

The Guide

A Theatergoer's Resource

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PCS's 2016-17 Education & Community Programs are
generously supported by:



PCS's education programs are supported in part by a grant from the
Oregon Arts Commission and the National Endowment for the Arts.

with additional support from

Craig & Y. Lynne Johnston

Holzman Foundation

Mentor Graphics Foundation

Autzen Foundation

and other generous donors.

Hold These Truths

By Jeanne Sakata

Cast & Creative

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THE ARMORY

Theater Etiquette

Seeing a play is very different than seeing a movie. During live theatre, the audience is as equally important as the actors on stage. Please share the following points with your students, and encourage them to practice good theater etiquette throughout the workshop.

- **Live response is good!** If you tell a story to a friend and notice they aren't responding, it makes you want to tell the story better. A live audience is as critical a component of the theatergoing experience as the actors on stage. The more the audience listens, laughs and responds, the more the actors want to tell the story.
- **The actors can hear you talking.** Have you ever had a conversation with someone and felt that they'd rather be someplace else? This is the exact feeling actors get when people in the audience are talking. If an audience member is not paying attention, the actors know it.

- **The actors can see you.** Imagine telling something to a group of fellow students who are slouching, pretending to be bored, or sitting with their eyes closed in attempt to seem disinterested or "too cool" for what you had to say. Think about it: Even though the actors are pretending to be other characters, it is as much their job to "check in" with the audience as it is to remember their lines. Since stage actors only get one chance to tell the story to each audience, they want to make sure to communicate clearly each and every performance.
- **Cell phones, beepers, candy wrappers, loud gum smacking.** Please turn off all cell phones and do not eat or chew gum inside the theater. These things disturb the people around you as well as the actors. As much as you might be tempted to text a friend how cool the play is that you're watching, please wait until after it is over.

Many thanks to our colleagues at Montana Shakespeare in the Parks, from whom these excellent etiquette suggestions have been adapted.

Education Programs: Stage Door

Our Education Programs provide young people with opportunities to experience the art of theatre, to directly participate in its process, and to apply its collaborative principles elsewhere in their daily lives. Stage Door is an unforgettable opportunity for students to experience professional theatre in a context that supports their education.

The following activities have been constructed by our Teaching Artist to help students explore themes found in our production of Little Shop of Horrors. We encourage you to adapt these activities for your group as needed.

GOALS:

- Encourage personal connections between students and the major themes of the play.
- Excite students about the story and theatrical elements in the production.
- Engage students using the actors' tools: body, voice, and imagination.

KEY CONCEPTS:

- The Immediacy of Segregation
- Embodiment of Resilience
- Values to Defend

Performance Warm-Up: Class Filter

The goal of this activity is to bridge independent-group perspectives, and to engage participants physically. Social groupings and game-play connect this activity to the themes of class structure and inherent competition.

HOW IT WORKS:

- Divide the group into categories: Born in this state, born out-of-state, parent(s) born out-of-state
- This activity works with many group games, provided they have an elimination element. e.g.: Red Light, Green Light, Zip-Zap-Zog, Dodgeball.
- Begin the game by rewarding (small prize) all of the members of the group: Born in this State
- Throughout, continually favor the In-State group
- When an Out-of-State player is eliminated (tagged-out), dismiss the people standing next to them as well. Experiment with giving an explanation, or not.
- At some point, reward a player who was dismissed unfairly – a piece of candy will do (this sets up a later conversation about reparations)
- To end the activity, admit to having too much authority as the leader, and invite any In-State students to share their prizes. Shift the burden of privilege.

SAMPLE FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS:

Describe what you experienced as an In-State? Did the categories seem fair? What's an example of a game wherein the odds are not even, not rigged, just biased?

Activity #1: Hero Profile

Students will improvise the characterizations of traditional values with varying interpretations, collaboratively. Students build communication skills as they convey subtext, viewpoints and realistic reactions.

HOW IT WORKS:

- Working in small groups. Each member of the group will pose in a way to embody a “Heroic” trait.
- Each group will present their poses to the group.
- Discuss the similarities of body language, themes, and which factors are essential.
- Compare to the common usage of, “cool,” “rebel,” and “outcast.”

REFLECTION/DISCUSSION:

Why wasn't it an option to stop shaking hands? How quickly did you begin suspecting the people around you? Why didn't the “winkers” stop winking? Which do we tend to respond to more, the warning or the proof?

Below: Ryun Yu in *Hold These Truths*.
Photo by Patrick Weishampel/blankeye.tv



Activity #2: Simplicity in Motion

This activity focuses on the interpretations of civil and unalienable rights. Collaboration and tableaux will be used to illustrate themes of justice.

HOW IT WORKS:

- Working in small groups, the participants will show a three “slide” progression of tableaux.
- Keep group topics a secret, as the audience will be guessing the content of what they see.
- Suggested Topics are: Justice, Rebellion, Tradition, Containment.
- Encourage students to only use one word per slide which encapsulates the message of the moment.
- Groups will presents their “slides” to the group, and the group will be asked to guess what the given topic was.

TIPS:

Push the urgency forward - allow for a rapport to establish, and coach players to become more desperate/dire. Always encourage honest reactions and authentic responses.

REFLECTION/DISCUSSION:

What images came to mind when you first looked at the themes? How did rewinding the moment to find its cause, change your understanding of the end? Which moments were the most challenging to imagine?

Activity #3: Standing on Thresholds

This activity highlights the inherent limits each person sets for themselves. Participants will utilize value judgments a social approval for decision-making.

HOW IT WORKS:

- This is a whole group activity.
- Begin standing, and allow people to be seated when they agree to the “deal.”
- Using days of incarceration as a negative, and positives like college tuition, begin narrowing the field of participants by making value decisions.
- “Would you be willing to sell everything you own, and move to a place you’d never been?”
- “To avoid: One day in jail? 30 days?” “Would you rather lose items that you own, or gain days in jail?”
- Continue until the whole group has found their threshold for rebellion, identify participants who lasted until the end.

REFLECTION/DISCUSSION:

When was a time when you were so focused on a goal, that you missed out something else? When has the hope of a goal pulled you through the process?

