



â??Welcome to Fat Schoolâ??: Class Is in Session, and the Curriculum Is Radical Self-Love

## Description

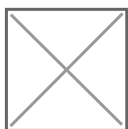
Salt Lake City, UT â?? Fearlessly written and performed by Kelsie Jepsen and Olivia Custodio, and directed by Ali Lente at the 2025 Salt Lake City Fringe Festival.

â??One of the most powerful pieces of fringe theatre Iâ??ve ever seen. While this show doesnâ??t follow a conventional narrative, it tells a story nonethelessâ??the story of every tween girl and woman trying to love her body in a world thatâ??s taught her to hate it.â?•  
â?? *Rhetorical Review*

*Welcome to Fat School* is not your typical Fringe comedyâ??itâ??s a full-bodied act of reclamation. Sharp, vulnerable, and unflinchingly honest, this two-hander world premiere confronts one of the last widely tolerated forms of discrimination: fatphobia.

Fat School doesnâ??t just break the fourth wallâ??it rebuilds the room. Drawing from Kelsie Jepsenâ??s acclaimed Body Acceptance Workshop and the real-life experiences of both creators, the show blends satire, storytelling, and pedagogy into a radically embodied performance. Jepsen and Custodio donâ??t perform around their identitiesâ??they lead with them, transforming personal histories into collective revelation.

What emerges is more than theatreâ??itâ??s praxis. Framed by humor but grounded in data, the performance invites audiences to think critically, feel deeply, and engage ethically. Participation feels less like a gimmick and more like an invitation to join a movement: one that dares to name discomfort, challenge bias, and imagine something better.



“It’s just fucking pudding.”

—Kelsie Jepsen

*Small, absurd, and gutting—this line captures the radical tenderness at the heart of Fat School.*

—Rhetorical Review

## Genre Disruption: Not a Typical Play

From the moment **Kelsie Jepsen** and **Olivia Custodio** burst onstage and shout, “Welcome to Fat School!” the audience knows they’re not in for a typical night of theatre. This is fringe-as-frontline: a classroom, a comedy set, a confessional booth, and a rallying cry.

With its TED Talk delivery, sketch show energy, and direct audience interaction, *Fat School* breaks the fourth wall early and often. “One, two, three—eyes on me! Keep your shit together,” Olivia commands, parodying classroom rituals while preparing the audience for radical truth-telling. In one unforgettable moment, she invites an audience member to call her “fat,” then laughs: “I’m just fucking with you! Can you imagine?! Yes, that’s right. I am fat.”

This is not a show that coddles. It implicates.



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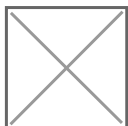
## Pedagogical Power: Fatness as Lens, Not Punchline

The structure mimics a school day—bell, lessons, homework—but every subject is a challenge to dominant culture. Jepsen sets the tone:

*“Today we are going to explore history, statistics, society, family, relationships, health and healthcare through the fat lens.”*

They tackle health myths, media narratives, and systemic bias through smart, satirical slideshows and personal testimony. Jepsen jokes, *“Spoiler alert: capitalism is at the corrupt root of almost all of our problems!”*—a punchline that lands because it’s as true as it is horrifying.

Together, they expose the ways medical systems punish fat bodies, from faulty BMI logic to misdiagnoses. *“Even if we play devil’s advocate and say that being fat does mean you’re unhealthy,”* Jepsen says, *“health is not a prerequisite for dignity or respect.”* The line earns cheers.



## The word “fat” and Fatphobia

The show doesn’t just name fatphobia—it defines it, teaches it, and offers tools to fight it.

Custodio explains:

*“Fatphobia is the fear of being fat and/or the hatred of fat people.”*

*“Anti-fatness refers to a systemic prejudice against fat people, rooted in a perceived moral failing or self-control issue.”*

This is not body positivity as branding. There’s no soft-focus self-love here. Instead, Jepsen and Custodio ask the audience to **rethink fatness not as an exception to health, but as a valid**

framework through which to understand racism, capitalism, ableism, and misogyny.

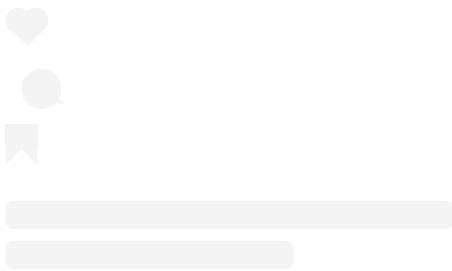
The show becomes a toolkit.

The word "fat" is no longer a flaw but a neutral human trait, no better or worse than thin.



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## Aesthetic of Urgency: Multimedia and Mood Shifts

*Welcome to Fat School* is nimble, propulsive, and tonally precise. Multimedia slides, magazine covers, medical charts, even church sermons create emotional whiplash, deepening the show's

stakes and sharpening its satire.

Jepsen drops research mid-laugh:

*“We’ve known since the 1950s that diets don’t work long term for 95% of people.”*

Custodio reads aloud:

*“Doctors reported liking their jobs less as patients increased in size.”*

But it’s not just data. It’s delivery. Jepsen turns to the audience with a smirk:

*“Raise your hand if you’ve ever dieted? That fucking sucks, doesn’t it?”*

The room erupts—not just with laughter, but with recognition. With grief. With release.

## Raw and Personal: Shame, Humor, and Testimony

What elevates *Welcome to Fat School* beyond satire is its vulnerability. The stories Jepsen and Custodio share aren’t just personal—they’re political acts of survivance.

