



The cast of "Jim Henson's Sid the Science Kid Live: Let's Play!" will bring the PBS Kids television show to life with two shows Saturday at the Lake Michigan College Mendel Center Mainstage Theatre. Photos provided

# Sounds of Science

'Sid the Science Kid' comes to life at Mendel Center on Saturday

By JEREMY D. BONFIGLIO  
HP Features Writer

BENTON HARBOR — Translating an animated television show to the theatrical stage has its share of challenges.

For dancer and puppeteer Sherrell Whitmire, who portrays Gabriela in the touring production of "Jim Henson's Sid the Science Kid Live: Let's Play!" the biggest obstacle was quite literally stepping inside the character's oversized shoes.

"It's full-costume puppeteering from head to toe," Whitmire says by telephone during a tour stop in Saginaw. "So it gets really, really hot, but all I'm thinking is there are tons of kids in the audience who know this show through PBS. They know how Gabriela acts, so I'm challenged with bringing her to life. You want to keep that magic alive for the kids."

## If you go

**What:** "Jim Henson's Sid the Science Kid Live: Let's Play!"

**When:** 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. Saturday

**Where:** Lake Michigan College Mendel Center Mainstage Theatre, 2755 E. Napier Ave., Benton Harbor

**How much:** \$16-\$26

**Contact:** 927-1221 or [www.lmcmainstage.org](http://www.lmcmainstage.org)

**Artist info:** [www.gablesgrove.com](http://www.gablesgrove.com); [www.henson.com](http://www.henson.com)

Based on the Emmy-nominated PBS Kids television series that debuted in 2008, "Jim Henson's Sid the Science Kid Live: Let's Play!" — which has back-to-back matinee performances Saturday at the Lake Michigan College Mendel Center Mainstage Theatre — uses comedy and music to promote exploration, discovery and science.

The stage show centers on students Sid (Carolyn Wells), May (Dionne Eleby), Gabriela (Whitmire) and Gerald (Cesar Razza) as they explore their five senses through fun games and interactive experiments, as well as asking curious questions and finding the answers with the help of Teacher Susie (Sarah Krauss).

"She has them bring different things to school and through those different objects they learn about sight, sound, taste, smell and touch," Whitmire says. "Teacher Susie expresses all of those through songs such as 'Detective Rover,' where she's describing how dogs have one of the most powerful senses of smell. It's a very interactive show with a lot of singing and a lot of dancing and asking the audience to participate with us as well."

"Sid the Science Kid Live: Let's Play!" was designed for the stage by Tony Award-nominated actor John Tartaglia, the creator and writer of "ImaginOcean"; Michael Lewis, the veteran Broadway performer and producer of "ImaginOcean"; and



Sherrell Whitmire

The Jim Henson Company. It's also the same team that produced last year's "Dinosaur Train Live! Buddy's Big Adventure."

Tartaglia has been working in the puppetry industry since he was 16 years old after joining the "Sesame Street" team, performing many minor characters, including Phoebe, and being the understudy for Kevin Clash's Elmo. He went on to perform Ernie for the second season of "Play with Me Sesame" and Oscar the Grouch for "Sesame Street 4D." He also created and puppeteered the roles of Princeton (the recent college grad) and Rod (the closeted Republican investment banker) in the Tony Award-winning Broadway musical "Avenue Q." And last year, he was cast as the new puppeteer for Gobo Fraggle of "Fraggle Rock," replacing Jerry Nelson, who died in 2012.

Whitmire, who is primarily a commercial dancer for TV and film by trade, says it was both the animated series and Tartaglia's

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Trout Stock Revival riding Decky Mounts

## SCIENCE KID

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involvement in “Sid the Science Kid Live: Let’s Play!” that drew her into the show.

“I used to substitute teach in Ohio and used to have my kids watch this show,” Whitmire says. “I moved to New York two years after subbing to pursue my dance dream and I saw this random audition. I knew this was the show I used to have the kids watch, so I went. I never had any experience puppeteering, but I wanted to give it a shot

because of John Tartaglia, who is so well known in this world.”

Whitmire, a Columbus, Ohio, native, has been dancing since she was 7 years old. She graduated from Ohio State University, where she studied both dance and social work before heading to New York. She says that dance background has certainly been tested during this production.

“As dancers, it’s challenged us to go above and beyond, and that’s what I love about this show,”

Whitmire says. “Most of us are trained technical dancers so we are doing

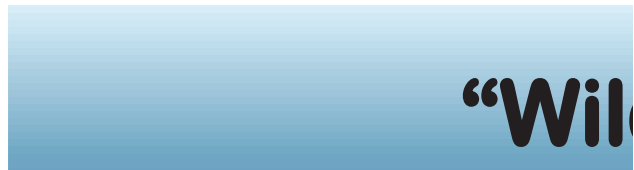
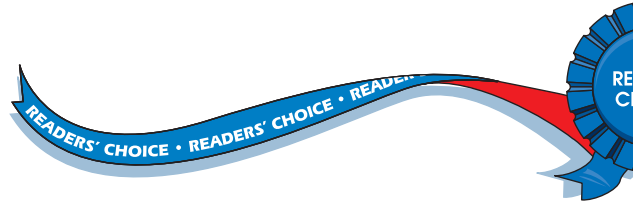
real dancing in these huge costumes. We had to learn how to breathe right, and I have to move so much bigger than I’m used to.”

Whitmire describes her character as being smart and a bit of a tomboy, who, along with Sid, is the leader of the classroom

who loves to ask and answer questions.

“I know there are kids who can relate to her; I certainly can relate to her,” she says. “I haven’t had any problem channeling my inner Gabriela.”

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