

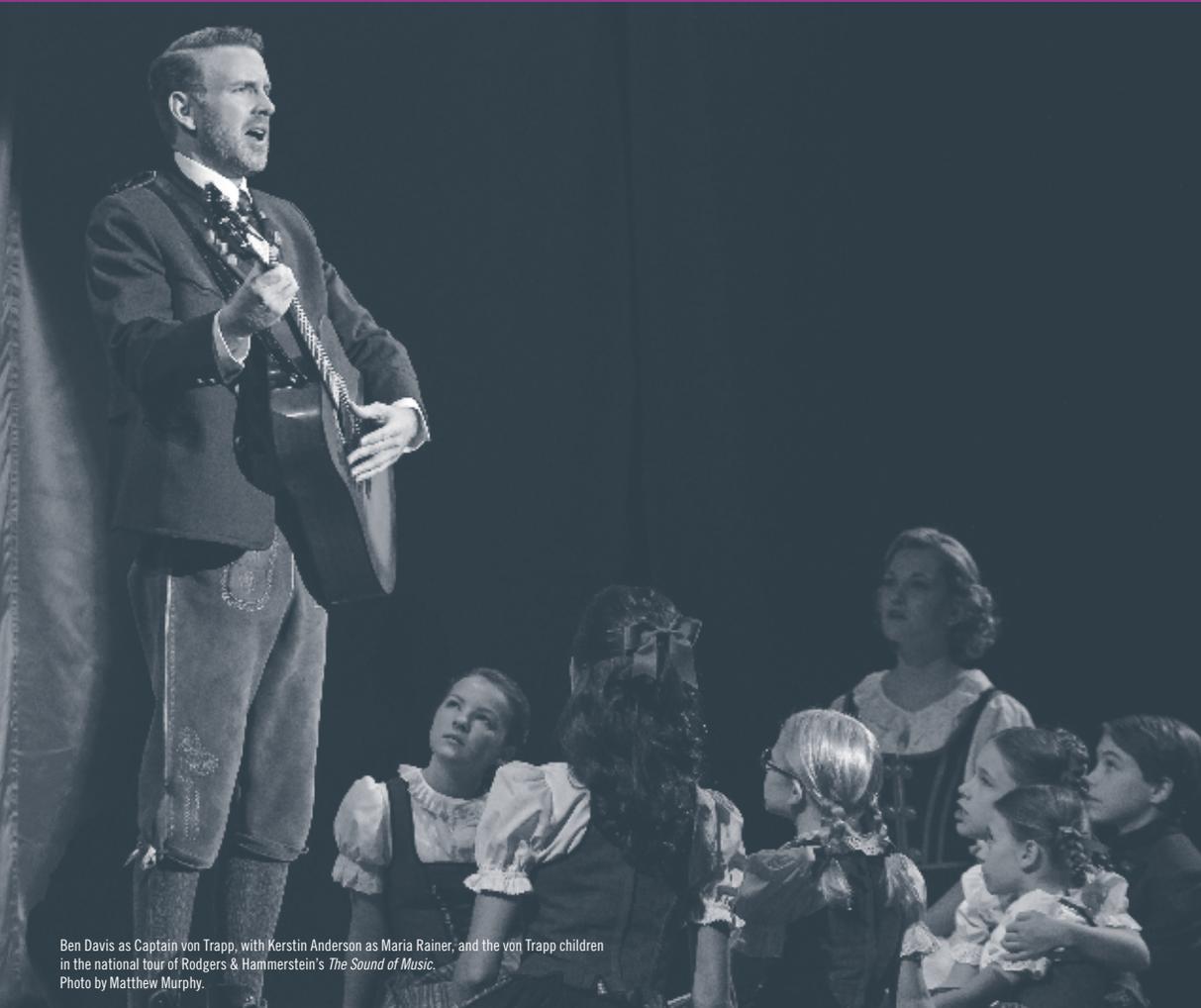
THEATRE BASICS



a starting place for
introducing children
to the world of
live theatre

□ theatre basics

A Starting Place for Introducing Children
to the World of Live Theatre



Ben Davis as Captain von Trapp, with Kerstin Anderson as Maria Rainer, and the von Trapp children in the national tour of Rodgers & Hammerstein's *The Sound of Music*. Photo by Matthew Murphy.

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Center Theatre Group is a non-profit theatre whose mission is to serve the diverse audiences of Los Angeles by producing and presenting theatre of the highest caliber, by nurturing new artists, by attracting new audiences, and by developing youth outreach and education programs. This mission is based on the belief that the art of theatre is a cultural force with the capacity to transform the lives of individuals and society at large.

Lovingly dedicated to Renee and Meyer Luskin

whose passion for bringing theatre to as many young people as possible and generous spirits were the inspiration for this book.



Photo by Ryan Miller/Capture Imaging

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WELCOME TO THE THEATRE



The Company of *Matilda The Musical* national tour.
Photo by Joan Marcus.

Discovering the amazing world of the theatre is an unforgettable and rewarding experience for people of all ages.

