**Theatre Etiquette**

Below are some widely accepted and observed guidelines for attending or working in professional theatre.

**Turn Off Your Cell Phone**

Somehow the most obvious rule of good theatre etiquette is still the most often disregarded. Turn it off, people. Turn. It. Off. And, no, putting your cell phone on vibrate isn’t good enough – the people next to you can hear that weird buzzing sound, too. Be present for the moment.

**Don’t Send Text Messages During the Show**

You may think you’re being all incognito, but in a darkened theater, the light from your cell phone screen is incredibly distracting to those around you. And why do you still have your phone on anyway? We just told you to turn it off!

**There is no photography or videoing allowed in the theater.**

As mentioned above it is super distracting to the other people who are trying to watch the show. Beyond that, it is distracting to the performers who are prepared to give you the best performance possible. Finally, it is illegal in many instances. The majority of most performance contracts strictly forbid the recording of a performance. The organization producing the show has a responsibility to discourage the practice. Set designs, costume designs, direction, performances and the script and music are all the intellectual property of those who created them. It is possible you may be responsible for copyright infringement by recording a live theatrical production.

**Eat Your Dinner Before the Show, Not DURING It**

This isn’t the movies. Munching on candy and chips during a live performance is annoying to your neighbors. Bringing hamburgers and large salads (oh, yes, we’ve seen people do it) is really unacceptable. If you’re absolutely starving (after all, nobody wants to hear your stomach growling either), then a little quiet snacking on something fairly unobtrusive like M&Ms is acceptable. But it’s still better if you avoid eating altogether during the show and get your treats in the lobby during the intermission instead.

**Unwrap Cough Drops and Candies in Advance**

If you anticipate any coughing fits during the show, be sure to unwrap your lozenges before the performance starts and have them at the ready. That crinkling sound is like nails on a chalkboard during a quiet play. And, no, unwrapping it S-L-O-W-L-Y does not help the situation … it’s much, much worse.

**Don’t Be A Disruptive Miss (or Mr.) Manners**

Sure, it’s irritating when someone’s cell phone goes off, but what’s even worse is when the brief breach of theatre etiquette is followed by a series of overreactions from other audience members. Annoyed “Tsks,” “Hmphs,” hisses, snarls, and shouts of “Turn it off!” along with scandalized glares can be just as distracting as the original disruption.

**Don’t Talk During the Show**

A quick whisper to your neighbor, or an audible reaction to something interesting that happens on stage is fine (this is the live theater, not the morgue), but keep conversations to the intermission and after the show. Nobody needs to hear your theories on what the next plot twist will be, and please refrain from asking your companion to explain to you what was just said onstage. By the time he or she explains it to you, you’ll have both missed something else important.

**Standing Ovations Are Overdone – Don’t Give In To Peer Pressure**

Traditionally, applause for an actor when he or she first takes the stage and standing ovations at the end of a Broadway show were signs of an audience so full of appreciation and respect that they couldn’t help themselves. Lately these reactions seem to have become obligatory, and unfortunately when standing ovations and entrance applause are done out of mere habit, they essentially become meaningless. Ultimately, how you react is up to you, but let your true feelings guide you.

**Respect the Space and Comfort of Those Around You**

Many theater seats make Economy Class on a commercial airliner look luxurious, so sometimes a little elbow bumping can’t be helped. But you can practice good theater etiquette by taking care to not lean into your neighbor, hog armrests, intrude on other people’s already limited leg room, or let your big heavy coat hang so far off the back of your seat that it ends up in someone else’s lap.

General reminders for etiquette at all theatre levels:

**Audience Member**

* If you cannot use your ticket, turn it in or call the box office and let them know.
* Arrive and find your seat before curtain.
* If you arrive after the show has begun, the House Manager may need to delay seating you immediately.
* Please do not eat anything in the theater.  If necessary, unwrap throat lozenges, mints or gum before the performance begins.
* Do not talk with fellow audience members during the play.
* There is no use of cell phones or noisemaking devices during the performance. Please silence them before the performance. This includes texting ……the screen is a big distraction to those audience members who are both around and behind you.
* There is no use of laser pointers during the performance.
* Please remove any hats during the performance.
* Please avoid wearing strong perfumes or cologne.
* Return to your seat promptly before the intermission ends.
* Do not recite, hum or sing along with the actors.
* Please keep hands and all other body parts to yourself.
* Stand up if someone needs to pass in front of your seat and there is not enough room to do so.
* Do not block aisles or doorways.
* Remain seated until the houselights come up. Exit in an orderly fashion.
* Please take your trash and program with you when you leave.
* Please give your program back to the ushers after the show if you choose not to keep it.

