

PERFORMING ARTS – THEATRE, DANCE, FESTIVALS

THEATRE

Boomers love theatre. Do you secretly yearn to get on stage? Or volunteer behind the scenes? What resonates with you? Where can you get involved? An ever-changing theatre landscape offers limitless opportunities to engage in all aspects of theatre.

Portland beckons theatre-lovers with rich, vibrant, opportunities for every interest and budget. Large, established venues anchor the theatrical panorama, enriched with a delightful, diverse mixture of quality regional and local productions. You can choose innovative and experimental, ethnic and social statement, and ambitious blends with original music and visual arts media.

From new and original to classical, to new twists on timeless favorites, to the innovative and extremely physical, it's on stage here. Passionate homegrown PDX troupes even perform on converted warehouse stages. Choose from mime, clowns, puppets and street theatre, to popular summer outdoor stages. Youth theatre, classes and outreach bring theatre to all communities.

But for Boomers, the actual performance by actors, directors, and musicians is the tip of the iceberg in theatre.

Being on Stage: Acting and Storytelling

Want to lose the timid and get on stage. Haven't acted since junior high? You're in the right place. Do a little homework first, though, because theatres have different needs and prerequisites for performers. Large and medium-sized professional theatres generally cast and hire equity and non-equity actors. Smaller and independent theatres may stage productions with a volunteer (unpaid) cast. Some train you in advance. Others give you on-the-set training.

Smaller community theatres are good starting places because of their all-volunteer cast and crew. For example, at the [Magenta Theatre](#) in downtown Vancouver, you can audition to act, understudy someone, or work hands-on behind the scenes. Or learn about acting or improv. Tasks such as building and taking down sets, changing scenes, sewing costumes, running the lights and helping on show nights is a fun way to learn theatre ins and outs.

Storytelling is another great way to get in front of an audience. Storytellers share vivid personal stories on stage, believing that to be human is to have a story to share. Special workshops help storytellers learn how to develop and present stories to live audiences. Interested? Attend a show. Story theatre groups include:

- [Portland Storytellers Guild](#). Storytellers share stories monthly, teach storytelling skills to ordinary people, and hold free "story" swaps to introduce the craft.
- The [Portland Story Theatre](#). Gives voice to the true stories of ordinary people through workshops and puts them in front of audience.



- [Back Fence PDX](#). Offers performances and storytelling and writing classes.

Behind the Scenes

Off-stage roles are filled with people like you who make it happen, and theatre volunteering attracts volunteers for many reasons. The joy of being creatively involved in making plays happen. Using a special skill or interest such as construction, costuming, music, organizing or meeting the public. Or the simple love of theatre and desire to experience it up close.

Volunteers greet and usher. They design, build and change sets, sew costumes, apply makeup. Manage lighting, sound and music. Work in the back office selling tickets, creating flyers, maintaining lists and doing mailings. Design brochures, take photos. Sell refreshments and gifts. Meet the public at special events and outreach activities. Or plan those activities.

Major Theatres

If you volunteer through [Portland'5](#), you'll join a well-established [volunteer](#) organization that supports 5 centers – Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall, Winningstad, Keller Auditorium, Newmark and Brunish venues. Its 500-700 volunteers, mostly retirees, donate hours as ushers, greeters, gift shop attendees, tour guides, reception desk attendants, office assistants and receptionists. Volunteers get to watch events they work.

[Portland Center Stage](#), the city's largest theatre company, presents classical, contemporary and premiere works, holds a summer playwrights festival, and conducts education and community programs. Its [volunteers](#) are ushers, Armory Ambassadors, office assistants, support casting, technical rehearsals and special events.

[Volunteers](#) at the [Artists Repertory Theatre](#) perform similar tasks.

Medium-Size and Regional Theatre

Medium-size professional and non-professional companies perform in area downtowns and suburbs. Volunteers usher, sell concessions and merchandise, help patrons, do hands-on behind-the-scenes tasks, sew costumes, build sets, and work in outreach. Below are links to theatre websites and volunteer pages.