Theatre is a place for everyone, and it's never too early (or too late) to make seeing live, professional theatre part of your life.

Stories are powerful tools that express the depth and beauty of our imaginations. And sharing stories through theatre helps us know ourselves better and allows us to connect deeply with one another. Theatre gives us a safe space to wonder, explore, question, and dream.

When you love the theatre, there is nothing more exciting than going to a show, except, of course, sharing its magic with your family and friends. It's especially fun to introduce theatre to the young people in your life! Trying theatre for the first time together can also be a great adventure to share.

I am so lucky because I get to work at a theatre every day! I am always learning new, interesting, exciting, funny, and wonderful things about how theatre is made and the amazing people who make it happen. Sometimes when I attend Center Theatre Group's student matinéés, where more than half of the

students in the audience are seeing theatre for the first time, I have a hard time watching the show. I can't take my eyes off the reactions from our young audience members as they are awed and delighted by the art onstage. I take pride in knowing that for many of those young people that moment of discovery might very well spark a curiosity and passion that will last a lifetime.

We invite you to share the one-of-a-kind experience of coming to live theatre with the young people you know. We want everyone – from long-time theatre aficionados to first-time theatregoers – to feel welcome and at home at the theatre, get the most out of the experience, and keep coming back for more. We hope this primer helps and encourages you to make going to the theatre a regular part of the cultural, educational, and recreational experiences you share with the children in your life.

Looking forward to seeing you at the theatre!

Leslie K. Johnson

Director of Social Strategy, Innovation, and Impact, Center Theatre Group

LET'S GO TO A SHOW



Paige Faure and Blakely Slaybaugh in the national tour of Rodgers & Hammerstein's *Cinderella*.
Photo by Carol Rosegg.

We all love stories. Sharing, hearing, reading, and creating stories are part of the magic of growing up. We each remember treasured books, fairy tales, legends, favorite bedtime stories, and important accounts of characters – both real and imaginary – that we were told again and again. The best stories open our minds, touch our hearts, make us laugh, give us heroes, fuel our imagination, and help us think and grow. Stories are powerful nutrients for our minds and spirits that enable us to learn more about ourselves, others, and our world. And theatre is storytelling brought to life, right in front of our eyes!

□ find the right show

Selecting a show to bring your young person to see is a lot like creating the right meal for them.

You see, theatre is a lot like vegetables.



Okay, so there's no "right" show, but do some research:

- What show would be appropriate for your child?
- What kind of stories and characters does your child like?
- Are there things that scare your child?
- Consider the style, duration and, of course, content of a show.
- Don't necessarily rule out "adult" shows; it's quite possible your young person can handle a more adult performance. Just be aware that mature themes, language, violence, and nudity are sometimes included to help tell a story.
- Consider talking to other parents or adults who have seen the show.
- Many theatres will also make age recommendations for each show.
- Check out the theatre's website and if you have more questions, call the box office or speak to a member of the theatre's education staff.

NOTE: Like the movies, theatres may have age restrictions for various productions. Always call the box office or consult each theatre's website to be sure children are able to attend the show.

Some types of shows we instantly connect with (like carrots) and, if given our choice, we will fill our plate over and over again with those kinds of shows at every chance we get. It's great to know what you like, but variety is the spice of life, and no one should just eat carrots!

In selecting shows for your child, try to create a balanced diet of tried-and-true mixed with adventurous, new experiences that will help (you and) your young theatregoer develop an appetite for a range of theatrical experiences. And, like going out to eat, enjoy selecting from the "menu" of options together.

It's true that some types of theatre we consume once, and never want to consume again (like beets – blech!). When you do see a show or type of theatre that's not to your taste, consider giving it another try at some point – as you grow older or more experienced, your palate certainly changes. Something your child disliked when they were 6 or 9 years old may be just the ticket a few short years later (as is sometimes the case with Brussels sprouts).

Some shows are exotic, but worth sampling for the variety they add to our theatrical diet. (Like fiddlehead ferns. Seriously – try them if you can find them!) Some shows are good for you (like broccoli), some are an acquired taste (like stewed tomatoes), and some shows are just for fun (like corn on the cob)!

There are theatrical productions that are easy to digest (like sweet potatoes) while others require careful preparation and thorough chewing (you'd never eat an artichoke raw, right?). Consider what you might need to do – before, during, and after the show – to help your child get the most out of their theatregoing experience.

Finally, just because you love a certain vegetable (like kale) don't assume your young person is going to enjoy it. They might, but they might not. Think about how you can choose shows that will help your child develop a lifelong passion and curiosity for the theatre that will "ripen" over time into their own unique sense of personal taste based on lots of different experiences.

□ choose the right seat

Sitting in an audience is part of the live theatre experience, and each seat has different advantages.

Choose your seats with your young person in mind. The seats closer to the stage excite audiences because they allow you to see the performers up close. The middle and back of the audience gives you a more complete perspective of the stage and can allow you to see the “full picture.” If you think that you are going to need to leave early (or if you anticipate a case of the wiggles), you may want to consider a rear or aisle seat. Give your young person the experience of being part of the audience community and choose the seat that you think will make for the most enjoyable performance.

