

## PRESS RELEASE



3002 N. Arizona Ave Suites 3-4  
Chandler, AZ 85225  
[www.CopperstarRep.org](http://www.CopperstarRep.org)

From Left: Leah Henthorne (13, Chandler), Jake Bonar (13, Mesa) Lois Zozobrado ( 13, Chandler)

### Media Contact:

Mary-Jo Okawa 480-250-2870, [mjokawa@copperstarrep.org](mailto:mjokawa@copperstarrep.org)

## Copperstar Wins Grant for Upcoming Summer Theatre Academy as Copperstar Alumni Head to New York for Prestigious Broadway Academy

*Arizona Community Foundation Grant Provides for Teen Intensive Camp and Additional Scholarships to Copperstar's Summer Theatre Academy*

### For Immediate Release

May 13, 2014

CHANDLER (May 13, 2014) – Copperstar Repertory Co. (Copperstar) has been awarded a \$10,000 grant from Arizona Community Foundation to assist with their Summer Theatre Academy. “Copperstar is extremely honored to have been awarded this grant.” says Mary-Jo Okawa, Artistic Producing Director. “This comes at a very exciting point in our development. It is a joy to see the hundreds of young people who have gone through our Summer Camps throughout the past five years who are now going on to do great things. Many of them are pursuing careers in theatre and entertainment fields. We were are very proud of what our current and former students are able to achieve. We enjoy having them in camp and stay in touch with them through the years. Often our Summer Theatre Academy are a jumping off point for kids to do our mainstage shows, weekly classes and private lessons.”



Okawa was asked by iTheatrics New York to nominate several students to audition for their *Broadway Academy*, which CBS News NY recently named as the top school for Broadway Bound Kids in all of New York. She nominated several students and three of them were cast in shows in New York City this summer.

Leah, Jake and Lois all started in Copperstar workshops and camps and went on to perform in Copperstar's mainstage shows. Now they are headed to New York for iTheatrics Broadway Academy to be a part of this very special program.

“We are very proud of our Copperstar Summer Academy Alumni and cannot wait to hear more about their wonderful experiences.” Says Copperstar’s Resident Choreographer and Summer Camp Choreographer and Dance instructor, Laura Christian. “Copperstar training is really excellent and these students are great examples of what you can do with the right instruction and opportunities if you set your mind to it and work hard.”

More than 500 students from around the country auditioned to be a part of these summer programs including 5 Copperstar alumni students. Three of Copperstar’s talented students were cast. Leah Henthorne, Jake Bonar and Lois

Zozobrado will soon be on their way to the Great White Way! After participating in Copperstar's Summer Theatre Academy, all three will head over to New York in July; Jake and Leah will both be in *The King and I* and Lois will be in *Peter Pan*!

The SYPF Grant will allow Copperstar to kick off their newest program, a Teen Intensive camp called **Broadway Bound** which will offer a more focused program for teens (ages 12 and up) who want to develop their dancing, singing and acting abilities. Copperstar team Director, Mary-Jo Okawa and Choreographer, Laura Christian will be joined by New York Director, Music Director and performer, Stephen Wertz. **Broadway Bound** teens will have the amazing opportunity to work with these accomplished professionals. **Broadway Bound** will meet Saturdays in June and start each day of the two week session with classes in Dance, Singing, Acting and Technical Theatre. In the afternoons, the cast will rehearse for their production of *Disney's Beauty and the Beast Jr.* (performing June 27 & 28).

Thanks to the Arizona Community Foundation grant, Copperstar will also be able to offer additional scholarships for their **FunTales** Camps for ages 4-7 during all three sessions, **Summer Stars** Camps for ages 8-16, **Disney's Aladdin Kids**, June 2-13 and **Annie Kids** July 7-18. Copperstar will also be able to offer Extended Camp Care before and after camp hours for working parents. In addition, campers can order lunches in advance from Ladybug House of Sandwiches.

**Visit [www.CopperstarCamps.com](http://www.CopperstarCamps.com) to register or for more information.**

### **About Arizona Community Foundation**

In the 100-year-old tradition of community foundations across the country, the Arizona Community Foundation and its statewide Affiliates harness the collective generosity of thousands of Arizonans.

The Arizona Community Foundation and its Affiliates steward the gifts placed in their care with an eye toward permanence and growth, and from the investment earnings on the endowment, award millions of dollars in grants and scholarships every year.

Funding is awarded year-round to nonprofit organizations, government agencies and educational institutions for a variety of uses, including general operating support, programmatic support and capacity building. While most grants are made in Arizona, grants may be made nationally as well.

