THEATRE

Our whole school unit this year was Theatre! For five weeks in the Green Room we studied stories, made props, practiced using voices for speaking and singing, did creative movement, learned to play different roles to help tell a story on the stage, and much more.

Why Theatre?
“Theatre, the imagined and enacted world of human beings, is one of the primary ways children learn about life, about actions and consequences, about customs and beliefs, about others and themselves. They learn through their social pretend play. For instance, children use pretend play as a means of making sense of the world; they create situations to play and assume roles; they interact with peers and arrange environments to bring their stories to life; they direct one another to bring order to their drama, and they respond to one another’s dramas. In other words, children arrive at school with rudimentary skills as playwrights, actors, designers, directors, and audience members.”

From: Arts Edge (The Kennedy Center)  https://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/
Week 1: What Is Theatre?
The Story: The Three Billy Goats Gruff

“Being on the stage” is something the children know about theatre from the very start of the unit. Aya draws herself on the stage of her Theatre Locker Tag.

Dance and music are two parts of Theatre. Aubri responds to different kinds of music while dancing with ribbons. Children watch a CMU student ballet class, then participate in a dance activity with the students.

Enacting a familiar story multiple times on the stage helps children to: more deeply understand the flow of stories (beginning, middle, end); practice different roles; and feel comfortable on the stage. Simple sets and costumes make it easy to do quick changes of characters. Adler, Elijah, Isaiah and Connor enact The Three Billy Goats Gruff.

Talking about emotions and how they can be expressed so that others know how we are feeling happens all year long in school. During the Theatre Unit, we learn that when on the stage we should “Act as though the audience can’t hear, and speak or sing as though the audience can’t see.” Eli and Dean play the Moody Monsters Memory game.
The Children's School is very fortunate to be on Carnegie Mellon University’s campus, which houses a top notch Drama Department. The children get the opportunity to have a tour of the Purnell Center for the Arts theater.

Learning to be a good audience member is an important skill for a lifetime of theatre enjoyment. Henry, Connor, Siobhan, Josh and friends sit in the Purnell auditorium.

The children are able to make the connection that not only are actors pretending on stage, the set pieces and props used are also often pretend. A group sees the pretend car of CMU's hit musical “Ragtime” from backstage. Children see people at work in both the large set and prop construction shop and the small Prop Shop. Everyone is amazed by the huge, pretend hamburger!

It is both exciting and hard to wait in the Lobby for the Theater Tour to start. We take the opportunity to talk about the Box Office, and how buying tickets to see a performance is a way to support all of the people who work hard to make life more fun through Theatre.
After reading the story of the Turnip, children help to prepare for performance in many ways. Clockwise from right: Caleb makes a character stick puppet. Josie and Eli use stick puppets to perform the story as a puppet play. Benny stuffs a large “turnip” prop. Evren explores making music with a variety of instruments at the Science Center. Avi examines a real turnip at Circle Time.

And now for the performance!
Week 3: Set Design

The Story: Goldilocks and the Three Bears

The fairytale of Goldilocks and the Three Bears required a more extensive set, scenery, and more props. After two weeks of experience on the stage, the children are capable of much more movement and dialog as actors around, on and off the stage.

Maya as Goldilocks, sleeps peacefully just before she is discovered by the three bears.

Bears Lillian, Josh and Caleb leave for a walk after discovering that their porridge is too hot. Goldilocks, played by Addison, then helps herself.

Adler prepares the scenery in the Children’s School Make Shop for the next week’s Castle productions.

Bears Chudi, Josie and Dean discover that someone has been eating their porridge.
Week 4: Production - Writing

The Story: Original Castle Stories

After weeks of listening to and discussing stories, and practice on the stage, friends are ready to write, produce and act in their own original Castle Stories.

Knights Jack, Colby and Adrian wait in the wings until it is time for their entrance.

Josie and Eli discuss their roles in a castle story.

Dragons Elijah and Conor make a plan to save the day.

Max makes a crown at the costume table for use in a castle play.
Making Paper Maché Animal Puppets

Isaiah measures the dowel rod for his puppet’s handle before he saws. After sawing the right length of dowel, Yerick fits it into the neck of a recycled water bottle. Alisa uses paper scraps and clear paper mache glue to smooth on the undercoat of paper. After the undercoat dries, Lillian adds facial features and ears.

Friends explore Shadow Puppets.
Debbie from the Carnegie Library brought a shadow puppet story, children play a Guess Whose Shadow game (it is John), and there are many performances of Abiyoyo using the shadow screen.

Miss Zhu leads the children in making a traditional Chinese Lion Dance Puppet.
Celebrations

Sydnee’s family shares a favorite story at Circle Time to celebrate her 5th birthday.

Colby’s mom reads Don’t Wake the Bear to celebrate his half birthday.

Eli celebrated his birthday with a tuba and flute serenade by a family friend.

A Happy 5th Birthday, and a sad goodbye to Ava who moved in February.

Welcome to Emilia, who joined the afternoon group in March!
Performances, Visits, and Special Events

The children tell a story through dance in a special class taught by Attack Theater Dance Company.

Professionals of the Attack Theater Dance Company perform for the children and families of the school.

The Green Room friends attend the Kindergarten play, “Theseus and the Minotaur.”

Eli’s dad, Jono, teaches the friends about theater lighting. Harris explores how a gel changes the color of the light.

Friends enjoy a surprise visit by Miss Wilson, the fall semester student teacher.

Children listen to a story on the 100th Day of School.
Friends visit the school office to do a math game with Dr. Carver.

Mrs Wendolowski leads a special gym class - 10 sets of 10 exercises to get to 100!

100 Days of School!

Siobhan celebrates the 100th day of school with a hat and face/hand paint.

The children count 10 pieces of 10 different foods to make the 100 Day Snack.

Can we stack 100 cups? Julia practices stacking her set of cups to add to other stacks.

Maren is getting her hand painted with the number 100.