Theatre seating

Some theatres are quite large and have different seating sections, and some are modest in size so seats are simply delineated by number and row. Some theatres have “general admission,” which means you take whatever seats are open. When you have the chance, try sitting in different parts of the theatre to get a different experience of seeing a show.

Upon arriving at the theatre with your child, point out the different seating sections of the theatre auditorium. It's fun and educational to orient yourself. While you are looking around at the space, it's also a great time to take notice together of where the emergency exits are located.

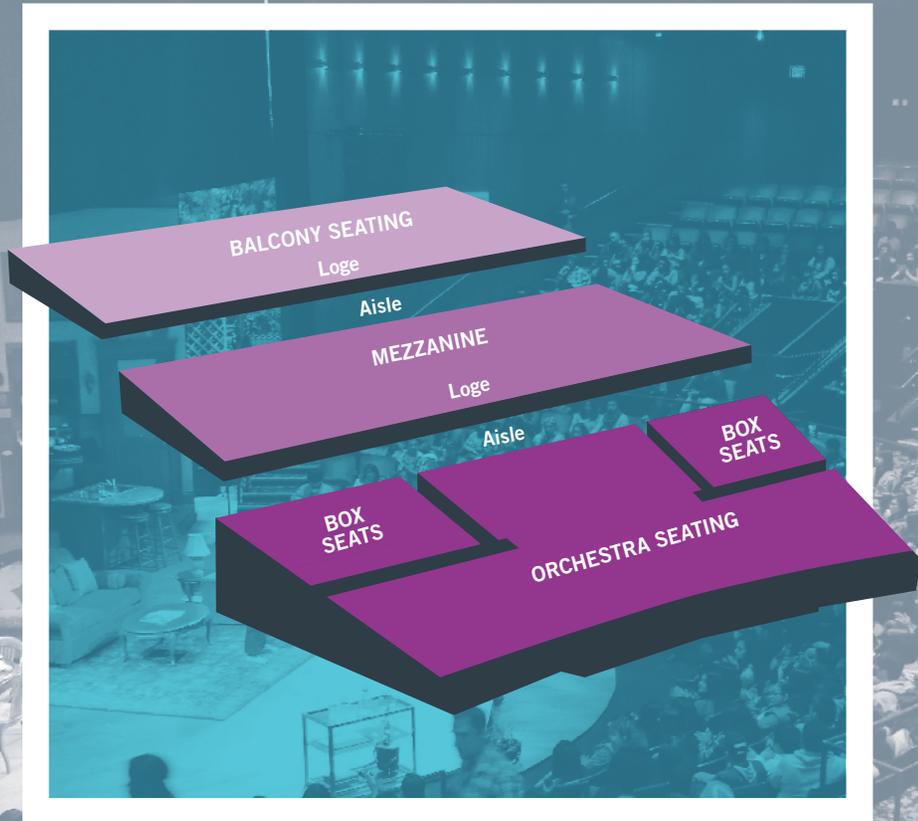


Photo by Ryan Miller/Capture Imaging

Box Seats: A Box is a small, separate seating area usually to the front or side, and above the stage level. They sometimes have their own private door or curtain to separate them from other audience members. A Box seat is a great place to watch the audience as they watch the show and sometimes get a glimpse of the off-stage action taking place in the wings.

Balcony Seating: Balcony seats are upstairs, on the second or third level of a theatre. The Balcony seating area usually extends partially out over the level of seats below and provides great views of the full “stage picture.” In bigger theatres there may be upper and lower Balconies. In theatres with more than one Balcony, the lowest Balcony level is sometimes referred to as the **Mezzanine**.

Orchestra Seating: The seating on the main level in a theatre is called the Orchestra section. Don't worry that you'll be seated with the musicians, though. If a show has live musicians, they will be seated in the Orchestra pit (“the pit”), which is the area right at the front of the stage below the floor level. During intermission, it's interesting to go up and look into the pit. Ask the ushers if you can take a peek.

The Orchestra and Balcony Seating often have front-, mid-, and rear-sections in really big theatres.

Loge: The term Loge is used to refer to different sections in the theatre depending on the size of the venue. Sometimes the Boxes are referred to as the Loge. In theatres without Box seats, the Loge can refer to the front of the Balcony.

Aisle: The aisle is the walkway between the rows and seats. Some theatres have only one big main aisle while others have several main and side aisles to make getting to and leaving your seat easy. If you are sitting in your seat and another audience member needs to get by, it's always most polite to stand up to let them pass.

Tiered and Raked Seating: When the row of seats are arranged on a gradual slope so that each row is slightly higher than the row in front of it so that audience members in the back can see over the heads of audience members in front of them, we say the seats are “tiered” or “raked.” You can also check to see if the theatre has booster seats available to help your child see the stage more clearly.

AT THE THEATRE



Photo by Ryan Miller/Capture Imaging.

