

## Director's Note

It was only a couple of months ago that I sat looking at the audition videos for Mary Poppins wondering if I could just simply cast all of these talented kids as lead. As I contemplated, the faces of 100's of youth whom I have had the privilege of training and directing in the past danced through my head causing my eyes to fill with tears of joy. Not only has my days in the theatre shown me that a blank stage can be transformed into any place in the world, but it can also help transform the shy, the unconfident, and the low self-esteem into the confident, the tenacious and the fearless. I have witnessed it, I have experienced it and I have thoroughly loved it.

This play, this cast and this crew are indeed supercalifragilisticexpialidocious (translation, "extraordinarily good and wonderful") but that's not what brought me to choose to direct them. It is not even the uncanny ability of the play's namesake to find wonder and good in everyone and everything she experiences. It is the message brought by the woman, who doesn't even have a name - the bird woman - who in contrast to the emotionally absent and monetarily focused Mr. George Banks, is compassionate, giving and kind to the small birds whom are seen everyday, but never really noticed. Whilst clearly in need herself, she puts herself aside and with the humble and simple words of, "Feed the Birds" inspires me to unselfishly give so that others may fly.

And, the "Spoonful of Sugar" given to two seemingly hopeless self-centered children reminds me that no one is beyond hope and kids who are entrusted to our keeping need words of encouragement. Encouragement and positive words can motivate even the most difficult to change for the better.

Mary Poppins is really a story told from the eyes of two children, Jane and Michael, who have everything, yet it is not everything they want. They really only want a father who will take time just to fly a kite with them and a mother who will stop worrying about what others think - they want family.

And isn't that what we all want? To belong, to be loved and to be accepted unconditionally.

Mary Poppins challenging yet soft words, help fulfill the children's dream. But, Mary Poppins is just an imaginary character in an imaginary world.

I unashamedly say that I know of a real live person whose challenging yet soft words can, as they have me, give anyone who desires, that unconditional love and acceptance. Whose words can heal a broken family and a broken heart. He feeds the birds yet values you even more than them, even more than his own life. I aspire to be like Him and I endeavor to inspire the youth of our community to "Step in Time" with this not "Practically Perfect" but totally perfect being, Jesus.

So, welcome to BYT's Mary Poppins and let us not just entertain you, but let us help you realize, that "Anything Can Happen" if you let it and believe!!

Cynthia Ford  
Founder and Artistic Director of BYT

## **A Note From The Stage Manager**

As much as I love watching each child perform and to watch DVDs of past performances, nothing, to me, beats lunch break. As we reach the middle of practice and we break for lunch, you see something far greater than a cast. As I sit there watching each student talk, laugh, and have fun, I always remember that the cast is family. I once told the students that and they all said it was cheesy, but it really is true. Growing up, I was in many musicals and I came out of the shows with more than just the fulfillment of another show. Every cast became my family. There is a different bond that is built from being in a show together. Although I can see them connect through tons of rehearsals, you see them grow from a cast to a family during lunch. As they start to talk with people they may have never met otherwise, you see them connect over interests you never would have thought both students had. Together, through hard work, dedication, and the community they create, they come together to put on some amazing shows.

When I work backstage, I see this community that the cast has created. I see them work together in amazing ways. You really see them work by our motto, "Inspiring children to be their best, on and off stage." We see that our students are all going to shine on stage, but that isn't all that matters. We want them to shine off stage, and when I see the cast members helping one another succeed, I know we have accomplished that goal. The audience sees them perform on stage, but I get to see them when they're off stage, and I believe that is just as important.

Jennifer Ford  
Stage Manager