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What to See This Fall in the Seattle Area

And why it's worth buying those tickets

BY GEMMA ALEXANDER (/AUTHOR/GEMMA-ALEXANDER) |

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Every year, ParentMap brings you the latest in fall arts events around the Puget Sound region, which is great. But what if your kid refuses to go to that symphony or says they “hate” the opera? How do you get them to care?

Why should you bother? To start, it's good for the whole family.

Reason no. 1: It's good for them

A [2015 National Endowment for the Arts survey](https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/arts-in-early-childhood-dec2015-rev.pdf) (<https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/arts-in-early-childhood-dec2015-rev.pdf>) of 15 years' worth of research found connections between the arts and the development of social and emotional skills, such as "helping, caring and sharing activities," not to mention greater independence, emotional regulation, open-mindedness and self-expression.

[Other studies](https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED529766.pdf) (<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED529766.pdf>) have shown that students who receive arts education are better at setting and achieving ambitious goals and are more likely to go to college.

Those results don't surprise Sarah Bloom of the Seattle Art Museum (SAM).

"Learning through the creative process feels very different from traditional learning, but it builds all these skills that kids can take back to the classroom," says Bloom, who is the senior manager for SAM's teen, family and multigenerational programs.

Parents may not be familiar with decades of research confirming the academic and developmental benefits of the arts, but educators are.

"That is why Washington state requires art as a core subject and defines five arts that students should be studying every year in school: music, dance, theater, visual and media arts," says Danielle Gahl, executive director of [ArtsEd Washington](http://artsedwashington.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/smARTS-For-Students-FINAL3.pdf) (<http://artsedwashington.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/smARTS-For-Students-FINAL3.pdf>), an advocacy organization for arts education in Washington state. But despite the research, Gahl says, "when budgets are tight, schools cut art, in part because parents believe it is auxiliary."

The state doesn't even track how many schools are in compliance with the recommendation of five arts to study, although [one survey of King County](http://artsedwashington.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/4-Culture-ArtsEdWA-C3-FINAL-REPORT_FINAL.pdf) (http://artsedwashington.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/4-Culture-ArtsEdWA-C3-FINAL-REPORT_FINAL.pdf) found that music – the most commonly taught arts subject – was only offered in roughly half of surveyed schools.

This lack of arts education in school makes it even more important for parents to expose their kids to art at home.

"Art is fun. It's much easier to enjoy learning about art than memorizing times tables," says Gahl.

Reason no. 2: You can do it together

"Kids learn by example," says Gahl. "One of the best things you can do is model love for the arts. Go to that prelecture at the opera [or] take the kids to SAM," she says. "Make a family outing of it."

Bloom adds: "Families learning together is so important. [Kids] seeing someone they respect learn something new is a different experience from coming with a school group."

This doesn't just mean buying a season subscription or annual membership; you can make art together, too. SAM offers Family Fun Workshops, which combine viewing art with making art. Tacoma Art Museum's drop-in TAM Studio is always available for families inspired by the museum's exhibits to create. Even places like the Living Computers Museum + Labs host creative events; that museum has offered sessions for making LED Father's Day cards, and drop-in labs where kids can explore pixel art.

Reason no. 3: It's fun

These days, going to the museum or seeing a show isn't the boring experience you might remember from your own childhood. Today's arts organizations are working hard to make everyone feel welcome.

SAM has playrooms and open studio space. Seattle Children's Theatre and Village Theatre both offer soundproof viewing rooms so that parents don't have to sweat about crying babies or restless toddlers. Seattle Symphony performs short, informal Friday-night concerts that let you get home by bedtime. Seattle Opera puts on multimedia preshow lectures that can include cartoon clips, animations and quiz games.

But don't feel limited by a "traditional" definition of art, say experts.

"Art is anything that gets creative juices flowing in a child," Gahl says. "It's about communication and sharing feelings and ideas."

