

Urban Stages Summer Camp FAQs

Who are the instructors/staff?

Urban Stages' instructors are professional teaching artists, with varied experience as performers, designers, stage managers, instructors, and devisors. We have a high ratio of staff to campers, so campers' individual needs and learning goals can be met. In 2018, we initiated a CIT program, with campers who have aged out of the program returning to help on the staff side of things. This program will likely be repeated in the future.

Who are the campers?

Our campers come from all five boroughs, New Jersey, and Long Island. We have campers from other states who stay the five weeks with local family members. We have had international campers as well! Our campers are a diverse group, who come from all walks of life. They are 10-15 years old. Most of our campers identify as actors and performers, but not all do. Some are poets, directors, designers, etc. All campers have a role onstage in the final play regardless of how they identify.

Is food provided?

No, we do not provide lunch or snacks on a daily basis. We ask campers to come to camp with a nut-free, bagged lunch and plenty of snacks. We will refrigerate and microwave lunches as necessary. Occasionally we will provide popsicles or other snacks, such as on very hot days or birthdays. We also provide pizza the day of the first performance.

Will my child have any time outside?

Barring rain or a terrible heat wave, we go outside for lunch every day. At least three staff members accompany campers to a park nearby during our lunch hour. In case of rain or extreme heat, we stay in the theater and play music on the speakers.

What does a typical day schedule look like?

9:30-10am: Improvisation Warmup

10-11am: Spoken Word

11-12:30pm: Acting

12:30-1:30pm: Lunch time

1:30-2:30pm: Voice or Acting

2:30-4pm: Puppet Design/Costume Design/Stage Management/Special Topic (on camera workshop, clowning workshop, etc)

4-5pm: Dance

Do you go on field trips?

Each year we go on 1-2 field trips. We always see a Broadway matinee. Although Urban Stages will cover the cost of the ticket, we ask parents who are able to contribute towards the cost, which typically ranges from \$15-\$50/camper. Some years we go on a second field trip, but this depends on campers' interests. In 2018, we visited a costume-making workshop. In 2017, we had a field trip to a museum planned but cancelled it in order to have more time creating design elements for the show. In 2016, the campers visited backstage at Julliard.

Is this a musical theater camp?

Not really. The focus of our camp is on writing, creating, designing, and staging an original play. Most years, this play includes some music elements. We do have singing class a couple times a week, and we end every day with dance. Our singing and dancing classes are not pre-professional training -- they are to introduce our campers to new skills and to have fun with creating in a different medium. Most campers do not identify as musical theater performers, though we've been known to sing *Wicked* songs during indoor lunches.

What is the final play about?

That is left entirely up to the group of campers. In 2018, it was about the government unlawfully creating a quarantine area for immigrants, who happened to have animal-like features. In 2017, it was about a group of people in an apartment building who were all undergoing different forms of prejudice, and then had to band together to solve a problem during a giant snowstorm. Our campers are creative, politically active, informed youth who have a lot to say!

Will my friends and family be able to see the final play?

Yes! Each year, we have two performances of the final play, on the final Thursday at 6pm and the final Friday at 4pm. Each family is given 2 free tickets; additional tickets may be purchased for \$5 each. Additionally we always video the performance, so if a family member can't make it in person, they can see the video later. The video is available for \$20.

Does my camper have to be there for the whole five weeks?

Yes, they do! We expect campers to be present for every day of camp. The first week is crucial for making friends and laying the baseline for the final play. The middle weeks are full of creating characters, dialogue, rehearsing lines, creating staging, and adding design elements. In the last week, it all comes together. **It is mandatory that campers are present all day, every day of the last week of camp.**

My child has never done theater before, is that okay?

Absolutely! Is your child curious about theater? Will they try everything, every day? Are they okay trying something silly in front of a group of new people? Will they enjoy sharing their ideas in a group setting? Then this will be a perfect fit for them.

What is your return rate for campers?

We have a high amount of returning students each year. Our campers form close friendships and want to come back, year after year. One of our campers will be entering her sixth summer with us this year!

Do you have scholarships?

Yes, we do. We have a pool of money that we share between interested families. We do not have any full scholarships. Scholarship rates are decided on a camper-by-camper basis, based on need as determined by the family.

How does payment and enrollment work?

After the application is filled out online, camp director Ilanna Saltzman will be in touch to schedule an interview at the theater with the camper and a parent. At this meeting, scholarship opportunities will be discussed if requested. Once a decision is made regarding scholarship and tuition, parents will be sent a

welcome letter. A non-refundable deposit is due by June to hold the camper's place. The balance may be paid in a lump sum or as a series of payments. We accept cash and checks.

Do you have testimony from previous families?

Yes, here is some feedback from our 2018 parents.

What did you as a parent enjoy most about this camp?

"Observing my child's tremendous enthusiasm about the program! How each and every inspirational, supportive, and talented staff member encourages and supports these campers to challenge themselves -- which not only builds confidence but is also excellent professional training in a variety of disciplines. We also enjoyed learning and observing the process, creativity, and voice of expression achieved in the final piece that the campers produced."

"How happy it made him!"

"I appreciate the communication between staff/families."

"Great relationships are built."

"Watching my son blossom"

"The entire experience has been a blessing and watching our daughter blossom in the arts, creative writing, and acting"

Have you noticed any changes in your camper?

"His writing has gotten so much better!"

"A sense of belonging by forming relationships that are outside his regular (school's) social circle"

"My daughter has been more comfortable with trying new things outside of camp despite being in new/different settings"

"He is even more expressive"

"My daughter is more willing to share her thoughts and have a voice in this world. Talking to new people has been a challenge however since camp she's a bit more comfortable in her skin around new folks."

What do you think your child enjoyed most from his/her experience at camp?

"Supportive environment"

"Coming out of his shell"

Final comments

"A phenomenal year and experience! Thank you to all at Urban Stages!"

"Everyone was so welcoming and wonderful! Thank you!"

"Truly a hidden gem"

About Us

Since 1992, Urban Stages has been touring productions in libraries and community centers throughout the five boroughs of New York City. While these theater pieces allow us to reach many audience members, many of whom would not traditionally attend live theater, these performances are usually one-time events, offering short lived moments of connection.

Summer Camp provides a completely different way of interacting with young people; we meet with the same group of young people every day for five weeks. This extended time is a real gift, allowing us to foster a deeper understanding of performance and theater-making in the young people. We focus on the art of collaboration and build an ensemble of campers who collectively develop their own original performance. Our classes are more than a sharing of skills, we seek to challenge the young people to

articulate their opinions, make artistic decisions, and become active members in creating theater. One of the most trying aspects for staff and campers is the development of our ensemble and the process of collective creation, but through this method we are able to challenge the young people to develop ways of working with a group, to share and critique ideas, and overall to support each other and the final show. It is an incredible experience to watch the development of these young people as the five weeks progress, and we at Urban Stages feel honored to have the opportunity year after year to go on the summer camp journey. Thank you for helping us make this a possibility!

Our Goals

- Ø To provide an opportunity for campers to learn as much about theater as possible
- Ø To allow campers to find what aspects of theater they enjoy and where they shine
- Ø To form a camp ensemble and build collaboration skills
- Ø To create an original high-quality show that highlights the interests and talents of the campers
- Ø To encourage social development
- Ø To build confidence and ability to articulate one's opinions and ideas
- Ø To create a fun and playful environment where learning and trying new things is encouraged

Please be in touch with ILANNA@urbanstages.org with any further questions!