



# “Theater Camp” is Campy Fun... About Theater

NEWS

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PARK CITY, UTAH – JANUARY 21: (L-R) Owen Thiele, Noah Galvin, Ben Platt, Molly Gordon, Patti Harrison, and Jimmy Tatro attend the 2023 Sundance Film Festival “Theater Camp” premiere at Eccles Center Theatre on January 21, 2023 in Park City, Utah. (Photo by Amy Sussman/Getty Images)

By Peter Jones

Middle school actors cannot always live on their talent alone.

“His family is rich,” a man says, casting his unofficial vote for which kid in the theater camp should get the lead role in an upcoming production.

“We don’t do things that way,” a woman responds. “... How rich?”

So begins *Theater Camp*, a comic mockumentary, vaguely cut from the cloth of Christopher Guest’s *Waiting for Guffman*, but with an independent verve all its own. Featuring a cavalcade of likable, self-important characters living in a broad-comedic universe, *Theater Camp* has cult film written all over it.

During the Q&A after the premiere at the Eccles Theater, co-director Molly Gordon said she initially envisioned *Theater Camp* as a bit like *The War Room*, D.A. Pennebaker’s fast-paced documentary about the 1992 Bill Clinton campaign.

But a comedy.

“We just wanted to do it in a more verité way,” Gordon explains. “Obviously, this is inspired by Christopher Guest, but we wanted to take our own spin to it.”

The result is a premise made for offbeat comedy: After temporarily losing its founder, Joan, to a coma, thanks to a freak accident — during a production of *Bye Bye Birdie*, no less — AdironDACTS, a kids’ theater camp in upstate New York, turns to Troy, her clueless son, to steer the hapless enterprise. The camp has more than its share of financial and creative problems, and Troy is utterly ill-equipped to deal with any of them.

The winning cast includes Amy Sedaris as the ill-fated Joan, and Jimmy Tatro turns in a hilarious turn as the decidedly incompetent Troy. The flawless young actors of *Theater Camp* have far more talent than their characters — though some can sing in a way that celebrates and lovingly mocks both Broadway and try-hard community theater.

“Our entire writing process was very much about trying things and creating situations that we wanted to see these characters in,” co-director Nick Lieberman says.

*Theater Camp* is audience-friendly fun, full of characters who seek a friendly audience.

“We just always wanted to do something as a collective and we were so inspired by people who just made things with their friends,” Gordon says.

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