



Not Just “Playing” Around

Hillbarn Theatre in Foster City
marks 80 years!

Theatre has a long-standing tradition of getting to the heart of matters that affect human behavior. For 80 years Hillbarn Theatre and its Conservatory (now celebrating its 20th anniversary) have been a testament to shaping minds and warming hearts in the community. It's their contribution to humanity — to ease the burden of life, to make us laugh, to stir our emotions.

Since 1941, historic Hillbarn Theatre has served the San Francisco Bay Area by embracing this founding ideal: **“To create theatre with the community, for the community.”** They fulfill their mission by bringing together artists and audience members as part of an intimate Hillbarn family to experience engaging and inspiring theatrical productions, selecting program themes that entertain, explore the joys and sorrows of our common human experience, and celebrate our diversity.

Live theatre fulfills the essential human desire to expand our connection to the larger world and our empathy for lives lived differently from our own. It's where patrons come to

find pleasure, to ask questions, to understand themselves, and to negotiate society. The stories they tell provide a point of focus, a frame of reference, by which attendees come to better understand their place in the world as individuals and in their community. Hillbarn annually presents 6 MainStage shows. Their goal is to select plays and musicals that provoke conversation and debate, inviting us to recognize our similarities even as we appreciate our differences.

The hardest part of explaining the value of the creative arts is that it defies measurement. It's impossible to get inside the head of a patron who has just experienced live music, or dance or drama to assess data points of change. History tells us that all great civilizations used the performing arts as ways to express or challenge the moral values of the times. Biologists have argued that the formation of creativity was the most important step in human development and that society cannot move forward without creative people. Creativity can take place on stage or in the mind of the recipient of an art form offering respite from stress, challenging a belief, introducing a new concept, or building empathy.

Hillbarn Theatre Conservatory programs encourage children to question and explore how to live in a complex world so that they grow up HEALTHIER, SMARTER, and KINDER.

“Anyone who knows theatre well knows that theatre offers something completely different than TV and movies. There is immediacy in the live theatre; each performance is unique. You are in the present, in the moment, sharing an experience. I think we need that as human beings, and I can’t think of many things that provide it.”

Dan Demers, Hillbarn Executive Artistic Director



Studies show that performing arts education improves children’s cognitive development and academic success. It’s not just about teaching them to sing or dance. It’s about teaching them teamwork, time management, focus, discipline, confidence, and so much more. Hillbarn is dedicated to providing safe spaces for students to learn and grow through the arts as they create, collaborate, and build confidence.

American playwright, Lauren Gunderson, in *How Theatre for Young People Could Change the World*, says that, “so much of the toxicity in this world comes from a collective draining of empathy. We don’t understand each other, and we don’t want to. But theater invites us – no, forces us – to empathize.”

In our technological and media-driven world, the communal experience of live theater is increasingly important. Hillbarn Theatre continues to be a creative beating heart in a sea of technology. The theatrical experience requires no immediate responses to texts or emails; no photos or video that distract from experiencing the event live; no tweets, no posts, no demands! Engaging imaginatively in a work of art as a group and as individuals simultaneously, the audience experiences theatre’s power; to make one feel more alive, to dream up new possibilities and to tell and be changed by stories in different ways that help each of us learn and evolve. Our Community needs us, and we need our community.

Come to Hillbarn and experience what live theatre can do for you!
Visit hillbarntheatre.org

