

FAQ: After School Theatre

(Note: while most of this information is still relevant and reflects our program goals and values, it is specific to a typical in-person school year. Please see our Online Theatre document for information on how our 2020-2021 virtual programming will be different.)

What is After School Theatre? When does it happen?

We are proud to offer a robust after school theatre program at Salmon Bay. Our program includes multiple after school plays and several after school classes offered over the course of our school year. Our typical schedule is as follows:

- Fall K-8 Play: September - November
- Middle School Playwriting Class: November - January
- Winter K-5 Play: January - March
- Spring Middle School Play: March - May
- K-2 Creative Drama Class: April - May
- 3rd-5th Grade Playwriting: May - June

Who runs it?

All after school theatre activities are organized and produced by our Theatre Committee, a group of highly-engaged parent volunteers as well as our Program Coordinator, and receive the support of FOSB and the administration. Our committee is dedicated to bringing highly-skilled directors and teaching artists to work with the students of Salmon Bay. The committee works hard to ensure that decisions reflect the needs of the students, the parent body, and the school at large.

The play rehearsal and performance process is similarly supported by parent volunteers. We ask that every family contributes ~10 hours or equivalent to the play rehearsal process. There are many ways to accomplish this, and a lot of them afford you opportunities to see your student's experience.

What are the aims of the program?

As an educational theatre program, our goal is to provide multiple, varied, meaningful, and differentiated opportunities for children at every grade level, while supporting and contributing to the Salmon Bay community at large.

In our programming, we strive to create multi-age communities where students have the opportunity to learn from and support each other, to build leadership skills, and demonstrate initiative and independence in their learning. In all of our projects we aim to provide each student with an experience that honors their individual talents and creativity while differentiating to their age, experience, endurance, ability, and commitment level. We plan our classes and plays respecting students' time, making every effort to ensure they have a voice, and are an integral part of the experience. We select our content and material with the larger community in mind, upholding the Salmon Bay culture of promoting understanding for multiple perspectives, individuality, and difference.

What will my child be doing?

Students work alongside our theatre educators in a student-centric process to create the play. We aim to give our students ownership of as many aspects of the play as possible, while still preparing a full length play and ensuring a successful experience for all students.

When students are onstage, they are working to create expressive characters, develop and employ acting technique, collaborate with their fellow actors to tell a story, follow direction, communicate and test their ideas onstage, reflect critically on their own work, support their peers and celebrate their successful theatre endeavor. This takes an amazing amount of time, practice and coordination. Rehearsing one day a week for eight weeks might be just enough time to get one scene ready for performance.

When your student is not on stage, they are still working behind-the-scenes. This backstage world has a life of its own. Students may be rehearsing with another director in a second rehearsal space, memorizing their scenes, running lines or blocking with other students, preparing to make an entrance, troubleshooting a surprise change that just occurred in the play, changing costumes, working with their props or set pieces, helping other students prepare to go onstage, moving from greenroom to backstage, or one of the other myriad activities that need to occur for a play to happen. (Not to mention tackling homework or getting to know each other.)

This work is just as important, and many of our families who have seen it attest to it being an incredibly formative experience for their child. We find this especially true during the K-8, where students of all ages are collaborating with children they would rarely encounter during the school day. We would encourage you to volunteer at rehearsals, backstage, or in the greenroom to see it for yourself.

We believe that theatre provides an opportunity for students to not only learn theatre skills, but more importantly to develop and practice skills that will serve them in every facet of life. Skills like creative problem solving, confidence, focus, accountability, dedication, expressive body language, oral communication skills, patience, kindness, courage, risk-taking, both teamwork and independence, determination, time management skills, adaptability, handling success, handling disappointment, leadership, community building, shared joy and appreciation for the work of others are almost always at play in theatre, and hopefully part of a process that is equal parts fulfilling, challenging and fun.

What are the different levels of commitment and what do they mean?

For each of our productions, we offer students and families to select the commitment level that best suits their student. There are four* different ways that students can be involved with our productions. Each of these roles involves a great deal of collaborative work, so it is important for all participants in our productions to commit to working kindly with one another.

*During the Middle School Play, we do not have “JFF” roles - just Medium, Serious, and Crew.

