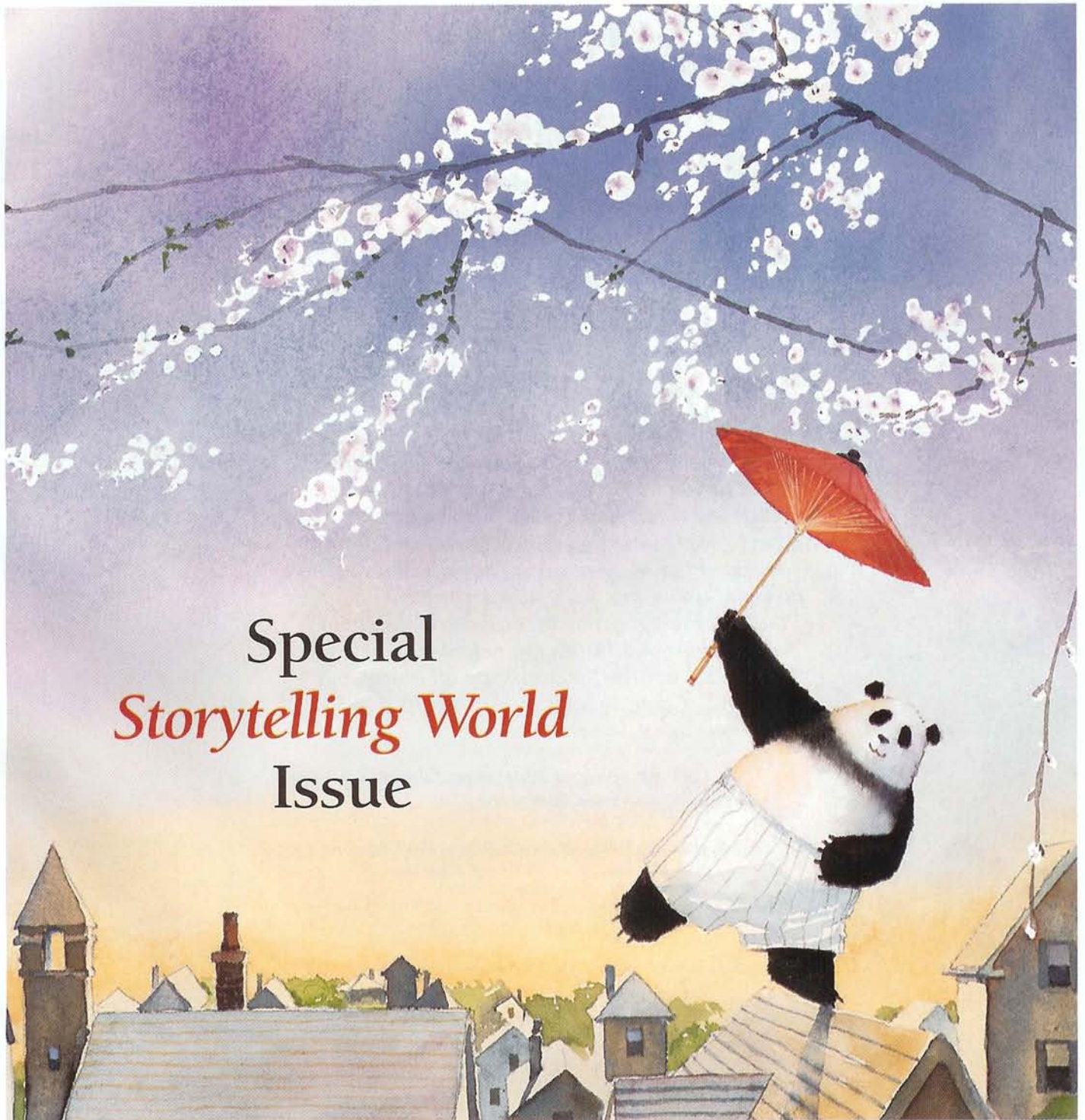


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Issue

Stagebridge Theatre Company

MARYANN MASLAN

Stagebridge Theatre Company in Oakland, California, is the oldest senior theatre company in the nation. Founded in 1978, it bridges the cultural and generational gap between senior storytellers, actors, dancers, and singers. The company is comprised of 125 adults; senior storytellers range in age from 50 to 85.

