

# GOING OUT IS IN AGAIN



ARTS EDUCATION programs are back to enriching students with experiential education

In the last issue of *Backstage News*, we were celebrating the triumphant kick-off of our 2022-23 Arts Education season and welcoming back school audiences for the first time in more than 2 years! Since the fall, we have been overjoyed to welcome to the Theater nearly 10,000 students and educators (and counting!) from throughout Central Virginia for quality educational and enriching live arts events that capture imaginations, broaden perspectives, and tap into new ways of learning.

"It is hard to believe that we are now over half-way through our Arts Education season," shares The Paramount's Education & Outreach Manager Cathy von Storch, "a season we celebrate and are so grateful for each and every day. From the moments of first school bus arrivals to final waves goodbye — the sights and sounds of all the children in anticipation, with faces aglow, questions aplenty on arrival signaling teachers have prepared them, AMAZING artists taking to the stage bringing important stories to life, from history and literature to science and math, plays packed with hope and joy and messages of 'I matter', and the clapping, and more clapping, gasps, sometimes tears, truly the purest of human interaction, radiantly signaling to all of us MANY opened minds and grateful hearts."

It's not just The Paramount or the students who are enjoying this return to the Theater, either. Educators at every level are more than ready to re-integrate experiences beyond the classroom with their learning plans for their students. What comes with these off-site experiences, what students get out of them, aren't necessarily lessons that can be instructed or demonstrated — it's the active participation, the opportunity to apply learned social skills in new environments and make connections to the "real world", that resonates on a deeper level.

Aaron Eichorst, Coordinator of Fine & Performing Arts at Charlottesville City Schools, says, "I have a great sense of pride in helping to facilitate field trips for our city school children to attend a production at The Paramount. Bringing students from disparate neighborhoods

and backgrounds together under one roof physically unifies us. In these instances, The Paramount becomes a safe space that welcomes all regardless of race, class, ability, gender, or any other label that might separate us. I feel proud to play a role in bringing students to experience the arts in this context. I feel hopeful that we are planting the seeds for the future — that what students do as children they will also enjoy and do as adults whether that is as a performer or as an audience member or both."

Dama Schneider, Lead Coach, Visual and Performing Arts, Albemarle County Public Schools, adds, "For many Albemarle County students, Arts Education programs at The Paramount include a lot of firsts: their first time in downtown Charlottesville, their first time seeing a live performance, their first time at The Paramount, their first time in any venue of this size and age. This is a space that holds such cultural history. The Paramount continues to provide opportunities for students to connect their experience of performing arts events to their learning in the classroom, to one another, and to the fabric of our community. There is no comparison to the joy and energy that children share when attending events together. We are so fortunate to have access to this amazing resource."

"Overall, the feedback we receive from educators about these Arts Education experiences is overwhelmingly positive and appreciative," continues Cathy. "From the educational value and diverse content to the level of quality and artistry with each production, to the financial assistance available to ensure all have access, educators from all over Central Virginia continue to be eager to bring their students to the Theater. And our hearts have melted many times with hundreds of thank you letters from teachers and students, artwork too, not only filled with gratitude for the amazing show, but also for the generous donors who help make it possible, and for our amazing Paramount staff, Education Committee, and volunteers who work so hard and are such a vital part of the entire program!" ■



Photo: Franklin Knox

Stone Robinson  
Elementary  
School Bright  
Stars say  
THANK YOU  
after attending  
It's Okay to  
Be Different –  
Stories by Todd  
Parr, October  
24, 2022.