- [Broadway Rose Theatre Company](#), Tigard. Features Broadway-style musical theatre and music reviews. [Volunteer](#).
- [Lakewood Theatre Company](#), Lake Oswego. Entertains with new productions and old favorites. [Volunteer](#).
- [Portland Playhouse](#). Performs original and popular plays and musicals. [Volunteer](#).
- [Profile Theatre](#). Focuses on works of a single Playwright for an entire season. [Volunteer](#).
- [Oregon Children's Theatre](#). Offers staged productions, outreach programs, and a children and teen acting academy. [Volunteer](#).

Local and Independent Theatre

Dozens of smaller independent and home-grown performing groups are scattered throughout the area, entertaining in converted theatres, buildings, churches, and warehouses. Many are all-volunteer – from actors and directors to behind-the-scenes and office work. Following are links to theatre websites and volunteer pages:

- [Clackamas Repertory Theatre](#) (Oregon City)
- [Gresham Little Theatre](#) (Gresham) [Volunteer](#).
- [Magenta Theatre](#) (Vancouver) [Volunteer](#).

- [Theatre in the Grove](#) (Forest Grove)
- [Mask & Mirror](#) (Tigard and Tualatin) [Volunteer](#).
- [New Century Players](#) (Milwaukie) [Volunteer](#).
- [Sellwood Players](#) (Sellwood)
- [Northwest Senior Theatre](#), Beaverton

Cultural and Social Statement

Several theatres portray stories from cultural or ethnic points of view. Many also are all-volunteer, from actors and directors to behind-the-scenes and office work. Following are links to theatre websites and volunteer pages:

- [Corrib Theatre](#). Stories filtered through the Irish experience.
- [Jewish Theatre Collective](#). Performs great Jewish stories from the past and present.
- [Milagro](#). Provides Latino focused theatre. [Volunteer](#).
- [Passin Art Theatre](#). Performs from the African American perspective.
- [Salt and Sage Productions](#). Explores issues from the female experience.

Experimental and Innovative

Ready for off-the-grid theatre? Portland is a hotbed of innovative, in-their-own category groups. They need specialized skills on and off stage. Check their websites and call them. Following are links to theatre websites and volunteer pages:

- [Do Jump's](#) extremely physical theatre blends theatre, dance, aerial work, acrobatics visual and live music. Imago performances are known for characters and beings such as comedic amphibians, acrobatic larvae, circus boulders, and metamorphosing. [Volunteer](#).
- [Liminal](#) creates immersive, media-rich environments that become elaborate worlds unto themselves.
- [Shaking The Tree](#) melds boundaries of theater and visual art with immersive theatrical experiences.

DANCE

Portland's dance scene ranges from ballet concerts to contemporary work by local companies and collaborations with other art forms. Many take their innovations to local communities. Dance companies in greater Portland include:

- [Oregon Ballet Theatre](#): Oregon's largest professional ballet company rooted in traditions of classical ballet. Ballet school. [Volunteer](#): Assist with office and at performances.
- [Metro Dancers](#), Portland Metro Arts. Dance productions, repertory concerts and showcases and major ballet by pre-and professional dancers. [Volunteer](#): Fundraising, help with office, classes, performances, facilities and grounds.
- [Northwest Dance Theatre](#). Pre-professional dance performances, community outreach and educational programs.
- [Polaris Dance Theatre](#). Contemporary dance company and dance center for youth and classes. [Volunteers](#): Ushers, setup/strike at productions, costumes, table staff. Committees.

- [White Bird](#). Brings Portland-based, as well as regional, national, and international dance companies to Portland. Collaborates with area arts organizations. Community outreach. [Volunteers](#): Ushering, office, poster distribution, loading in/out shows, special events.

FESTIVALS

Annual festivals are another way to experience the area's new, emerging and fringe theatre. Among them:

- [Fertile Ground](#). Two weeks focused on new work in the arts including staged readings developing works and myriad of other arts events from local artists, performers and resident theatre companies. Portland Theatre Alliance. January.
 - [JAW](#). Portland Center Stage. A festival of staged readings of new scripts and performances from Portland theatres and arts ensembles. All free. July.
 - [Time-Based Art Festival \(TBA\)](#). Portland Institute for Contemporary Art. Features fresh new wave of art in real time from performing and visual artists hailing from all over the world. Installations and live performances fill out area theatres, temporary galleries and unexpected public spaces. [Volunteer](#): Construction, administration, exhibitions. September.
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