This can mean interactive and kinesthetic activities, especially for younger kids. Give kids the opportunity to dance, whether it takes place in a studio or the kitchen. Make some noise with handmade instruments at home, then play with the real thing in the Sound Lab at the Museum of Pop Culture (MoPop). Go to the free Festál performances at Seattle Center, where sitting still is not required.

Now, go and do it

However you get out there this fall, use your experience with the arts to ask open-ended questions. Ask "Why?" to encourage kids to have confidence in their own ideas while accepting that different opinions aren't necessarily wrong.

"Building the skill of close looking is something we try to instill in children and caregivers together," Bloom says. "Looking at art is a skill that you build over time."

And remember: Making or seeing art doesn't have to be a formal experience. Sing in the car. Sit and color as a family. Encourage your Instagram-loving teen to start creating interesting content themselves.

The point is to get those creative juices flowing. "Art teaches people important skills for the 21st century: creativity, communication, exploration, problem solving, valuing your own opinions while respecting the opinions of others," says Bloom. So, from visiting museums to watching live shows, make a habit of having fun with art — it'll make life richer for the whole family.

Shows and exhibits to see this season

Corduroy

(http://secondstoryrep.org/childrens_theater/season20/corduroy.html)

Sept. 8–30, SecondStory Repertory

Now in its 20th season, SecondStory Repertory's Theater for Young Audiences opens its season with the beloved picture-book teddy bear Corduroy. Also this season, look forward to Freckleface Strawberry, about learning to love the skin you're in, the musical "Sparkle Fairy's School for Formerly Vile Villains," and adaptations of "Around the World in 80 Days" and "The Phantom Tollbooth."



Photo courtesy Tacoma Art Museum

Animals: Wild and Captured in Bronze

(<https://www.tacomaartmuseum.org/exhibit/animals-in-bronze/>)

Ongoing, Tacoma Art Museum

This ongoing sculpture exhibit features wildlife that inhabits the American West. Examine the way that likenesses captured in bronze convey shape and movement differently from two-dimensional paintings.

Marvel: Universe of Super Heroes (<https://www.mopop.org/marvel>)

Through Jan. 6, 2019, MoPop

At the largest exhibition ever staged at MoPop, remind your kids that artists created the iconic pictures, costumes and props from their favorite comics and films.



Distant Worlds: Music from Final Fantasy. (<https://www.seattlesymphony.org/concerttickets/calendar/2018-2019/symphony/final-fantasy>)

Sept. 12–13, Seattle Symphony

Lots of people who think they don't like classical music don't realize that it is actually woven into their everyday lives. Bring your video-game-loving kids to this live Seattle Symphony performance in which video and music combine to immerse the audience in the beloved, fantastical world of Final Fantasy XIV. The composer will be in attendance.

And in This Corner: Cassius Clay (<https://www.sct.org/Shows/2018-2019-Season/CassiusClay>)

Oct. 11–Nov. 25, Seattle Children’s Theatre

For kids who prefer sports to sitting still, try a play about the world’s most famous boxer, Muhammad Ali. The draw may be sports, but Seattle Children’s Theatre’s (SCT) story about the determination and hard work of the 12-year-old who would grow up to make history will also teach kids about perseverance and civil rights. SCT consistently produces intelligent, nuanced work for children. With “The Very Hungry Caterpillar Show,” “The Velveteen Rabbit” and “The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane” also on the calendar, season tickets are an excellent idea.

Polaroids: Personal, Private, Painterly **(<https://www.bellevuearts.org/exhibitions/upcoming/robert-jackson>)**

Oct. 12–Mar. 24, 2019, Bellevue Arts Museum

This curated collection of popular photography and photographic ephemera focuses on the instant Polaroid. Instantly printed photos were a revolutionary technology in their time, one that fascinates kids today and is having a resurgent moment as a novelty. The exhibit inspires discussions of privacy and points out the art in the mundane. Be warned, though: The unique selling point of the Polaroid was privacy. Some images include weapons or suggested nudity. Parents concerned about this content may prefer the upcoming BAM Biennial, “Bam! Glasstastic” (Nov. 9–Apr. 14, 2019).



