

# Shows to Go

Portland's local performing arts companies have creatively pivoted to offer fun and educational shows for families at home. BY MIRANDA RAKE

In times like these, keeping our kids inspired and entertained can feel like a really tall order. We've all had to get more than a little creative. But, thankfully, PDX parents don't have to do all of the out-of-the-box brainstorming alone! Who better to turn to for a little help in fostering that creative spark than some of our city's most beloved arts organizations? Many of the music and theater institutions that we usually rely on for kid-friendly plays and concerts have hustled to adapt to the new landscape that we live in now, with a host of exciting, educational and downright fun virtual offerings for local kids and families to look forward to this spring and summer. We might be home, but that doesn't mean we can't enjoy and support the beautiful work being done by some of our city's very best, most adventurous artists. From the silly to the seriously educational and everything in between, this colorful, imaginative lineup of online shows and series proves without a doubt that necessity is indeed the mother of invention.

Just a few weeks into 2020's lockdown, NWCT launched **How Do You Do?**, a spunky, high-energy web series featuring how-to activities from DIY puppet-making to dance tutorials. Season 1, which aired from April to August of 2020 (all of which is available on YouTube), is hosted by NWCT associate artistic director John Ellingson. Now in its third season, the show has pivoted its format a bit. NWCT's Talon Bigelow and his sidekick puppet Perry Winkle are hosting now. The show has evolved to have more of a variety-show vibe, with a focus on how various NWCT families are keeping busy at home as well as one-off tutorials and performances by NWCT staff, alumni and current performers. New episodes premiere every



other week on Northwest Children's Theater's YouTube channel [youtube.com/user/NWChildrensTheater](https://www.youtube.com/user/NWChildrensTheater) and Facebook page through the end of March. All three seasons can be found on YouTube and at [nwcts.org](https://www.nwcts.org).

**NORTHWEST CHILDREN'S THEATER (NWCT)**

**MILAGRO THEATRE**

Now in its 37th season, the Milagro Theatre has a lineup of very family-friendly plays created by its arts education team that are all available for free or at very low cost for local schools and community groups. All three plays celebrate the theme of *mujeres bravas* (brave women). Because they're being offered virtually, they're available simultaneously right now through at least June 2021. **Blast Off!** tells the story of Ellen Ochoa,



the first Latina astronaut, and Ochoa herself gave Milagro an enthusiastic OK to present this inspiring biopic about women in science. Next up is **Huínca**, a play about Colombia's indigenous Mapuche people and their ongoing struggles against deforestation and the corporations that perpetuate it. It was created in collaboration with Marilo Nuñez, a Chilean-Canadian playwright. Last but not least is **Huelga!**, which

dramatizes the life story of Dolores Huerta, co-founder of United Farm Workers and a woman who devoted her life to fighting gender bias and racism. Access to these shows is not easily available to the general public, but they may be offered through your child's school, or another group in your community. Consider reaching out to your PTA about virtually bringing these powerful, engaging, educational pieces into your school. Additionally, some free and "pay what you can" hosted virtual performances are in the process of being scheduled at small theaters around the state, and you can reach out directly to Milagros Artistic Director Dañel Malán ([malan@milagro.org](mailto:malan@milagro.org)) for more information about dates and availability.

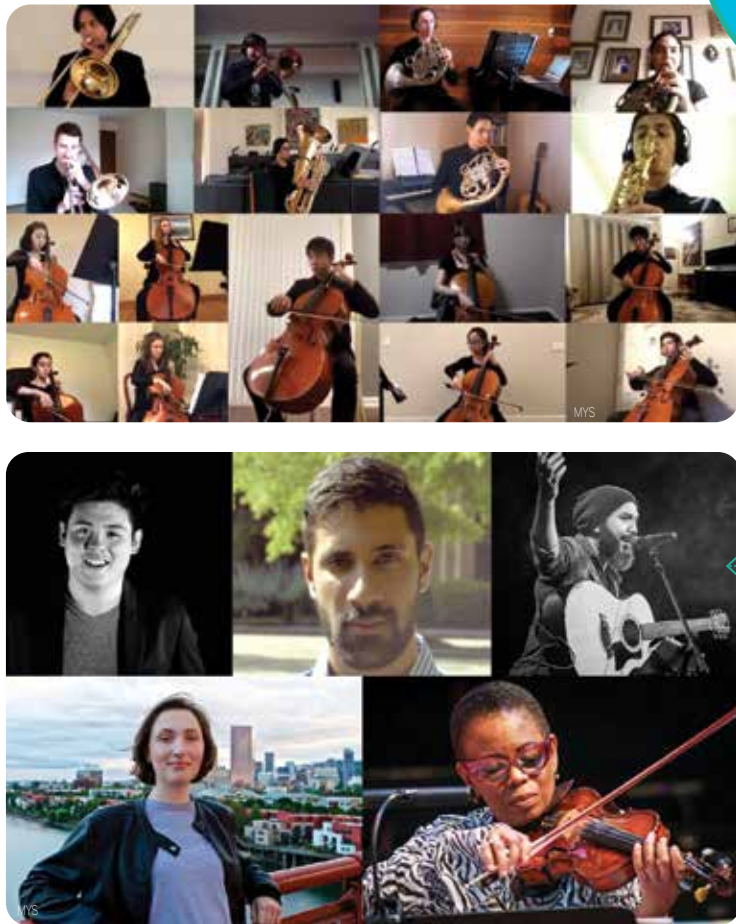


**OREGON BALLET THEATRE**

Perfectly titled and so much fun, an offering of short, three- to four-minute videos called **Dance Snacks** are OBT's solution to the fact that some of their youngest fans are stuck at home and more sedentary than ever. Designed with kids' inherent need to wiggle in mind, these colorful, exuberant themed videos are based on Oregon Department of Education standards, and are specifically oriented toward kids ages 5 to 8. Their goal? Just to help kids remember to move their bodies, and get their breath and creative juices flowing. Easy-to-follow movements are led by OBT instructors and feature OBT dancers. Simple themes include: stillness, rhythm and strength. So far six of 18 planned videos have been released, with more to come in April. Go to [OBTV.uscreen.io](https://OBTV.uscreen.io) to subscribe.



