofit that has become a vibrant part of the arts scene. Since 2023, the group has brought together young performers, families, volunteers, and local artists to create live theater.

The March production of *Little Shop of Horrors*, the story of a shy florist and a mysterious dangerous plant, was a great example of that community effort. "Theater is such a collaborative art," said **Untitled founder Emily Graham**. "Every show is the result of dozens of people sharing their time, skills and creativity." That collaboration shows up in the music, costumes, choreography, lighting, sound, and set design. **John Fink** helped create the set pieces for the flower shop, including the plant that grows bigger during story, requiring several versions of the puppet. Volunteers **Ryan Laferriere and Rob Nutt** built the plant, using metal, fabric, design software, 3D printing, and CNC machines. The result was one of the most talked-about parts of the production.

Costuming also plays a big role. **Nancy Meiler** created costumes for *Little Shop of Horrors* and is working on the upcoming production of *Matilda the Musical*. "I volunteer because I'm impressed that so many young people are excited about the performing arts," Meiler said. "It's a chance to support the youth in our community, be creative, take on new challenges, and the youths really appreciate the costumes. It is exciting because you never know what the next project will be. I love working with colorful fabrics and helping dress the cast to fit each scene."



It's a lot of work for a show that only runs a few days, but that's part of what makes community theater special. "You have people from different backgrounds coming together to make it happen," said **Untitled Artistic Director Steve Campbell**. "Parents, artists, builders, musicians... everyone finds a way to contribute." Producing a show also relies

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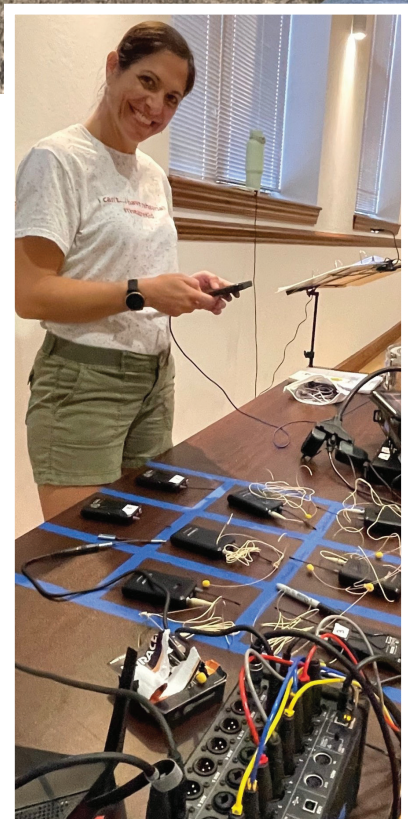
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on **support** from local businesses and community members. **Sponsorships** and gifts help cover costs, and Untitled is fortunate to partner with **Pender County Parks and Recreation** that manages the beautiful **Hampstead Annex** which houses the theater.

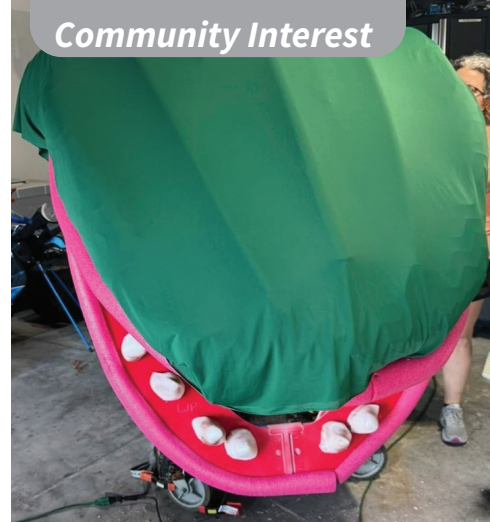
Untitled Theatre Productions was founded with a **simple goal**: Create a place where young people in Pender County and nearby communities can experience the joy and confidence that comes from live theater. The productions have featured dozens of performers and drawn thousands of audience

members. There is a growing network of volunteers who help with concessions, ticket sales, building sets, sewing costumes, and managing rehearsals.

That team effort is preparing for the **June production**, **Matilda the Musical**, directed by Hampstead resident **Sara Nutt**, marking her first time directing for Untitled. At the center of each production is a core creative team. Local choreographer **Katie Auletti-Smith** brings energy and movement to the stage, while music director **Jaime Schumer** works closely with performers to bring each score to life. Stage manager **Maggie Proscia** keeps everything organized, and **Dave Matherly** manages the production lighting. They volunteer their time and talents, driven by a shared passion for theater and its community. That behind-the-scenes team of volunteers continues to grow one show at a time.

For more information or to get involved:
www.untitledstage.com.

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