In one scene, Kelsie reenacts a tween phone call with a friend, whispering:

*“We want people to like us, don’t we?!” So we just put the food down.”*

Later, a monologue on street harassment crescendos into fury:

*“Funny how you’re hot until you don’t respond to their advances. Then you’re just a fat piece of shit who deserves death.”*

The scary part is that these are based on real experiences.



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## Ethical and Cultural Stakes

As the show nears its conclusion, the tone shifts from revelation to invitation.

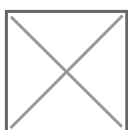
*“Fatness is not a failure and thinness is not an accomplishment,” Jepsen says no longer joking.*

*“Dismantling fatphobia isn’t just about us feeling better—it’s about doing better so that the world is a safer, more inclusive, more accessible place for all of us.”*

They close with a vision borrowing the words of **Aubrey Gordon** of a world where bodies are not moral barometers:

*“There is a world beyond this one where each of us is judged based on our actions, not our bodies.”* (From Aubrey Gordon’s book [What We Don’t Talk About When We Talk About Fat](#)).

And then the school bell rings and it is time to go home.



• *Welcome to Fat School* is a dialogue between performers and audience. Between past selves and present ones. Between shame and liberation.  
• *Rhetorical Review*

## A Fringe-Sized Revolution

To call *Welcome to Fat School* a fringe show is to understand that fringe, at its best, is a frontline. This is not a show that begs for acceptance—it dares you to unlearn your own cruelty.

Some of the most powerful takeaways from *Welcome to Fat School*? Get clear on your values. Diversify your social media feed—don't just follow perfect bodies. Stop insisting on retaking photos. Prioritize joyful movement. Build community. Call out fatphobia. And above all: stop commenting on other people's bodies. Our worth is not tied to appearance.

Toward the end of the performance, Jepsen and Custodio opened the floor for audience participation, and one attendee became audibly emotional while sharing a personal story of medical bias. Custodio responded with humor and care—I'm gonna need their Social Security number—bringing levity to the moment without dismissing its weight. Jepsen offered grounded, practical advice: if a healthcare provider refuses to treat your condition or dismisses your concerns, ask them to note in your chart that they are refusing care. That usually changes their tune, she said. I would add, if you're not comfortable asking the doctor directly, you can also request that a nurse document it. Also, if you ever feel like a medical professional doesn't listen to you or treat you with respect, you have every right to find a new one. Conversations like these are important and a powerful reminder that self-advocacy is not only valid—it's vital.

While this show doesn't follow a conventional narrative, it tells a story nonetheless—the story of every tween girl and woman trying to love her body in a world that's taught her to hate it. Its strength lies not only in what it reveals, but in what it asks of us—to listen, to reflect, and to do better. Class may be dismissed, but the work has only just begun.

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## About the Show

### A World Premiere at the 2025 Great Salt Lake Fringe Festival

**Created and Performed by:** Kelsie Jepsen and Olivia Custodio

**Venue:** Alliance Theater • Main Stage

**Runtime:** 60 minutes

**Genre:** Theatre • Comedy • Drama • Original Script • Audience Interaction

**Rating:** FFF • Full-Fledged Fringe (Recommended for mature audiences)

**Website:** <https://www.instagram.com/fatschoolslc>, <https://linktr.ee/fatschoolslc>

**Media:** <https://www.abc4.com/gtu/welcome-to-fat-school-a-play-you-must-see/>

## • Tickets

**General Admission:** \$15

Available at: [tickets.greatsaltlakefringe.org](https://tickets.greatsaltlakefringe.org)

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Resources provided at the show:

[resources](#)

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## Showtimes

- **Friday, July 25** 9:00 PM
  - **Saturday, July 26** 3:00 PM
  - **Sunday, July 27** 12:00 PM
  - **Saturday, August 2** 3:00 PM & 10:30 PM
  - **Sunday, August 3** 4:30 PM
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## Learn More

- Instagram: [@fatschoolslc](#)
- [linktr.ee/fatschoolslc](#)

## Welcome to Fat School Artist Bios

### Kelsie Jepsen (Co-Writer & Performer)

Kelsie is thrilled to make her debut at the Great Salt Lake Fringe by bringing her activist and theatre work together in *Welcome to Fat School*. She is both a professional actor and a certified body acceptance coach committed to serving oppressed, marginalized, and underserved communities. Her mission: to dismantle systems of body oppression and empower others to live boldly in their truth. Through her coaching practice, Kelsie cultivates community, fosters self-esteem, and helps individuals find their voice. She is a proud alum of the University of Utah's Actor Training Program.

embod Loveworkshop.com

### Olivia Custodio (Co-Writer & Performer)

Olivia is an actress, opera singer, playwright, and unapologetic arts devotee. Most recently, she served as head writer for Salt Lake Acting Company's 2024 summer show, *Close Encounters in the Beehive*. You may recognize her from numerous Utah productions over the years, where she's brought both comedic and dramatic roles to life. Olivia holds a BFA in Vocal Performance from Carnegie Mellon University and a Master of Music degree from the University of Utah.

oliviacustodio.com

### Ali Lente (Director)

Ali is honored to direct *Welcome to Fat School*. A longtime actor and recent director, she made her directing debut in 2024 with *Dance Nation* (Voodoo Theatre Company). With a passion for bold, meaningful stories, Ali is excited to help bring this powerful new work to the stage. She holds a bachelor's degree in Arts Administration and Theatre from Westminster University (Class of 2012).

## Category

1. Premiere
2. Reviews

### Tags

1. Audience Interaction
2. Body Politics
3. Body Positivity
4. Disability Justice
5. Fat Liberation
6. Fatphobia
7. Fringe Comedy
8. Great Salt Lake Fringe Festival
9. Original Script
10. Radical Self-Love
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