- *Do you remember seeing your first theatrical production?*
- *What show did you see? Who were you with?*
- *How did the experience make you feel?*

Introducing someone to the magic of theatre is a gift! Some of us are introduced to theatre as children by a family member, a mentoring adult in our lives, or maybe through school. Others see our first show much later in life. Regardless, coming to the theatre is a wonderful experience from start to finish – getting excited about what show you are going to see, the pre-performance bustle in the lobby, finding your seat, reading the program, all leading up to the moment when the lights go down and you can leave this world behind and enter into another time or place...

□ get ready for the show

You have chosen the show. Now help make the most of your young person's experience with some pre-show preparation!

Spending some time preparing together for the show will make their experiences even more meaningful. Many theatres and productions prepare excellent educational resources designed specifically to help audience members of all ages learn more about the show and the artists involved.

1 Share your enthusiasm

The most important thing you can do before the big day is to get your young person excited. Share why you are looking forward to going to the show, what you love about seeing a live performance, and what interests you about the story. Talk about the things you will experience when you get there, what you will see on the stage, the people you will meet, and what makes the theatre special. Start your own theatregoing traditions (you always wear your matching sweaters, you always take the Metro, or always grab a pizza lunch before or after the show!). Make going to the theatre personal, special, and fun!

2 Get to know the show

The more young people know about the play, the more comfortable and invested they will be as audience members. Don't worry about spoiling the magic (How many times has your child re-read a book or re-watched a movie?) – introduce your young person to the characters, setting, and plot of the play. If the play is based on a book or novel, read it. Also, younger audience members might be relieved to know that scary characters and effects are just pretend, and any character who dies will reappear to bow at the end of the show.

- *What happens in the play?*
- *Who are the characters in the play?*
- *Where does the play take place?*

3 Meet the playwright

A writer often uses their own life and experiences to shape a story. Getting to know the biographical information about a playwright will help you and your young person understand the play on a deeper level.

- *Who wrote the play?*
- *When did the playwright write the play?*
- *What was their inspiration?*
- *What experiences shaped the playwright's life?*
- *How are you similar to the playwright?*
- *How are you different?*

4 Get to know the historical backdrop of the play

Watching a play set in modern times will look very different from a play set in the 1950s. Consider ways to help your child enter the world of the play. You can do some quick research together to discover more about a play set in a city, country, or time in history that might be unfamiliar to you. Particularly note how race, gender, class, religion, and social class might change a character's behavior based on the historical context of the play. Take advantage of this wonderful opportunity to familiarize yourself and your child with the social and political landscape of the play. Use your imaginations to describe how the play might look, especially if the play is set in a fantasy world or magic kingdom.

- *Where and when does the play take place?*
- *What world events were happening at this time?*
- *How might the time and place of the play affect people's behavior?*

□ the house is open

Take your seat

Make sure you review how to read your ticket so your child learns how to find their seat the next time. The door, section, row, and seat number will guide them.

If all else fails and you aren't quite sure where to go, ask an usher. It is the usher's job to help every audience member find their seats and feel welcome and comfortable at the theatre.



The time has come! You've arrived at the theatre and are ready to share the experience together. Even before the curtain goes up, there are lots of ways to help your young theatregoer feel oriented and have the full patron experience.

Tend to the basics

Make sure your children are well-rested, well-fed, and that they use the restroom before the show. It might be a good idea to bring some snacks for intermission. Also, if you can tell that your child has the wiggles in the first act, make sure you are quick on your feet to make it to the bathroom during intermission.

The house is now open!

The front of house is any place in the theatre open to the public (as opposed to the stage and back stage, which are reserved for cast and crew). The front of house includes the box office, lobby, and audience seating areas. The house manager is the person responsible for organizing all of the elements that deal with the audience and leads a team of people that assist audience members with any needs including box office staff, ticket sellers, ushers, concessions, etc.

It is a tradition in the theatre for the house manager to declare "the house is open" when audience members can start to enter the auditorium and take their seats.

Encourage your child to be part of the interchange at the box office when you pick up the tickets. Let them give the tickets to the attendant upon entering the theatre. Also, encourage the ushers to hand them the program.

Once seated...

Talk about what you can see and hear. Notice the other audience members and watch the way they behave. Look at the space and observe the architectural details of the theatre. Locate the hanging lights that will soon illuminate the stage. Look through your program together. Most of all, get ready...the show is about to begin!

Intermission

Leave your seats quickly to avoid bathroom lines. Even if your child doesn't have to use the restroom, it's good to get up and stretch. Take the intermission to ask your young person questions:

- *What do you think will happen?*
- *Did something surprise you?*
- *What character do you relate to?*
- *Commend their behavior and let them know they are doing an excellent job as an audience.*

While you are out and about in the lobby, ask your young person to watch for any blinking lights – the audience's cue to get back into their seats. Once you have seated yourselves again, let them know that the second half is usually shorter. And soon, they'll be able to clap for the actors!

**After intermission, ask your child to take you back to your seats. The more in charge they feel about their experience at the theatre, the more engaged they will be.*





THE POWER OF THE AUDIENCE



Photo by Ryan Miller/Capture Imaging.