### **About Copperstar Repertory Co.**



**Stephen Wertz** is excited to be returning to Copperstar Repertory Company for *Broadway Bound Teen Intensive*. Stephen is an Assistant Administrator in his native, Denver, Co. where he recently returned. He had spent the previous 10 years teaching music and theatre in upstate New York where he is the Music Department Chairperson and head of an amazingly successful theater program. Stephen performed regionally as well as in NYC, including the Off-Broadway show *Our Life and Times (Newsical, The Musical)* and the title role in *Sweeney Todd, The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, to name a few. Stephen is

thrilled to be a part of this award winning theatre company and looks forward to returning to perform in *Broadway Buddies* in September.

**Laura Christian** is excited to be involved with Copperstar Repertory Company once again and thrilled to be teaching at their new studios. Laura graduated summa cum laude with a BA in Theatre and a Master's Degree in Secondary Education at ASU. Her training includes acting, vocal performance, and 15 years of dance focusing on pointe, ballet, jazz, and tap from Alan Baker an American Ballet Theatre and New York City Ballet soloist. Laura has directed, choreographed, and taught ballet, jazz, musical theatre, and acting classes with numerous companies across Arizona including Arizona Broadway Theatre, Broadway Palm Dinner Theatre, Copperstar Repertory Company, Chandler Center for the Arts, The Ballet Centre, and Greasepaint Youtheatre. Laura has been teaching and choreographing for Copperstar since 2009, most recently having directed and choreographed *Joseph and the*



*Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. Laura is also an active performer appearing professionally with Phoenix Theatre, Arizona Broadway Theatre, Cookie Company, and the Phoenix Symphony. Some of her favorite performance credits include *A Chorus Line* (Kristine), *Grease* (Frenchy), *The Nutcracker* (Butterfly/DrewDrop Soloist, Marzipan Soloist), *The Producers*, *Crazy For You*, *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, *Bye Bye Birdie*, *Anything Goes*, *The Music Man*, *A Funny Thing... Forum*, *Kiss Me Kate*, and *Damn Yankees*.



**Mary-Jo Okawa** is Copperstar's founder and Artistic Producing Director, Mary-Jo Okawa is an award winning educator who has been a professional director, choreographer and performer for over 20 years. A talented award winning educator in theatre, dance and vocal music, Mary-Jo is also an accomplished professional singer who has traveled throughout the United States, Asia and Southeast Asia sharing her talents. She is proud to have entertained our troops in the USO. Over the past six years, Mary-Jo has built Copperstar into a reputable theatre company which offers enrichment, education and entertainment to community members of all ages through high quality theatrical productions, camps, workshops and classes. In 2011, Mary-Jo was honored with the Gilbert Mayor's Cooley Award for an individual that made a significant contribution in the Arts. In 2010, Copperstar was awarded the Zelma Basha Salmeri Gallery Award for providing Gilbert with services enabling an expansion in the scope and quality of the arts. She is the proud mom of two amazing children, Shanti, a Senior at Mesquite High School and Chris, a Sophomore at University of Arizona as a Musical Theatre major. Mary-Jo teaches Music at Carlson Elementary School in Chandler. She is grateful for her loving supportive husband David. Mary-Jo finds great joy in the journey of creating in the theatre, enriching the lives of community members of all ages.

Copperstar Repertory Co. is entering their seventh season of professional quality entertainment, education and enrichment. Founded in Chandler, Arizona by an entrepreneurial and spirited group of professionals in 2008, Copperstar Repertory Co. has built a reputation for artistic achievement that has attracted both local and national support. Copperstar prides itself on growing a highly recognizable brand that is becoming synonymous with quality, innovation, and dazzling musical theatre in the East Valley. Copperstar's goal is to bring the joy of live performance to thousands of people each season through stunning performances and premiere education and outreach programs.

In the fall of 2013, Copperstar Studios opened at Pollack Plaza in Chandler with two beautiful state of the art dance studios. Copperstar Studios are buzzing with exciting activities with a wide variety of classes in singing, dancing and acting, performing arts camps, and rehearsals for their main stage productions. Copperstar also opened Copperstar Scene Shops at Sunset Plaza where they create the sets, props and costumes for all Copperstar shows.

Copperstar is a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to providing high quality enrichment, education and entertainment for community members of all ages. ***Bringing the Brilliance of Broadway to You!***

**Press Contact:**

***To set-up an interview, please contact Mary-Jo Okawa at [mjokawa@copperstarrep.org](mailto:mjokawa@copperstarrep.org) or call 480-250-2870***