

Teens Help Give Voice to Audiobook Boom

Only one audiobook company in the burgeoning market employs teen actors to play the roles of teen characters in their productions. The results: Award-winning productions, critical acclaim and most importantly to the company founder, the opportunity to give teens serious work. Full Cast Audio, in Syracuse, NY, also boasts one of the industry's most talented young people.

Syracuse, NY ([PRWeb](#)) November 6, 2006 -- At Full Cast Audio, there's only one way to produce award-winning audiobooks: By letting kids do it.

This one-of-a kind audiobook publishing company, based in Syracuse, NY, regularly employs genuine kids playing the roles of children and teens in the company's productions. That's unlike any other company in the market, where adults feign young voices on young-adult recordings.

Full Cast's commitment to children is turning heads -- among the nation's top authors and within the burgeoning audio publishing industry, which topped \$871 million in sales in 2005.

"You can't get that vocal freshness out of adult vocal chords," says Tamora Pierce, best-selling fantasy author who has recorded seven books with FCA. "You are always aware it is not a kid's voice, that it's not a teen's voice. But there's also a level of energy and adrenaline that kids bring."

Consider some of Full Cast's groundbreaking results, achieved in the span of its five-year existence:

- Ryan Sparkes, at 13 one of FCA's most accomplished actors, became the youngest actor ever to narrate an audiobook. He was 10 at the time.
- Full Cast won a 2005 Audie Award, audio publishing's equivalent of the Oscar, for a production narrated by then high-school student Spencer Murphy. Murphy narrated "Buddha Boy," by Kathe Koja, which won Best Audio Drama. Full Cast was an Audie finalist in 2004 and 2006 for titles narrated by teens.
- The top-selling Pierce is writing a novel tailored for one of FCA's young actresses and the novel will debut on audiobook rather than print: A first in publishing.
- Full Cast's productions consistently earn starred reviews and often appear on various national library association lists of best listening selections for teens. The company also won two "Listen Up" Awards from Publisher's Weekly and several Golden Headset Awards.

In a culture which often undervalues the talents and contributions of children and teens, FCA company founder Bruce Coville is one CEO who cherishes working with young people. He has a deep-seated belief that young people long for meaningful work and they prove him right every time in the recording booth.

"The pleasure that our young casts take in what can be pretty grueling studio sessions has been confirmation of that longing," says Coville, also a best-selling children's author with more than 90 books to his credit. "The kids bring us energy and excitement, and to be honest, working with them gives me hope for the future. We are blessed to work with some of the most amazing kids I've ever met, kids who are vibrantly alive and clear-eyed about their plans, hopes and dreams."

Sparkes, 13, one of FCA's most accomplished actors, is an up-and-coming voice actor in the popular world of audiobooks.

Sparkes' career started at 8 when he earned his first role with Full Cast Audio. Since his debut, his performances have garnered glowing reviews. He's about to begin recording his 16th production, due out this spring.

"He acts, and has acted since he was nine, with his entire being," Coville says. "His intensity of concentration is remarkable."

Sparkes, of Baldwinsville, NY, began with his first minor role at 8 and quickly added the roles of lead character (at 9) and narrator (at 10). He became the youngest actor in the industry to ever narrate an audiobook when he provided the first-person narration at age 10 for "Moongobble and Me: The Dragon of Doom," by Coville, also a children's author.

In addition to other roles, Sparkes went on to record the next two books in the "Moongobble" series, playing Edward, who is the lead character and the story's narrator. Not all actors can pull off first-person narration, but Sparkes excelled immediately.

"One of the trickiest aspects of first-person narration is making a clear distinction between the narrative text and lines spoken by the narrator's character as dialogue," says Coville, who directed all three productions. "It takes a subtle shifting of intonation, and Ryan was able to master this very quickly -- much to my relief. He just has a gift for this kind of thing."

Industry reviewers agree. Several publications have taken note of Sparkes' fine performances. Audiobookstoday.com wrote of the first Moongobble: "Sparkes' narration is so impressive you find yourself listening in awe."

AudioFile Magazine wrote: "(Sparkes') youthful exuberance carries the innocence of a bygone age and may remind older listeners of the sort of boy heroes that populated late-50s and early-60s children's films, or, say, "Leave It to Beaver."

Sparkes also performs in community and school theater, plays hockey, golf and tennis, sings in his church and school choirs, plays clarinet and has earned the rank of First Class Boy Scout. In school he's on high honor roll. He plans to attend college for musical education and acting. Sparkes is set to return to the studio this fall to tackle the fourth "Moongobble," which is due out this spring.

"A lot of kids don't get this chance and I feel great that I get that chance to read professionally," Sparkes says. "I thought it was fun just reading and doing the work. Then there's the added bonus that I get paid to do what I love."

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