

THE **ARMORY**

# The Guide

*A Theatergoer's Resource*

## Education & Community Programs Staff

Kelsey Tyler

Education & Community Programs Director

Clara-Liis Hillier

Education & Community Programs Associate

Eric Werner

Education & Community Programs Assistant

Matthew B. Zrebski

Resident Teaching Artist

## Resource Guide Contributors

Benjamin Fainstein

Literary Manager

Mary Blair

Production Dramaturg & Literary Associate

Claudie Jean Fisher

Public Relations and Publications Manager

Mikey Mann

Graphic Designer

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# Little Shop of Horrors

By Alan Menken and Howard Ashman

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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 Effect of "The Other"
- Exploring the range of Naturalism– Realism – Surrealism present in Musical Theatre
- Dramatic Tension: Prelude to Crisis

## Performance Warm-Up: Rock Paper Scissors Nirvana

*The goals of this activity are to connect and engage students with each other, building the foundation of trust. This type of “heightening” game results in larger-than-life scenarios, much like the heightened realism often found in Musical Theatre.*

### HOW IT WORKS:

- Pair up with someone sitting next to you, and introduce yourself.
- Person A begins by stating an ideal vacation location. (“Hawaii”)
- Person B restates what was said, and adds a perk, followed by the phrase, “Treat yourself.” As in, “Hawaii, yeah and go snorkeling. Treat yourself!”
- Person A restates the addition, and adds their own, and so on and so forth. “Go snorkeling and stay right on the beach. Treat yourself!”
- Repeat the game, starting with least appealing travel destination, and take turns making it worse, followed by, “That’s a shame...”

### SAMPLE FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS:

What new ideas did you about your ideal vacation? At what point did it seem impossible? What’s the difference between a “Dream” and a “Goal”?

Below: Nick Cearley in *Little Shop of Horrors*.  
Photo by Patrick Weishampel.



## Activity #1: Someone is Among Us

*The goal of this activity is to induce the feelings of suspicion and paranoia, which underpin many of the play’s characters and time period. Students will engage their identity while deciding their role in a simulated values environment.*

### HOW IT WORKS:

- Prior to the workshop, assign six students numbers (or letters or names), unbeknownst to the rest of the group.
- Gathered as a group, students will mill and seed (mingle). If seated as in an assembly, greeting the people seated nearby will suffice.
- Shake hands with people nearby.
- Teacher should then call out one of the names or numbers given earlier, thus “activating” that student to wink at will.
- Once a student has been winked at, they must COUNT TO TEN, before pretending to fall asleep. (The Vampire/Zombie variation here is to have the students turn into “winkers” once winked at, both produce fun results).
- Students can accuse others of being the winker. If they are right, the game is over and resets. If they guess incorrectly, then they and the four people nearest to them become afflicted.

### 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?



## Activity #2: Amp It Up Replay

*The focus of this activity is the range of Naturalism – Realism – Surrealism present in Musical Theatre. By utilizing role play and archetypical characters, participants will explore the balance believability.*

### HOW IT WORKS:

- For 2-5 players/round; students will perform as characters: Protagonist, Antagonist and Treasure (for lack of a better word).
- Crowd-source ideas for the plot of the scene. Have students perform a simple scene.
- Rewind the scene and play it out again, this time, whisper to all the characters that it is their birthday, and to keep that in mind when playing the scene.
- Continue to rewind and replay the scene, increasing the enthusiasm of the performers, and/or changing the context of the scene.
- Continue to check in with the audience to see which variation becomes “unrealistic.”

### REFLECTION/DISCUSSION:

When does drama become melodrama, and how do we know it when we see it? What draws us to a rags-to-riches storyline, or a good triumphing over evil storyline? Where have we seen examples of each?

## Activity #3: 10-Minute Musical

*This activity combines listening, agreement and storytelling skills. As many participants as possible will be working together, responsible for their “role” in the show.*

### HOW IT WORKS:

- Start with one student, and crowd-source a name for them. This is the Protagonist.
- Question the audience to describe the Protagonist’s life, wants, hopes and fears.
- Continue to build the arc of Protagonist’s life, and at each pivotal moment (each “scene”), have additional participants stand chronologically (e.g. the Protagonist’s graduation should be played by one actor on the timeline, their first kiss played by a different actor).
- Where appropriate, have actors join the timeline to represent songs, “love song,” “fight song,” “song of apology” – have actors use whichever songs they know, as long as they fit the bill.
- With everyone lined up and roles assigned, start at the beginning of the timeline and progress through each student saying or singing the crux of their scene, until everyone joins in for the finale.

