

# Class Act

Following her heart put Lisina Longo on top of her game

**G**rowing up in New York, Lisina Longo doesn't remember life without the theater. "I spent much of my childhood years in the wings of theaters and listening to great actors perform in my grandmother's living room at dinner parties," she says. "I think it was in my blood."

The granddaughter of screenwriter Arnold Manoff (*Ivanhoe*, *Route 66*, *Casbah*), Longo started producing her own plays when she was just a little girl. "I started putting on plays with the girls in my building, down in the community room," she says. "I would organize everything."

Today in Atlanta, Longo is the proud owner of The Company Acting Studio, her very own theater company in Midtown, celebrating its 10th anniversary this month.

As the only conservatory-style theater in the city, The Company Acting Studio works with kids, teens and adults. Longo and her partner, John Stoneburner, who used to be her student, teach the Stanislavski and Stella Adler techniques. "This is my dream job!" she says, proudly sharing the names of former students who have gone on to star on Broadway, and in feature films, TV programs and countless commer-



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cials. "I believe that I've provided a haven for people who did not know you can train this seriously."

Atlanta was supposed to be just another "stop on the way," Longo admits. But, shortly after arriving in 1993, she fell in love with the city's theater scene, Southern hospitality, and her supportive colleagues. "It felt like home," she says. "The theater community really welcomed me. They respected where I had come from and that made it really easy to be here."

After teaching one class that turned into several, before she knew it, Longo's theater company became a fixture in Atlanta's burgeoning art scene. —ELINA FUHRMAN

**When did you realize that teaching was your calling?**

I wanted to be an actor; I started off doing that. But then I found out I was good at a lot of other things: organizing, stage managing, interpreting scripts and, at times, I wanted to be a director. I had the opportunity to do a lot of different things, but one thing I really enjoyed was coaching.

**What do most people not know about you?**

I have a black belt in karate.

**What is your best attribute?**

Probably my insight.

**Describe your perfect day off.**

Sleeping in and shopping.

**Where is your favorite place in Atlanta?**

I love the Fox Theatre! It's the most beautiful interior that I've ever seen in a theatre.

**What are your guilty pleasures?**

I'm hooked on computer Solitaire.

**What's your favorite TV show?**

Anything on Court TV. I love those real cold case files, forensic files...all that stuff!

Photography by Elina Fuhrman