Acting: Just For Fun (JFF)

If your student is young and/or is balancing a lot of additional commitments, they might succeed in a “Just For Fun” role. Students in a JFF role usually meet once a week for between 60-90 minutes until tech and dress, when they will come to additional rehearsals. These students are usually cast in groups, and get to collaborate with the directors to bring their own personality and ideas to their characters. Our JFF actors are asked to rehearse and memorize their lines outside of rehearsal time - our recommendation is to run through lines with your JFF student once a day. Our JFF actors are usually paired with older actors in Medium and/or Serious parts who help them find their positions onstage. Students who are brand new to theatre will do well in this role, as there is a great deal of built in mentorship from older students and individual attention from our directing team.

Acting: Medium (M)

If your student is balancing several other commitments and is ready for a larger part than a JFF role, a Medium role might be a good fit. Students in Medium roles will likely attend between 1-3 rehearsals per week. This is the ideal spot for a student who is excited about theatre, but may not be able to commit to working a great deal outside of rehearsal due to additional activities. This also is a great commitment to sign up for if

your student is older but less experienced with theatre; a Medium role offers a full experience as an actor in a play without expecting as much as a student in a Serious role. Students in Medium roles should prepare to spend 15 minutes per day outside of rehearsal practicing lines and movement.

Acting: Serious (S)

If your student is older and/or more experienced in theatre, they may be ready for a Serious role. Being in a Serious role does not guarantee a certain amount of stage time - a character who appears in the background of several scenes with several lines would be a Serious role. Additionally, a character who only appears once but has a long monologue or lots of lines in that scene could also be a Serious role. Serious roles are more about the amount of time your student is willing to commit both in and out of rehearsals than the amount of lines or stage time your student has. Students with high self-motivation tend to do well in Serious roles, as memorizing and practicing outside of rehearsal is absolutely essential. Additionally, we often use characters in Serious roles as built-in helpers for students in Medium or JFF roles. Students in Serious roles should prepare to spend 15-30 minutes per day practicing lines and movement.

Crew

If your student is more excited about crafting and creating props, set pieces, and lighting or sound effects than speaking onstage, they may be well suited to a role as a member of our Crew. Crew members will be working both individually and collaboratively on arts and crafts projects, led by our technical director. Under the leadership of our technical director, students in crew will not only find and create our props and sets as appropriate - generally crew doesn't actively build set items since we have a lot of pre-built items that we reuse with new decoration. They will also be responsible during our performances for carrying and placing set and prop pieces on and offstage, arranging sets and props at the beginning of each tech and dress rehearsal. For each production, a few Crew students will be operating our sound and light boards: this is typically two roles, so not everyone will be able to do so during the performances, but everyone will have an opportunity to help find sound effects and learn how to create light cues. Please note: participating as a Crew member is equivalent to acting in a Serious role in terms of time at rehearsal, as **Crew members must attend all technical and dress rehearsals**. Crew members must be in Grades 3+.

What is the program cost? What is my student's tuition paying for? Are scholarships available?

To ensure that every student in After School Theatre has a successful and positive experience, we hire working professionals who have experience both in the professional theatre world, as well as experience as theatre educators. The expenses of this program are higher than what we ask for in tuition, and we rely on the generosity of the Salmon Bay community, contributions from FOSB and our families to make up the difference and to continue to provide this excellent programming.

We are proud to offer competitive pricing for our programs. Registration costs **\$165** for our plays and classes. Your student's tuition goes directly to our After School Theatre Program, and contributes to stipends for our Teaching Artists and Directors (all professionals with experience and training in theatre and education), materials for props, set pieces, and costumes, the acquisition and commission of engaging scripts for our productions, and more.

We also understand the financial strain of living in Seattle and raising a family, and are proud to offer partial and full scholarships to all students who would be otherwise unable to participate in our programming. We strongly believe that theatre should be accessible for everyone, regardless of their financial situation. For more information on scholarships or payment plans, contact Program Coordinator Biz Freebairn.

How can I get involved?

There are countless ways to lend your support for our programs. We depend on our family volunteers to help out with rehearsals, provide snacks, take cast photos, and much more. If you are available during those precious after school hours and would like to volunteer at a rehearsal, please reach out. This could mean supervising students as they work on tech projects or helping a group of students practicing lines. When tech and dress come around, we need support in our backstage area, helping serve and sell concessions, assisting with costumes, and managing our students in the greenroom. If you aren't available during our rehearsal times but still want to help out, there are lots of jobs that can be done on your own or at home.

Of course, we are always welcoming new members to our After School Theatre Committee. If you would like to join the committee or talk more about what that entails, please contact Program Coordinator Biz Freebairn at sbafschooltheatre@gmail.com.