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## Standing ovation

July 13, 2010 · [Leave a Comment](#)

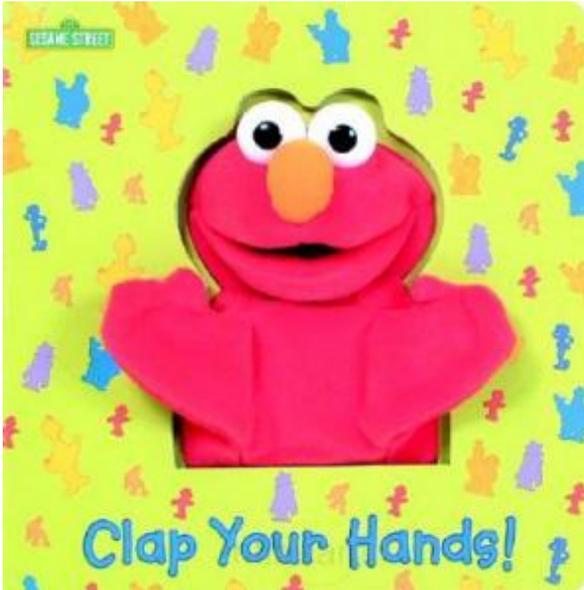


Clapping can be serious business

We've been to many a show that earned standing ovations—from the touring production of “August: Osage County” at [ASU Gammage](#) to Arizona Theatre Company’s “The Glass Menagerie” at the [Herberger Theater Center](#).

Sometimes shows that seem to deserve the honor fail to rouse the crowd. Other times patrons are on their feet for performances that feel uninspiring.

We rarely experience a standing ovation at the movie theater, unless it's for something like the 1975 cult classic “[The Rocky Horror Picture Show](#).”



Rocco Fiorentino has performed with Tony Bennett, Stevie Wonder and Elmo

But a “[Standing Ovation](#)” of sorts will be coming to movie theaters this week—in the form of a movie featuring a song and dancefest of young performers ala “[Glee](#)” or “[High School Musical](#).”

I’m a bit older than the average fan for this one, but can still appreciate the themes it tackles—including friendship, loyalty, competition, self-doubt and following one’s dreams.

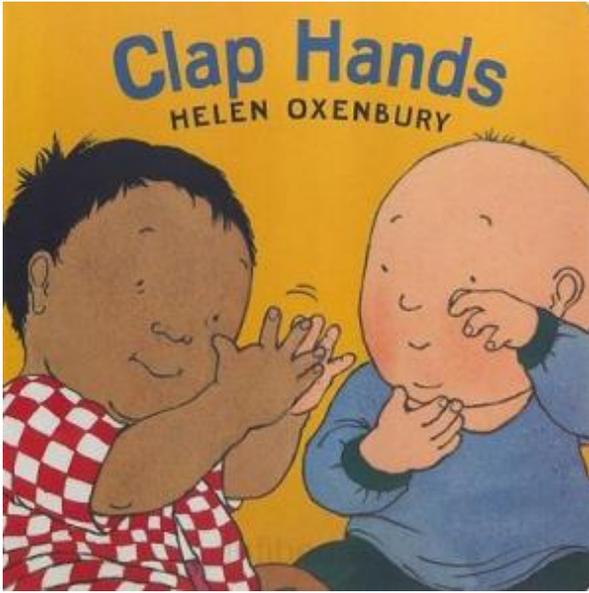
I spoke recently with two of the young performers who appear in the film—both of whom shared with me that they got involved at the suggestion of their voice teacher, Sal Dupree, who plays “Mr. Wiggs” in the movie.



Elevating clapping to a fine art at a 2009 Kinetica Art Fair

It reminded me of the importance of performing arts teachers of all sorts in the lives of young singers, dancers and actors. Lizabeth’s own voice teacher, Michelle Hakala, will soon be off to pursue graduate study and stage work in NYC—and I marvel at all she’s done to enhance Lizabeth’s confidence and technique.

Soon Lizabeth, a senior theater major at [Arizona School for the Arts](#), will be applying for college and conservatory study. Time passes so quickly, and I wonder what it must be like to have a piece of your child's young life preserved on film.



Babies seem to prefer seated ovations

In most cases, our memories are captured purely, but no less powerfully, by heart.

I always learn something, feel something, discover something when I talk with young performing artists, whether they're here in the Valley or performing elsewhere on stage or screen.

So it was when I chatted by phone with Alanna Palombo, who plays Alanna Wannabe in "Standing Ovation."



Alanna Palombo stars in "Standing Ovation"

First, go for it! Alanna says she really didn't expect to land a part when she auditioned at age six for a community theater production of "Annie," but she tried out just for practice and was cast as orphan Molly.

From there the career of this 10-year-old triple threat has soared. (It probably didn't hurt that mom put her in dance lessons at the ripe old age of two—something Palombo took to instantly).



Rocco Fiorentino is a musician and advocate

Second, believe in yourself! Pianist, composer and singer Rocco Fiorentino, a 13-year old “musician and humanitarian” who makes his film debut in “Standing Ovation,” praises the film’s “message of hope and inspiration.”

Fiorentino, who is blind due to premature birth, says the film mirrors his “really positive outlook on life.” His message to young movie-goers? “Do what you want to do,” urges Rocco. “And never give up on your dreams.”

Parents often say these sorts of things to their children, but teens too often meet them with rolling eyes and sighs of disgust. Picture taking your tweens to a movie that might actually help them get the picture.



Anita Blaytron's "Standing Ovation" at the DFW airport in Texas

The importance of family and friendship. The value of hard work and integrity. It’s all here—shining through in “20 original songs, 5 classic tunes and 13 spectacular dance numbers that feature over 100 talented dancers.”

A trip to see “Standing Ovation,” opening Friday, July 16, might be the very thing to inspire your child to find or pursue his or her passion.

In a media landscape riddled with mean girls and lean girls, with rough guys and tough guys—this movie sounds like a perfectly entertaining antidote.

–Lynn



Note: Check out [The Little Rock Foundation](#), a New Jersey non-profit organization established in 1997 that grew out of the frustration Rocco Fiorentino's parents felt in seeking resources to help children and families affected by blindness or visual impairment. Remember too that local organizations who work with visually-impaired youth and adults need ongoing community support.

Coming up: “Save the dates!” as Valley arts organizations announce upcoming fundraisers, News you can use from the [Arizona Commission on the Arts](#)

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