

THEATER



Kennedy Center

Child's Play

Kids, step away from those electronic screens. You, too, parents. If you're looking for action, laughs, games, stories, music and dance, theaters here offer all that and—even better—it's live.

Five D.C.-area stages are dedicated to young audiences, and many of the city's 90-plus other theaters present kid-friendly shows. "We have more children's theater programming than any other city except perhaps New York," says Michael Bobbitt, artistic director of Adventure Theatre.

With this profusion of plays, there's bound to be something that everyone in the family will enjoy. Roberta Gasbarre, artistic director of the Smithsonian's Discovery Theater, says, "I think of this city as one huge education and entertainment center for young people." —Amy Alipio



Discovery Theater

BEST IN SHOW

From seasonal outdoor stages to year-round theaters, here are some of the area's top kid-friendly venues.—AA

See the entertainment guide for more information.

DISCOVERY THEATER

Travelers often begin their D.C. exploration at the museums along the National Mall. But the vast collections can be overwhelming for little kids. A good place to get oriented is the Smithsonian's intimate Discovery Theater. "We are a gateway experience to the stories told here at the Mall," says director Gasbarre. That could mean plays about the wonder of science or the fun of percussion, all of them interactive.

- June 2-3: "Anansi Tales with Barefoot Puppets" (ages 4-8); June 29-July 1: "Rainforest Alive!" (4-12) discoverytheater.org

IMAGINATION STAGE

The largest children's theater organization in the Mid-Atlantic, this venue is worth the trip from downtown D.C. to Bethesda, Md., for its year-round high-quality productions on two stages. Shows include adaptations of cherished books,

premieres and new spins on traditional stories—"Cinderella: The Remix" gave the princess some hip-hop grooves. Imagination Stage caters to the youngest audiences, too, with interactive shows for ages 1-5 that brim with theater magic.

- June 22-Aug. 14: "The Little Mermaid" (ages 5+); June 25-July 31: "Inside Out" (1-5) imaginationstage.org

ADVENTURE THEATRE

Located in a former amusement park with a historic carousel, the theater presents takes on popular books, as well as new commissioned work, such as "Bob Marley's Three Little Birds," adapted by director Bobbitt. "We want kids to have



Wolf Trap

such an amazing experience," he says, "that, when they're 45, they remember it and take their own children to a show."

- June 17-Aug. 28: "Jumanji" (ages 4+) adventuretheatre-mtc.org

KENNEDY CENTER

The "nation's stage" offers a full slate of programming that includes family-friendly musicals, free nightly shows on the Millennium Stage and kids' concerts with the National Symphony Orchestra. But the center also has a dedicated Family Theater presenting a season of both new commissioned plays ("Oliverio!" put a Brazilian twist on the beloved Dickens classic) and touring productions.

- Through June 5: Ireland 100 Festival (all ages); June 25: Robert Post Comedy Theatre for Kids (8+) kennedy-center.org

NATIONAL THEATRE

Just steps from the White House, this historic theater presents Broadway productions, such as "Jersey Boys" and "The Wizard of Oz," and most Saturday mornings, special family-friendly shows

that range from plays and concerts to ballet and cultural dance. Best of all, they're free! (But reserve tickets ahead of time.)

- June 4: "Monkey Tales" (ages 4-10); June 11: "The Barker of Seville"; June 18: Groovy Nate (both all ages) thenationaldc.org

STRATHMORE

In North Bethesda, Md., Strathmore presents world-class musical acts, such as Kristin



Strathmore

Chenoweth and the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. Thursdays in July, Backyard Theater for Children brings kids' concerts to an outdoor stage (along with free snow cones).

- June 4 and 18: Saturday Family Jazz Sessions (ages 2-6) strathmore.org

WOLF TRAP

At America's only national park for the performing arts, Children's Theatre-in-the-Woods brings a packed roster of summer performances to its amphitheater stage nestled amid trees. Shows range from music to puppets, plays and dance.

- June 22: David Engel: "Pirate School!" (ages 4+); June 24-25: Josh & the Jamtones (2-8); and many more wolftrap.org