Theatre is all about telling stories together! Among the many wonderful things about the theatre is the powerful sense of community that forms as theatre is created and performed. The creators, cast, designers, and crew work as a team to decide how the story will be told. And people from all walks of life come together to participate in collectively experiencing the show, forming a unique temporary community each time. We call this community the audience.

□ making believe together

The power of the audience is one of the things that make theatre truly unique.

Some people say, in fact, that the show is not complete until there is an audience there to experience it.

Having everyone who is making the show happen together at one time in the same space sharing the same experience is something that sets live theatre apart from film, television, or any other form of storytelling – and makes going to the theatre really exciting and fun!

Your young person has a part in the play as well – an audience member! Have a conversation about the “live-ness” of live theatre and how it differs from watching a movie or television show. Remind your children that they are free to respond to what is happening onstage: they might laugh or gasp, but they can’t speak to actors onstage, shout if they don’t like something, or even talk to people around them. (They can do all of these things during intermission and after the show.) Also, you can introduce them to other responsibilities of being the audience:

having tickets to a designated seat, holding onto the program, being an active listener, giving the action onstage their full attention and interest, following the story and letting their feelings come alive, clapping their hands at the end of an act and when the actors come out to bow.

Some shows may include forms of more direct audience engagement. Actors may ask for volunteers from the audience to join the act up onstage. They may encourage the audience to “call and respond” verbally, sing or clap along, or engage in some “from your seat” movement to help them tell the story that is happening onstage. By all means, if this happens, you and your child should participate at whatever level you are comfortable. Just remember, when that part is over, the audience is expected to settle back down and return their focus to the actors onstage.

I don’t have a thing to wear!

Yes, you do! Good audience members wear all sorts of things to the theatre. Some people dress up; some people don’t. Encourage your young people to express themselves but be comfortable. Please note that theatres will require patrons to wear shoes and patrons may be asked to remove hats or other pieces of clothing that may interfere or obstruct the views of other audience members.



ten tips for succeeding in your role as the respectful audience member

Yes, of course you have a part to play in making the theatre shows that you see a success!

Share with your child that because theatre is live – every audience member has an essential role in supporting the actors onstage in telling the story. Their attention, engagement, reactions, and interest all help shape the live theatre experience. Unlike television or the movies, the way the audience listens, feels, and responds directly impacts the actors and the experience of the show. This is one of the most exciting and unique things about theatre – it is a real-time, two-way conversation between the actors and the audience.

Here are some suggestions for being the best audience member you can be!

Be respectful of other audience members and help everyone have the best show possible:

- 1 Please turn off all electronic devices that make noise or light.
- 2 Please help keep the actors safe and focused by never taking photographs or video during the show.
- 3 Please try not to talk too much during the show. If you have to talk, please whisper.
- 4 If you need to leave your seat during the performance, please try to wait until a break in the action on stage (during a scene change or applause after a song), and then quickly and quietly exit the theatre.



Help keep the theatre safe and clean:

- 5 Please listen for important announcements before the show which may include information about what to do in an emergency.
- 6 Please keep your feet on the ground, not on the seat backs in front of you or on the balcony railing.
- 7 Unless otherwise noted, food and drinks are not allowed in most theatres.
- 8 Upon leaving the theatre, please look around your seat for anything you may have dropped (ticket stub, program, your belongings) and make sure to leave the area as nice as you found it.

Let 'em know what you think:

- 9 Feel free to laugh when you think something is funny; be touched if something in the story moves you; and applaud for the actors to reward their hard work and effort.
- 10 Help spread the word! Share with your friends and family members what you did, saw, and felt at the show and encourage them to check it out for themselves.

Standing Ovation

If the audience really enjoys the show, and clapping just doesn't feel like enough, audiences members rise from their seats to standing and clap for the actors onstage. Oftentimes, if the audience claps long enough, the actors will keep bowing or leave the stage and return for a second company bow.





AFTER THE SHOW



Photo by Alan Weissman Photography.

The end of the show is just the beginning. When the lights go up, you are full of thoughts, feelings, questions, and ideas. You want to talk about the story, the characters, the costumes, the sets! Seeing a show stimulates our intellect and inspires conversations and connections with others. Theatre is an experience that sparks conversation and is meant to be shared!



□ after the curtain drops

Bravo! Praise your young person's audience behavior and spend some time talking about the whole experience.

Discussing the show after you've seen it is a very important part of the theatrical experience. Some shows will have post-show discussions or opportunities to meet the cast and creative team. Take advantage of it! The experience will be all the more meaningful if your young person can participate in a discussion about the performance or meet a cast member.

Keep the conversation going

Encourage your young people to become experts of their own experiences by expressing their feelings and opinions. Remind them that there are no right or wrong answers – each person in the audience will interpret the play in a different way!

The following questions will help your young person personalize and make meaning of the experience.

