



# The Children's Theatre General Guide and Etiquette for All Performances

## Part I

### PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES AND QUESTIONS

1. How many of you have experienced a live theater performance? What did you see?
2. What are some of the differences between going to the theater and watching television or going to a movie?
  - Theater features live on-stage actors. They have spent many weeks rehearsing for the performance.
  - The audience is a very important part of the performance. Appreciation and enthusiasm for the performers is shown by close attention and participation and applause at the proper times. The success of the play often depends on the audience.
  - The theater is a very special place. Its atmosphere is entirely different from your home where the television is always available.
  - It is easy to identify with live actors. You can see how they use their bodies and voices to convey different emotions.
  - Actors wear clothing and make-up to help create the impression of the characters they play.
  - There is much more to most live performances than actors. Special sets, effects, lighting, music, costumes, and of course, the audience add to the total experience.
3. Introduce your students to the following theatrical terms:

Box Office • Reserved Seats • Acts & Scenes • Producer • Program • Overture • Spotlights • Costumes • Props • Director • Stage • Curtain Call • Stagehand • Lobby • Usher • Musical Theater • Orchestra Pit • Proscenium arch • Playwright • Scenery • Makeup • Actor • Balcony • Play
4. Discuss the role of the audience and proper theater etiquette.
  - Arrive on time so that you do not miss anything and so that you will not disturb the rest of the audience while trying to get comfortable in your seat. Lights go out before the curtain goes up and seating is very difficult.
  - It is easier for you (and the rest of the audience) to see and hear the performance if you stay in your seat and listen very carefully.
  - In this theater you are not allowed to eat or chew gum. Not only does it ruin the theater, but it also distracts from your concentration.
  - Try your best to remain in your seat once the performance has begun. In long performances, there will be an intermission. There is no intermission in a performance of The Children's Theatre since they are less than one hour in length.
  - Although you may wish to say something to the actors while they are on stage, you need to hold your thoughts. You may disturb their concentration. After the performance you will have an opportunity to ask questions while waiting for your dismissal.
  - Sing or participate **if** and **only if** you are invited to do so. Your participation is often very important.
  - Listen to how the music sets the moods and affects your own feelings.
  - Show the cast and crew your appreciation for their hard work with applause. Do this when you like a song or dance or joke at the end of the show.

**PART II**  
**POST PERFORMANCE CLASSROOM EXERCISES**

**1. PANTOMIME**

- Look up "pantomime" in the dictionary and explain what it means.
- Take turns pantomiming everyday activities while the group guesses what is happening. ( i.e. reading a book, fishing, playing tennis, cooking, etc.)
- Pick an animal and pantomime its actions until it is guessed.

**2. MUSIC**

- Was music used in the performance? Was it live or recorded? How could you tell? When was the music used? Why? Did it help develop the plot? What type of music was used, or were different types used?
- Can you describe how different kinds of music would make you have different kinds of feelings?
- When a play is a musical, an actor must have additional skills. Can you name some?
- A musical costs much more to produce. Can you name some additional expenses? (i.e. orchestra members and director, a practice piano, a score, a choreographer, etc.)

**3. SETS**

- Describe the sets used in the play you just saw.
- What props or details were used to suggest specific times or settings?
- How could lighting be changed to create a mood, season, time of day, etc.?
- What materials might have been used in building the sets?
- How were the sets and props moved on and off the stage?
- Describe a simple scene (a day in school, a trip to the mall, a ride in the car or on the bus), ask students to describe a basic set for the scene.

**4. COSTUMES**

- What would you need to know to create costumes for a play (research, sewing, theatrical effects, etc.)?
- Why is the right costume important to the character in the play?

**5. DANCE**

- Describe the kind of dancing, if any, in the play.
- How is it different from the kinds of dancing you might know? What purposes could dance have in a play?

**6. ART ACTIVITIES**

- Draw a picture of a favorite scene or character.
- Draw a picture of what the audience might look like from on-stage.
- Re-create a scene from the play using clay forms in a box.
- Design a program cover for the play using the title, date, and an illustration inspired by the play.
- Draw an advertisement or program cover for the play.

**7. LANGUAGE ARTS**

- Choose a character that you liked and write a one-day's diary for that character.
- Write a letter to a cast member telling what you liked about his character.
- Discuss the play. Was there a hero or heroine? A villain? Was there any historical accuracy to the story? The setting? Was there a moral to the story?
- In 25 words or fewer, describe the plot of the play.
- Discuss the work of a movie/theater critic. Write a newspaper-type review of the play.
- Discuss live theater. Are the actors aware of the audience? Why might an actor change his presentation because of audience reaction? Would it be easy to be an actor? Conduct an interview with a classmate pretending to be one of the actors and find out the actor's feelings about being on stage, memorization, rehearsals, costumes, audience, etc.
- Make a list of all the personnel needed for a play. (director, actors, musicians, author, designers-set, costumes, lights & sound, stagehands, choreographer, producer, etc.)