

Theater Opportunities at Lopez School

While attending Lopez Island School I have had the privilege of being in nine Shakespeare plays, two community theater productions, two One Act Play festivals, and a production of The Laramie Project. This variety of opportunities in drama is unusual in such a small community. Each production benefited me in its own way. I am going to touch briefly on my experiences with theater as a student, in the hope that this outline will give you some insight into what is offered on the island.

I have been in more Shakespeare plays than most students, and this is mainly due to the Community Shakespeare Company that operates on Lopez Island. Every fall Richard Carter, owner and director, produces two Shakespeare plays. One production is an original script adaption by Richard Carter of a Shakespeare play, open to students in elementary and early middle school. The other production is the original Shakespeare play and is open to high schoolers and sometimes adults in the community. The Shakespearean language is challenging, but rewarding. I have been in both productions offered, and can confidently say that both were valuable and unforgettable experiences.

These productions require self-discipline and determination, but the effort pays off when you produce a magnificent show to share with the community.

Community Theater is usually a spring production. The plays are directed by Carol Steckler, a longtime resident of Lopez Island. Auditions are open to everyone in the community. There is a lot of variety in the productions: I was in *The Grapes of Wrath* and *The Moon is Down* in middle school, and this year the company put on *The Wizard of Oz*. Community theater encourages students to connect with adults in the community that they otherwise would not get to know.

Our school's Drama Club puts on an annual One Act Play festival in the winter. I have been part of this event for two years and have had a total blast. There is minimal pressure and a really supportive environment. Often, the plays are performed in a dinner theater setting, which creates a relaxed and casual atmosphere for the plays. Most of the scenes are funny, but it is up to the student actors to decide what they want to perform. This last year I wrote and performed an original script with two of my friends. I will never forget how much fun this was and I strongly encourage others to do the same.

The Community Shakespeare Company decided to take a break from Shakespeare this last fall and instead put on *The Laramie Project*. For those who don't know, the play is about the brutal murder of gay college student Matthew Shepard. The play uses the words from interviews conducted by a theater troupe to weave together the tragic story. The fact that we were playing actual people and recreating an actual event, made the play very powerful. It was very well-received by our community and I hope to see more theater in the future that addresses social issues.

Theater is one of my passions, and I feel so fortunate to have had the opportunity to develop and learn as an actor. I would have never started acting if I hadn't had the support of my community and abundant opportunities to participate. I encourage everyone to take part in the many productions offered each year on the island. Theater was an important facet of my education, only one of the many opportunities I have been offered as a student of Lopez Island School.