

THEATRE ETIQUETTE – THE ROLE OF THE AUDIENCE

Theatre is a living art. It is intended to be performed live before a group of people who form an audience and together experience the play. Theatre not only depicts human communication, it *is* human communication. Unlike television or film, two-way communication occurs between performer and audience. The audience hears and sees the actors, and the actors hear and see the audience. We are used to thinking about the performers' roles in a play, and may find it strange to realize that we, the audience, have an important role as well. Live theatre is the sharing of human experience, intensely and immediately, in a space which temporarily becomes our universe.

A live theatre production depends upon its audience. Because the art is living, each performance is guaranteed to be different, depending in part upon the audience's response. When the actors sense a responsive, engaged audience, their work is at its best – full of animation and energy. When the actors sense disinterest and restlessness, they too are distracted, and the theatre they create is less compelling.

How can you help actors give you their best performance?

- Don't talk during the performance. It is distracting to the actors as well to the people sitting nearby.
- Allow yourself to respond naturally to the play. Emotions are part of drama. We hope that you will laugh, cry, and even gasp as a natural response to the story – but not in order to distract attention from the stage.
- Please leave all “noisemakers” – food, gum, personal stereos, cell phones, gameboys, etc, back at school or on the bus. In a quiet theatre, wrappers and munching are heard by all, the actors included.
- No photographs, please! Flashbulbs can cause the actors to lose their concentration.

One actor described the experience of live performance as a story told by the actors and audience together. In this sense, you are also a participant in the experience of live theatre. We hope you will enjoy your role – and help us give you a theatrical experience that you will always remember.

[Theatrical performance] is essentially a sociable, communal affair. This is important. To resist this is, I think, to ruin one of the very important parts of the theatrical experience. Let the play and let the fact that temporarily you are not your private self, but a member of a closely-fused group, make it easy for the performance to 'take you out of yourself.' This, I suggest, is the object of going to a play ... to be taken out of yourself, out of your ordinary life, away from the ordinary world of everyday.

- Tyrone Guthrie, 1962