"Stagebridge offers classes, school assemblies, healthy aging workshops, and performances, and some of our tellers do it all," said Liz Nichols, Stagebridge's storytelling director. She recently joined the internationally recognized storytelling staff which includes Erica Lann-Clark, Ruth Halpern, Marijo and Clara Yen. The company also performs on television and radio. They reach more than 30,000 people a year in Northern California.

Stagebridge is currently working on a project to bring together residents of a Berkeley retirement residence and a nearby elementary school. "We'll teach

storytelling workshops at both places and then bring them together for an intergenerational story swap," Nichols said.

Stagebridge programs also place senior storytellers in the classroom to help children improve literacy, writing, social, and

communication skills. The program in Oakland Public Schools is in its final year of a three-year study funded by the U.S. Department of Education.

On another front, Stagebridge is a pioneer in bringing theatre arts to training programs for healthcare professionals. Storytelling helps healthcare personnel realize the vitality, humor, and wisdom of seniors.

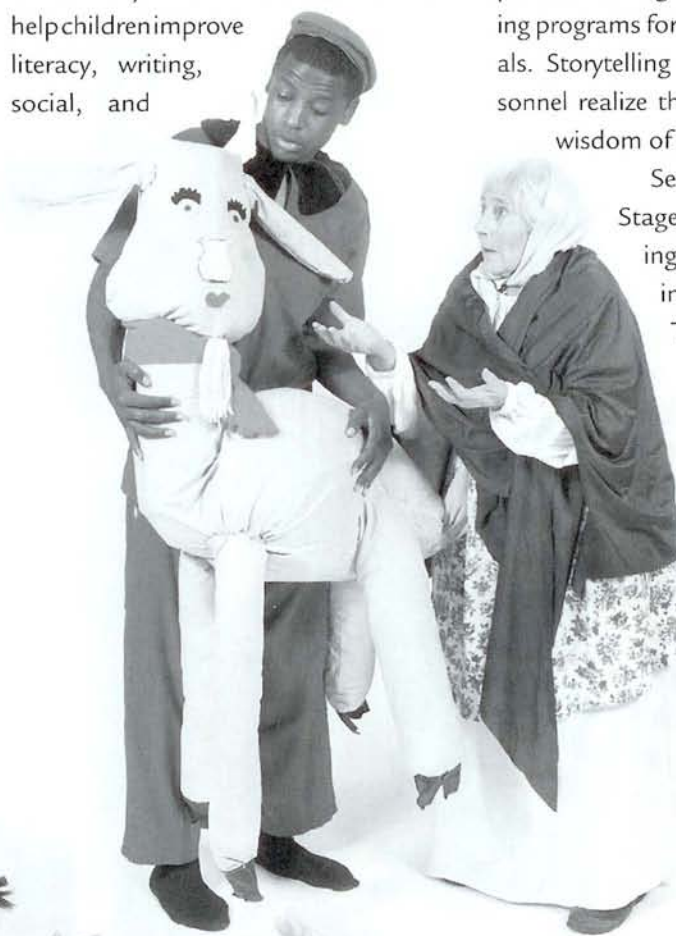
Senior storytellers with Stagebridge also present living history programs that include "Civil Rights Tales" and "World War II - at Home." A "Vietnam Tales" project is being developed.

In an effort to preserve the past, educate future generations, and build stronger intergenerational and cultural ties, storytellers stand out as living gifts to the community. Senior tellers at Stagebridge celebrate the joy of telling

from that first moment of silence to the smile that comes from the sound of applause.

For more information and for Stagebridge products, call (510) 444.4755 or visit www.stagebridge.org

Maryann Maslan (maryann@stagebridge.org) is the director of marketing for Stagebridge. She has a MFA in playwriting and theatre arts, plus extensive experience helping people tell their stories through ethnic dance, intergenerational projects, feature journalism, and senior theatre.





“Students who worked with Stagebridge tellers gained a greater awareness and understanding of storytelling as an art form.”

*Stuart Kandell,
Stagebridge founder and director*

“The experiences are powerful for the students, sensitizing them to all aspects of aging.”

*Patricia Hess,
San Francisco State University*



“Young and old share their stories and it breaks down stereotypes on both sides.”

*Liz Nichols,
Storytelling Director*