- *How did the play make you feel?*
- *What did you like best about the play?*
- *Were there things that surprised you about the play?*
- *What did this play make you think about?*
- *What do you think this play is about?*
- *Did anything about the play or a character remind you of your own life?*
- *What character did you most relate to?*
- *What did the costumes say about the characters?*
- *Do you have a favorite line or moment that you remember?*
- *Were there elements of the play that scared or confused you?*
- *How did it feel to sit in the audience?*
- *How is watching a play different from watching a movie, reading a book?*
- *What would you have done differently if you were telling this story?*
- *What is a different ending that we might imagine?*
- *What happens next for these characters?*
- *What kind of stories do you want to tell?*
- *Is there something that you would like to learn more about?*



THE WORLD OF THEATRE



Photo by Ryan Miller/Capture Imaging.

I bet you never thought about how theatre is related to quantum mechanics? Indeed, when we watch a show you might say that there are not one, not two, but at least three parallel universes existing simultaneously. There is, of course, the regular world outside the theatre. There is the world of the play onstage. And, there is the world that is taking place backstage, behind the scenes! (Technically, there is also the world inside your imagination too, but let's not complicate things.) The action behind the scenes that make the show onstage possible is an exciting universe of special language, folklore, strange and funny traditions, and amazing people – an exciting world to discover where magic is made and stories brought to life!

□ putting it all together

The live theatre experience means that everything you see happening is taking place in real time.

Before your very eyes sets and costumes change, day turns into night, words help us know and understand characters, stories are told in songs and movement.

It is the interplay of all the components of theatre that make watching a live show truly spectacular. So much work goes into getting a show ready for the stage: here is a glimpse of some of the people and elements that make it all happen.

PLAYWRIGHT

the person or group of people who write the words to create a script. Sometimes the idea for the script is entirely imagined, with made-up characters and events; some scripts are based on real-life events and portray real-life characters. Playwrights also might adapt their plays from novels, biographies, or interviews.

THE SCRIPT

the written version of a play. It includes every word that each character is supposed to say.

DIALOGUE

the words spoken by characters in the play.

MONOLOGUE

a series of lines or a speech given by one actor.



STAGE DIRECTIONS

information in the script that describes characters' entrances and exits, blocking (actor movements), scenic elements, or action.



DIRECTOR

the artistic leader of the play who provides the vision for how the show should be presented. The director casts the actors and works with scenic, costume, sound, lighting and prop designers to determine how the play will look and works with actors to develop their performances. Two directors directing the same play might direct the play very differently.

THE COMPANY

the cast and crew.

THE CAST

the name for the group of actors in the play.

ACTOR

the person who portrays a character in a play.

UNDERSTUDY

the person who learns the lines and blocking of a particular actor and performs onstage if that actor cannot perform their role. Understudies are vital for long runs because illness, injuries, and "days off" happen.

THE CREW

all of the people who work on the production except for the cast.

CHOREOGRAPHER

the person responsible for creating dance and organized movement in a production.

COSTUME DESIGNER

the person who designs costumes for a show. The costume designer creates a costume for each character. The costumes reflect the historical time period of the show, the personality and social status of the character, and the style of the production.

COSTUMES

the clothing characters wear onstage. They inform the audience about the personality and status of a character.

LIGHTING DESIGNER

the person who selects how light will be used in the production. Light not only allows us to see what happens onstage, it helps tell the story. It can create mood or emotion, establish location, mark the changing of time, and provide focus.

BLACKOUT

the fast shutting off of stage lights.

MUSICAL DIRECTOR

the person who works closely with actors, musicians, and the director to create the music that we hear during the show.

life of an actor

PROP MASTER

the person responsible for obtaining props for the production and keeping track of props for each show.

PROPERTIES

known as props, objects on the stage that are not part of the actual scenery. Hand props are any items carried by an actor onstage such as a book, frying pan, knife, bottle, etc.



SOUND DESIGNER

the person who designs the sound for the production. Like lights, sound helps convey mood and emotion and can illustrate a change of time and location. Sound effects are an important part of sound design and include doorbells, telephone rings, and off-stage noise like traffic.

STAGE MANAGER

the person who works with all members of the cast and crew in rehearsal and in production. During rehearsals, the Stage Manager is responsible for taking blocking notes for actors and compiling prop lists. During the production, this person runs the show from opening to closing curtain and is in charge of everything onstage and backstage. This person also gives all technical cues to the crew via a headset.

SET DESIGNER

the person who designs the set for a production. The set helps convey the time, place, and mood of a play.

SET

physical elements onstage that establish the setting of a play.

BACKDROPS

scenic piece hung at the back of a stage used to depict a location.



For many young people, their interest in theatre starts with a curiosity about performing onstage. Here are a few additional words related to the actors/acting:

CHARACTER

the made-up person created by a playwright for a play. Also called a “role” or “part.”

AUDITION

when actors try out for a particular character in the play in front of the director and members of the production team.

CALLBACK

the last phase of auditions before the actor is selected to play a role. The director will invite a group of actors from the audition to come back and read for roles. These actors are the ones who are seriously being considered for the roles.

CASTING

the process of determining which actors will play each role.

CALL TIME

the time the actor must arrive to the theatre for a performance or rehearsal.



