



With a backdrop of chalkboard paint, stage scenery can be easily changed. Velvet curtains glide on a custom-made curved metal rod to frame the work of young artists Zane (right, sketching on chalkboard) and Zara Hedaya.

CREATIVITY ENTERS STAGE RIGHT

A Tampa family's spare guest bedroom is remodeled into a bustling little theater. Its wee performers, and their parents, give it rave reviews.

BY DENISE GEE PHOTOGRAPHS BY WILLIAM STITES STYLED BY STEPHANIE DAVIS



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adies and gentlemen, boys and girls! Introducing Zane and Zara!" proclaims Zane Hedaya, the 6-year-old magician, stepping through the velvet curtains of his playroom stage. His lovely assistant, Zara, 4, follows with a curtsy to mom Carrie, smiling in her beanbag chair.

"Watch us make this stuffed animal disappear," Zane announces. "Close your eyes, Mommy!" Carrie dutifully obliges. "Ta-dah! OK—open your eyes!" Sure enough, the stuffed bunny has vanished—having just been flung backstage. "Wow!" Carrie cheers. "Bravo!"

Such shows play out almost daily since Carrie and Harry Hedaya remodeled their four-bedroom Tampa house to include a playroom, complete with a curtained stage. Working with interior designer Debbie Clifton

Perez, the Hedayas and their friends now enjoy a modern-day Shakespearean realm with durable materials, abundant storage space, and dramatic flair, thanks to the room's royal colors of purple, gold, and silver. To ensure adequate play space, the former guest suite's bathroom was removed to create a 13x18-foot room that "really only needed a clean-up sink," Perez says.

To decorate the room like a performance studio, floor-to-ceiling cabinetry—in peacock purple with gold crown molding—takes on the appearance of paneled walls. There, gilt-frame prints of Elizabethan-era >> on 144D

A small crafts table (top left) is a magnet for big ideas. Carrie, a music teacher (playing guitar, top right), knows that melodies bring out the best in children. "Together we create some lively and lovely music," she says.



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actors add a grand touch. Even more courtly flair stems from the room's metallic silver and gold commercial-grade vinyl tile flooring, with squares set on point for a festive harlequin design. No doubt the star of the room is its stage: a 6x14-foot oak platform standing 4 inches high and spotlighted by halogen track lights.

"Wardrobe" is an easily accessible rack built into one corner of the room's cabinetry. There, the children and their friends don dramatic garb à la Buzz Lightyear and Cinderella. "Often a show is decided on by what costume is most appealing at the moment," Carrie says.

The room is fun for adults too. The space doubles as a media room with a TV, DVD player, and >> on 144F

Rolling easels attached to cabinetry (top left) save floor space and add flexibility; framed prints of Elizabethan actors make door panels look more like walls. Next to the stage is the "spaceship" (top right). There, a short ladder leads to a door with planetary cutouts, behind which a "passenger" can sit on a 3x3-foot platform and enjoy imaginary adventures. A costume rack and a rolling box of props (left) are used when transforming into a wispy fairy or brave knight.



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family computer—a particular favorite for the adults. “Actually,” Carrie says, “when Harry and I take our own work in the room, we also think more creatively.”

Ultimately, when Zane and Zara get older, their interests will change. So, too, will the room, Carrie says. “We’d like to make it into a home theater room for adults, with pull-down screens, some big comfy chairs, a projector, and a good sound system.

“Who knows?” Carrie adds with a playful look—as well as optimism. “Maybe we’ll be in here watching or listening to the creative duo of Zane and Zara, after all.” @

A hallway to the former guest room now functions as the playroom’s gallery. Two walls lined with corkboard show off artwork by the Hedaya children and their friends.

This room encourages our children to be confident, to think for themselves. CARRIE HEDAYA