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BETH EL CONGREGATION  
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Beth El  
Early Childhood  
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Spotlighters from page 35

cousin did and I watched her and it looked like fun," says Aleyna Akcam, 12, a student at Perry Hall Middle School. She caught the theater bug from her cousin.

In addition to budding actors, the academy also nourishes the talents of young writers. Midtown Academy student Izzy Incoentes, 12, hopes to be an author when he grows up.

"I hope that when I'm doing 'Twelfth Night' I'll get ideas, because I want to be an author."

**"I'm so glad I came again because it really just ups my self-esteem and has made me such a better person."**

—Danielle Shorts

A similar improvisation class was under way for the giggling lower school kids. Here "Acting = Action" was written on the board. The lower school program was new for the summer of 2011.

Gilman points with pride to the mix of campers: public and private school students, city and suburban children.

"As actors it's a really great opportunity. It's not just because diversity is good, but it makes the program better. It's all about the experiences you

bring to your play and when you have kids who have very different experiences and can share those experiences with each other, the production has a much deeper sense of community. We have kids who would never meet each other in their lives and they come here and they actually get to meet each other and come together, and they all like theater," he says.

For distracted teens, the Academy offers a solid grounding in the bottom lines skills needed for acting. They come away with a sense of discipline.

"Attention span is a very hard thing to come by these days and I think the program pushes kids. We're training them to be professional actors. What that takes is a lot of concentration, [and] a lot of repetition," says Gilman.

This past summer, the Academy moved from the Spotlighters Theatre on St. Paul Street to a new home at the Midtown Academy in Baltimore's Mt. Royal neighborhood. Of course, no acting camp would be complete without those all-important performances for family and friends. The student shows took place at Spotlighters, so the kids could have the full theatrical experience, with lighting, sets, staging, etc.

This past summer, the lower school kids performed an original piece; the middle school students tackled "Twelfth Night" and the high school students put on "'The Tempest'."

"I'm so glad I came again because it really just ups my self-esteem and has made me such a better person. I love it here," says Shorts.

For Information on the Young Actors Academy summer programs go to [spotlighters.org](http://spotlighters.org) or call 410-752-1225. ♦

Amy Landsman is a freelance writer.

# Chevra.

(Lifelong Friends.)

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