REHEARSAL

the time spent practicing the play before the performance opens. The director and stage manager organize time to meet with actors to develop characters, block movement, and practice timing.

CURTAIN CALL

when the actors bow at the end of the play.

SECOND BOW

when, after an initial curtain call, the actors return to the stage to bow again. This happens when an enthused audience keeps clapping after the actors finish their first curtain call.



□ places in the theatre

APRON - the extension of the stage beyond the proscenium arch.

BACKSTAGE - part of the theatre not seen by the audience including dressing rooms, the green room, and wings.

DRESSING ROOMS - a room in the theatre where actors dress, change costumes and put on make-up for the performance.

GREEN ROOM - a place backstage where actors wait before they go on stage.

BLACK BOX - a bare room with a movable seating area, a movable stage, and a flexible lighting system.

BOX OFFICE - the place where tickets are sold and held. When you need to pick up tickets that have already been purchased, you go to the Box Office Will Call Window.

BROADWAY - famous theatrical district in New York that is composed of 40 theatres with 500 or more seats.

CURTAIN - the piece of fabric separating the playing space from the audience.

LEGS - the curtains hanging on each side of the stage that hide the wing space.

FLY - the space above the stage where curtains and scenery rise by a system of pulleys, ropes, and weights.

PROSCENIUM - the area of the theatre that surrounds the stage opening.

PROSCENIUM ARCH - the "picture frame" area at the front of the stage, framing the acting area.

STAGE - the part of the theatre where the action of the play takes place.

WINGS - the area offstage where the crew, actors, and scenery are out of sight from the audience.

Stage Right

the actor's right when facing the audience. The audience's left when facing stage.

Stage Left

the actor's left when facing the audience. The audience's right when facing the stage.

Directions onstage are seen from the actor's points of view.

Upstage a direction toward the back of the stage, away from the audience.

Downstage the part of the stage closer to the audience.

The Company of *Matilda The Musical* National Tour.
Photo by Joan Marcus.

heard in the rehearsal room

Here are some terms you might hear if you were listening in during the rehearsal process.

BLOCKING

the movement of the actors onstage as decided by the director.

CUE

a signal for actors, crewmembers, or musicians. Actors may have cues to say a line, enter, exit, or move onstage. Stage managers give cues over headset to instruct crewmembers to change lights, music, sets, or props. Musicians may have cues given by the conductor, or they must listen to actors' cues onstage.

SPIKE MARK

tape on the stage floor to show where props and furniture are to be placed.

TECHNICAL REHEARSAL

known as "tech," this rehearsal is when all elements of the production come together for the first time. Lighting, sound, and technical cues are set.

RUN-THROUGH

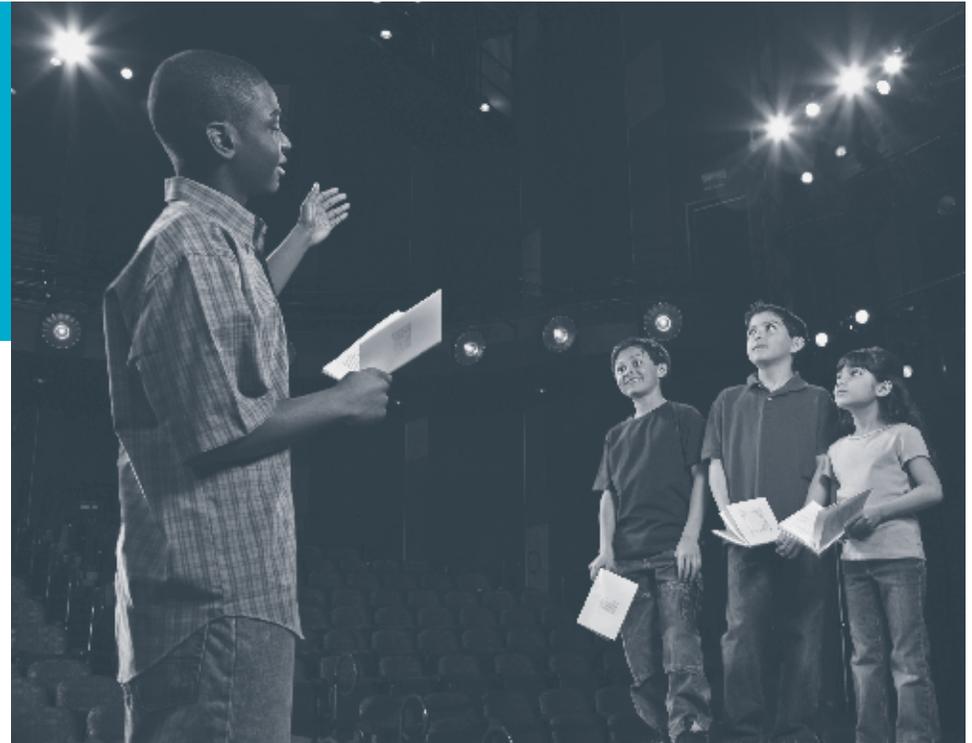
part of rehearsal when the actors rehearse the play from beginning to end with no stopping.