Seattle Art Museum family fun workshop | Credit: Robert Wade

Peacock in the Desert: The Royal Arts of Jodhpur, India
(<http://www.seattleartmuseum.org/Exhibitions/Details?EventId=58950>)

Oct. 18–Jan. 21, 2019, Seattle Art Museum

Brilliant, colorful paintings, lavish ceremonial objects, weapons and armor, sumptuous jewels and intricately carved furnishings from the royal palace of Jodhpur are sure to captivate kids' imaginations. Visit on Nov. 4 to pair the exhibit with SAM's annual Diwali festival, which features dance performances, hands-on art activities, a fashion show and traditional music.

Seattle Symphony 'Untuxed' Series
(<https://www.seattlesymphony.org/concerttickets/subscriptions/untuxed>)

Oct. 19, Beethoven; Nov. 9, Tchaikovsky; Nov. 30, Rachmaninov, Benaroya Hall

Seattle Symphony's "Untuxed" series features beloved composers in an informal setting with helpful introductions to the music. Performances start at 7 p.m. and last only one hour with no intermission. No need to dress up – even the performers are in street clothes.

How I Became a Pirate (<https://tmp.org/index.php/2018-2019-tmp-family-theater-season-tickets/>)

Oct. 27–Nov. 4, Tacoma Musical Playhouse

In this adaption based on the popular picture book, Braid Beard and his shipmates enlist young Jeremy Jacob to help them bury their treasure. Adventuring can be lots of fun, but Jeremy learns that love and home are treasures, too – and besides, he doesn't want to miss soccer practice!

Roald Dahl's Matilda the Musical
(<https://villagetheatre.org/issaquah/matilda.php>)

Issaquah: Nov. 8–Dec. 30; Everett: Jan. 4–Feb. 3, 2019, Village Theatre

You can't help but love and root for Roald Dahl's brilliant, bookish heroine Matilda. With awful adults and gross-out pranks, Dahl kept his signature perverseness in "Matilda," but the happy ending is perfect fodder for musical theater.

George Balanchine's The Nutcracker (<https://www.pnb.org/nutcracker/>)

Nov. 23–Dec. 28, Pacific Northwest Ballet

With unique set designs by Ian Falconer (of “Olivia” fame), Tchaikovsky’s instantly recognizable score and a cast that includes dozens of child performers, “The Nutcracker” is a perfect introduction to classical ballet. This year, you can purchase “Nutcracker” tickets as part of a family-friendly Story Time package, which also includes “The Sleeping Beauty,” “Pinocchio” and “A Midsummer Night’s Dream.”

Annie

(<https://www.5thavenue.org/show/annie>)

Nov. 23–Dec. 30, 5th Avenue Theatre

The 5th Avenue has an all-new production of this classic musical, with all your favorite songs from the original. If you’re looking for a full season of family entertainment, the 5th has also planned productions of “Rock of Ages” (a love story set to ’80s hair metal), Rick Riordan’s “The Lightning Thief” and “West Side Story.”



Photo courtesy Village Theater, Matilda

Syd the Solstice Kid (<http://www.kpcenter.org/event/storybook-theater-syd-the-solstice-kid/>)

Dec. 2–Dec. 22, StoryBook Theater

Performed at venues around the Puget Sound region, this one-hour show about sharing cultural traditions has Syd traveling around the world, exploring solstice legends and celebrations and finding answers to questions both scientific and cultural.

Disney’s ‘The Lion King’

(<https://www.stgpresents.org/tickets/eventdetail/3884/-/disney-s-the-lion-king>)

Dec. 13–Jan. 6, 2019, Paramount Theatre

You can always trust Disney to make a stage show spectacular. See your kids’ favorite animal characters and hear the famous songs from the movie performed live on stage.

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Seattle-based freelance writer Gemma Alexander focuses on the intersection of parenting and the arts. When she's not writing for "ParentMap," she blogs at gemmaealexander.com (<https://gemmaealexander.com/>) and tweets at [@gemmaeettweet](#).

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