## METROPOLITAN YOUTH SYMPHONY (MYS)



A shift to online performances has not slowed the flow of creative juices or beautiful music for the Metropolitan Youth Symphony (MYS). On **March 13**, tune in to the MYS's virtual spring concert. The symphony will be playing world premiere pieces commissioned by the **Youth Orchestra Commissioning Initiative (YOICI)**. A testament to both the brilliance and resilience of our city's young musicians, the YOICI is a collaboration between the Metropolitan Youth Symphony, the Portland Youth Philharmonic (see more about their spring offerings below) and the New Jersey Youth Symphony. It was formed in response to COVID-19 specifically to create virtual performances of new compositions by women and people of color. The spring concert will include performances of work by Seare Farhat, MYS alum Katie Palka, jazz violinist Regina Carter, and Costa Rican singer-songwriter Bernardo Quesada. The **week of April 19** brings another collaborative performance, this time with our neighbors at the Seattle Youth Symphony (SYS). Members of the SYS and MYS will come together virtually from iconic locations all over Portland and Seattle to perform Portland-based composer Kenji Bunch's piece *Groove Box*. The performance will be followed by a Q&A with the composer. Best of all? Both of these performances are free to the public – MYS just asks that you register via its website before tuning in on its YouTube channel. Find out more at [playmys.org](http://playmys.org).

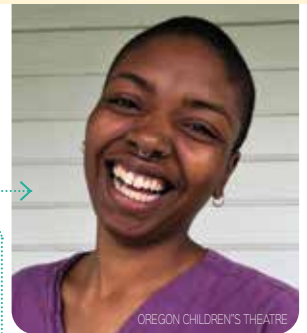
This spring, music lovers can look forward to two concerts from the budding virtuosos of the Portland Youth Philharmonic. Mark your calendars: PYP's virtual winter concert will take place **Saturday, April 10, at 7 pm**, and their virtual spring concert will happen on **Saturday, June 5, at 7 pm**. Each concert will feature all of the organization's ensembles performing new works created as part of their collaboration with other youth symphony orchestras via the **Youth Orchestra Commissioning Initiative**. Composers include Sakari Vanderveer, Tatev Amiryan, Gabriel A. Meneses, Rain Worthington, Erberk Eryilmaz, Oregon Symphony Principal Cellist Nancy Ives, Kevin Walczyk, Nicole Buetti, Alfonso Fuentes Colón and more. Both concerts are presented with a "pay what you can" fee structure, in light of the pandemic. Free tickets are also an option, but PYP asks that everyone fill out the registration form on its website [portlandyouthphil.org/concerts-tickets](http://portlandyouthphil.org/concerts-tickets) to get live links to the concerts.

## PORTLAND YOUTH PHILHARMONIC (PYP)



## OREGON CHILDREN'S THEATRE

Oregon Children's Theatre has found a way to spark ingenuity and joy, not to mention a sense of connection, with its warm, exuberant monthly show **Your Turn!**, which is available on its YouTube channel. The show is hosted by movement artist Sydney Jackson and actor Kaleena Newman, both of whom specialize in working with kids. As the name suggests, each episode features local kids sharing the things that are keeping them happy and busy at home. Every month brings a different theme – one recent episode explored the idea of "doing things alone," where hosts Sydney and Kaleena helped kids come up with ideas of things they can do when they want to – or have to – do things alone. Between the hosts and the local kids they feature, each program bounces happily among various artistic mediums, from music and movement to art and mindfulness, and is sure to bring a little brightness to kids of all ages. 🌈



Need a break from screen time? Portland Center Stage's pandemic offerings this spring fall firmly into the all-too-rare arena of no screens, no problem – and thank goodness for that! As part of the nationwide "Play at Home" theater movement, Portland Center Stage commissioned four short plays that are intended to be read – or all-out performed! – at home. Two of the four plays are a great fit for families with kids, particularly those with kids in their early teens. *Joy Frickin' Hates Her Dumb Stupid Room* by Sara Jean Accuardi is a hilarious romp starring a 13-year-old girl (stuck in her room), her hamster (stuck in his cage) and the soul of a 15th-century Dutch painter (stuck inside the hamster).



*A Wing and A Prayer* by Josie Seid centers on four college-age women who get a surprise visit from their fairy godmother. Both scripts are available to download for free at [pcs.org/play-at-home](http://pcs.org/play-at-home). If performing a play in your living room isn't quite your cup of tea, you can watch videos of other people reading the scripts there, too.



Say no more. I've got this. You're not the only one with dreams.  
(She taps herself on the head with the wand and there is another puff of smoke. She is her own brand of fabulous contemporary fairy.)  
MARIE  
Girl, what are you about to do?  
HARLOW  
I'm off to wake those sisters up in fairy land! This is what I was made for!  
BEGONIA  
Well what do you know? Dreams do come true!  
End of Play

## PORTLAND CENTER STAGE