DRESS REHEARSAL

a rehearsal done from beginning to end as though there were an audience, with costumes, make-up, lights, sound, and props.

LOAD IN / LOAD OUT

when the set, costumes, and props are taken into/out of the theatre. Usually load in is done at the beginning of tech week. Load out, done at the end of the show run, is also called "strike."



People of the Theatre

To make stories come to life, you need lots of dedicated people. There are many creative, interesting, and challenging jobs in theatre – both onstage and behind the scenes. Here we have shared just a handful of the many professionals working in the theatre. It would take another whole book to describe the careers involved in running a theatre including artistic, education, management, marketing, graphic design, production, casting, business, technology, and finance. If your young person is interested in learning about working in the theatre beyond the stage, encourage them to investigate more about careers in arts administration as a growing and rewarding field.



THEATRICAL FOLKLORE AND TR ADITIONS



Theatre people are superstitious. Famously superstitious. There are things you should do before a performance – and things you should not. Things you can say – and things you can't. In fact, the more theatre people you meet, the more superstitions you learn about. And it's no surprise, given the number of mishaps – large and small – that occur in every performance, that people look for – and invent – explanations. The following list includes some of the great theatrical superstitions. Take a look. And if you have more of them, send them our way. . . just not in a blue envelope.

theatre superstitions

SAY “BREAK A LEG,” NOT “GOOD LUCK”

Theatres are believed to have resident ghosts. If these mischievous spirits hear you ask for something, they are known to make the opposite happen. Thus, you say, “break a leg” to outwit the sneaky ghouls. Another possible reason for this phrase comes from Shakespeare’s time, when the word “break” meant “bend.” Therefore, if you tell actors to “bend a leg,” you are asking them to bow deeply and often at the end of the performance.

“THE SHOW MUST GO ON”

In the theatre, things go wrong...a lot. The phrase “the show must go on!” means that regardless of what happens – if an actor is sick, a cue is missed, or if the show just isn’t ready for an audience – the production must go on according to plan.

It originated in the circus: when a performer got injured or an animal got lost, there was still a waiting (read: paying!) audience that expected a show.

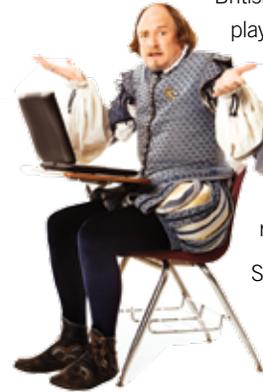
DON’T WHISTLE

Don’t whistle. Don’t whistle onstage, off-stage, or anywhere near the stage! Centuries ago, stagehands were out-of-work sailors hired at port (both ships and theatres have systems of ropes and pulleys). Sailors – at sea – communicated with whistles, so they did the same in the theatre, where their ropes commanded scenery and curtains. If you were an actor who whistled onstage – you might be giving a cue to a stagehand to drop a backdrop on your head!

DO NOT SAY “MAC...”

Saying Macbeth in the theatre will bring catastrophe...so don’t say it! There are many theories about the origin of this superstition that is taken so seriously that even during a production of the play, the title is never said by name. Instead, it’s called “The Scottish Play.”

Where did “the curse of Macbeth” come from? One story is that the famous British playwright William Shakespeare used actual incantations in the play – so the play curses itself. Another theory is that Shakespeare cursed the play because King James I forbid it from being performed. Yet another theory is that during the first production of *Macbeth* in 1606, Hal Berridge, the boy playing Lady Macbeth, died backstage, and it is said that Shakespeare himself took over the part and performed it badly. After that, Shakespeare only referred to *Macbeth* as “that play.”



Should you happen to say the cursed name, you must say: “Angels and ministers of grace defend us!” Then you must leave the theatre, spin counterclockwise three times, spit, swear, and knock to be readmitted.

GHOST LIGHT

One should always leave a light burning in an empty theatre. A ghost light is a light left on in the center of a stage when the theatre is unoccupied and would otherwise be completely dark.

A couple contrasting origins of this tradition exist: 1) The light remains on for the ghosts to play, perform and wreak havoc – so they won’t do it during a performance! 2) The light is on to keep ghosts away. Either way, you are hard-pressed to find a theatre in a world without a ghost light!

EVEN MORE TRADITIONS...

- *Never give flowers to an actor before the play.*
- *The color blue will make actors forget their lines.*
- *Don't wear green. Just don't.*
- *Do not use real flowers on stage.*
- *Actors should never wear new make-up opening night.*
- *Never open a show on a Friday night.*
- *Don't place shoes or hats on chairs or tables in the dressing room.*
- *Bad dress rehearsal means a good opening night.*
- *Actors shouldn't clean their make-up boxes.*



BRAVO! ENCORE!

Congratulations on introducing your young person to live theatre.

You are inspiring a new generation of empathetic and creative individuals... and who knows – maybe budding theatre professionals.

Photo by Ryan Miller/Capture Imaging.

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