**Crew Member**

* Arrive earlier than your call so you are ready to begin work at the call time.
* Sign in on time and do not ask others to sign in for you.
* Wear appropriate clothing for your call.
* Do not eat or drink backstage.
* Refrain from talking backstage except for show related business.
* Do not talk to actors except for show related business – it may break their concentration.
* Do not chat while on headset and turn off your mic when not talking.
* Do not perform tasks not assigned to you.
* Do not move or touch a prop that you have not been assigned to use.
* Report broken props or scenic elements to the stage manager.
* Acknowledge the stage manager’s calls with a polite “thank you.”
* Keep your workspace tidy.  If you do make a mess, clean it up.
* No pranks or practical jokes during rehearsals and/or performances.
* Refrain from using cell phones and computers while on duty backstage, onstage or in the dressing room.

**Scene Shop**

* Do not borrow tools/materials without asking.
* Put tools away when finished – even if you did not use it first.
* Clean as you work.  If you make a mess, clean it up.
* Do not talk to someone using power tools.  Wait until they are finished.
* If you break a tool, please report it.
* Horseplay is not appropriate in the shop or onstage.
* If you are unsure what you are doing – ask!
* If you are unsure how to use a tool – ask!
* Warn others of hazards.
* When you have finished a task, ask what you can do next.
* Call out when moving overhead rigging or stage elevators.
* Acknowledge warnings with a polite “thank you.”
* If you drop something overhead yell “HEADS” immediately and loudly.
* Report using the last (or nearly the last) of anything.
* Empty a full trashcan before adding to it.  If it is full, take it to the dumpster.
* Foul language is never appropriate.
* Refrain from using cell phones or computers.

**Performers**

* List all schedule conflicts with rehearsals/performances prior to casting.  It is your obligation to adhere to the rehearsal schedule once it is set.
* Generally, it is good to audition for any/all roles in the play.
* Check callboard daily.
* Report to all fittings on time, bathed, wearing deodorant and proper, clean underwear.
* Arrive early, ready to work for every rehearsal or performance.  This affords time to be prepared with pencil, note paper, script and changed into rehearsal clothing.
* If you will be late or absent from rehearsal, even in an emergency, contact the stage manager as soon as possible.
* Be attentive in rehearsal. Not only will you be ready when you are needed but you will learn more quickly.  Direction, suggestion, information given to another actor may affect/inspire you.
* Write down ANY AND ALL notes, blocking and direction you are given, preferably in pencil so you can accommodate any changes easily.
* Observe the off-book deadline by knowing your lines as well as you can. It is customary once a scene is blocked to have it memorized by the next time it is rehearsed.
* Call for line in rehearsal by staying in character with a minimum of hesitation and loss of focus.
* Refrain from disputing a director’s note or engaging in lengthy explanations when given direction.
* Never direct or prompt a fellow actor.
* Respect the stage manager, designers and all crew.  Give them your full attention and acknowledge their calls and instructions with a polite, “thank you”, so they know you hear and understand.
* Do your homework – research, blocking and line memorization ----outside of rehearsal.
* Stay close to the rehearsal space and do not leave without being dismissed by the stage manager.
* In rehearsal, when stopped for direction/discussion/adjustments agree on a point in the text to resume and make sure all involved parties are ready to start.  Do not start again until you receive the stage managers “go.”
* Do not handle/use/sit upon any furniture, props, or costume pieces unless you are required to do so in the play and even then only when necessary.
* Refrain from using cell phones or computers during rehearsals and performances.
* Refrain from making suggestions or problem-solving unless you are included in the discussion.
* Show respect for the space by always cleaning up after yourself.  Eat and drink only in designated areas.
* Sign in upon arrival for performance.  Sign in only for yourself.
* To the best of your ability, play every performance respecting your audience regardless of its size. Play as directed with no alterations for your own gain or because of the advice of critics, family or friends.
* Be quiet backstage when the audience is in the theatre.
* No vocal warm-ups in common areas –green room, dressing room—after half hour call.
* Check ALL props you use in the show prior to EVERY performance.  Make sure all are in working order and follow any safety protocol involving firearms, pyrotechnics or weapons.
* Report promptly to stage management’s “places” call.
* After use, return properties to the prop table.
* Smoking, drinking and eating in costume are forbidden.
* Never use alcohol or drugs prior to a performance.
* Remain backstage while in makeup and costume (unless otherwise directed to do so).
* Hang up or put away your costume as instructed after use.
* Keep offstage until the audience is completely cleared from the house.
* Instruct visitors to meet you in the lobby following the performance.  Only personnel directly involved in the show are allowed in the backstage/dressing areas.
* Keep your personal dressing/makeup station neat and orderly using only the space allotted to you.
* Never borrow another actor’s supplies such as makeup, cleaning items, without permission.
* Remove all personal items from theatre promptly after closing performance.
* Return any rented script material (sides, music, etc.) properly erased of your markings and in good order to the stage manager on closing night.