



ALL THE WORLD'S a (KIDS') Stage

LOCAL CHILDREN'S
THEATERS ARE CREATING
'CULTURAL NINJAS'

BY ALEXIS REID

I often feel like I live in my car. Hundreds of miles in a dusty sedan littered with granola-bar wrappers and the sweaty water bottles of absent-minded children. Hostile demands for the soundtracks to *Hamilton* or *Waitress* are usually the only greeting I get when picking them up from school, and then it's off to the races.

Soccer practice for the oldest, followed by guitar lessons, dance, knitting — and then there's theater. Most of their activities are only one day a week. Even soccer, which elicits a few grumbles when there's a tournament, doesn't compare to the agony of being part of a full-length musical production.

Yes, it's true: Few things are as demanding as theater life. Yet plenty of dedicated parents and faithful instructors know that few things are as worth the caffeine-induced effort. The schedules are grueling, the productions are almost always underfunded and understaffed, and — given the ages of the main players — rehearsals tend to look like herding cats with tiny bladders.

Seriously, try drawing feline whiskers on a wiggling 8-year-old.

Fortunately, Eugene is home to three incredible youth arts programs: Rose Children's Theatre, Upstart Crow Children's Theatre and the John G. Shedd Institute for the Arts. All three organizations empower and nurture our youngest and most vulnerable citizens through their own unique perspective and experience of theatrical arts.