



TEACHER PREPARATION GUIDE

# NOISES OFF

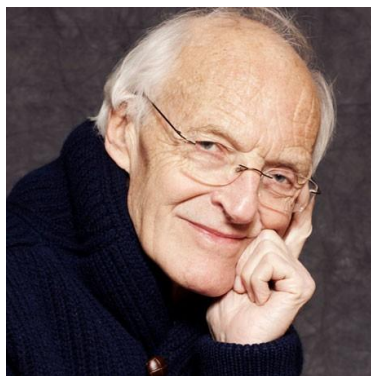
By MICHAEL FRAYN

Directed by CHRISTOPHER LIAM MOORE



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Spring 2025

Dear Educator,

Thank you for your student matinee ticket order to Great Lakes Theater's production of Michael Frayn's *Noises Off*. This production will be performed in the beautiful Hanna Theatre at Playhouse Square from April 25—May 18, 2025.

This sidesplitting romp takes you behind the scenes as one hilariously dysfunctional cast stumbles through rehearsals, opening night jitters and several escalating disasters. Doors slam, sardines fly and love triangles tangle as this award-winning farce sneaks a hysterical backstage peek at a production that teeters on the precipice of pandemonium and tests the limits of the adage "the show must go on."

Great Lakes Theater is proud to provide you with the finest in classic theater and the necessary educational resources to support your work in the classroom. We are thrilled that you will be coming to see us and we welcome your input on how best to support your classroom preparation for our work. Please let us know what you think!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Kelly Schaffer Florian".

Kelly Schaffer Florian  
Director of Educational Services  
[Kflorian@greatlakestheater.org](mailto:Kflorian@greatlakestheater.org)

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "David Hansen".

David Hansen  
Education Outreach Associate  
[dhansen@greatlakestheater.org](mailto:dhansen@greatlakestheater.org)





## A Note to Students: What to Expect at the Theater

You may or may not have attended a live theater performance before. To increase your enjoyment, it might be helpful to look at the unique qualities of this art form — because it is so different from movies or video.

The live theatrical performance not only involves the actors on the stage; it is meant to involve you, the audience, in ways that film and television cannot. In truth, although you are sitting in an auditorium and the actors are on stage, there is very little separating the audience from the performers. How you react to the play *deeply affects* the actors. Something as seemingly trivial as whispering or unwrapping a candy bar can distract them and disrupt the mood and tone of their performance. Due to the important relationship between actors and audience members, there are certain, perhaps obvious, provisions of live theater we wish to call to your attention.

In the Hanna Theatre, it is important to know that the taking of pictures, either with or without a flash, is strictly prohibited. Also, it is essential that all electronic equipment, including cell phones, music players (even with headphones), alarm watches, etc., be completely powered off once you have entered the theatre. Even the glow from a watch or a silent cell phone (used for checking the time, text messaging, or posting social network updates, for example) can be very distracting to fellow audience members, even if you try to mask it under your hand or an article of clothing. Our goal is to provide every person in the audience with the best possible theatrical experience, so we appreciate your respectful cooperation during the performance.

Other differences live theater provides: in film or video, the camera and editing define what we will see. In the theater, however, each of us works as our own camera and editor, choosing our own personal points of focus. And in the Hanna Theatre, you should know that often we do not use microphones. As audience members you'll need to actively listen and "tune in" to the sound of the unamplified human voice.

As for our lighting and scenery, it might surprise you to know that these are not necessarily meant to be realistic. In this production, for example, there may be design elements that are abstract or metaphorical.

The theater's ability to focus on human experience — distilled through the dialogue and behavior of people on stage and enhanced by the scenery, costumes, lighting, music and dance — is a centuries-old tradition. Being part of the communal magic when performer and audience connect — whether at a baseball game, music concert or theater performance — cannot be duplicated.

The performance you will see at Great Lakes Theater will happen only once. It is unique and personal. Though this play will be performed more than a dozen times, the performance you see belongs only to you.

We hope you enjoy it, and we'd like you to share your response with us.

# DIRECTOR'S NOTE



## Christopher Liam Moore

When I was 18, my older sister took me to London as a high school graduation present. Our first night there, we walked over to the Savoy Theatre to see if we could get tickets to a newly opened hit show, *Noises Off*. The box office had two tickets available in the last row of the balcony. All these years later, that performance remains one of the funniest, most delightful theatrical experiences of my entire life. I have loved *Noises Off* ever since.

Most people in the theater describe *Noises Off* as a perfect play. It is a magnificent, finely wrought engine of laughter. It invites us to watch the increasingly silly behavior of a group of people putting on a play and shows what will happen when everything that can possibly go wrong does indeed go wrong. It finds the humor in the absurd and the delight in watching people do their best to complete the task at hand under impossible circumstances. Most importantly, it creates a lot of joy.

I am over the moon that the brilliant Sara Bruner invited me to direct one of my very favorite plays, and am thrilled to share it with you today.

Christopher Liam Moore,  
Director

## Cast of Characters

Dotty Otley .....	Jennifer Joplin*
Lloyd Dallas.....	Topher Embrey*
Garry Lejeune.....	Jeffrey C. Hawkins*
Brooke Ashton.....	Kinza Surani*
Poppy Norton-Taylor.....	Zoë Lewis-McLean*
Frederick Fellowes.....	Nick Steen*†
Belinda Blair.....	Laura Welsh*+
Tim Allgood .....	Domonique Champion*
Selsdon Mowbray .....	David Anthony Smith*

\*Members of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States

† Fight Director

+ Intimacy Director



# Michael Frayn: A Biography



Michael Frayn (born September 8, 1933) is a renowned English playwright, novelist, essayist, and translator. Best known for his farce *Noises Off* and his dramas *Copenhagen* and *Democracy*, Frayn has carved a unique place in literature and theatre. His works, blending farce, philosophy, and history, have earned him widespread acclaim, making him one of the few authors to achieve success in both drama and prose fiction.

## Early Life and Education

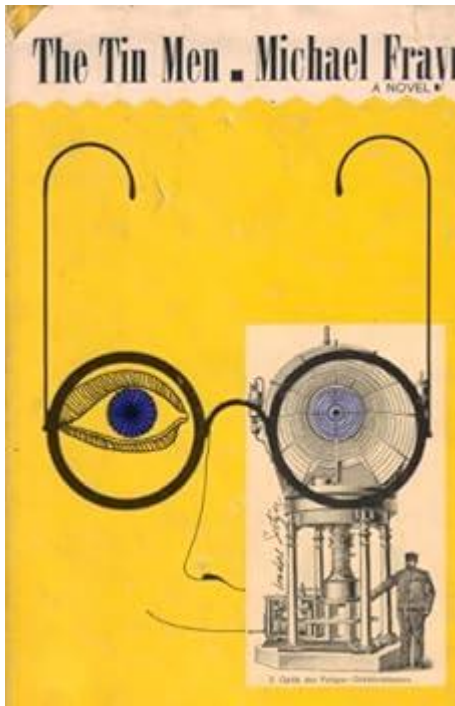
Frayn was born into a working class family in Mill Hill, a northern suburb of London. His father, Thomas Allen Frayn, was an asbestos salesman, his mother, Violet Alice Lawson, a woman from a background of failed merchants. Violet had trained as a violinist at the Royal Academy of Music and worked as a shop assistant and occasional model. The Frayn family faced economic hardships, especially after the decline in asbestos prices,

leading Frayn's sister to support the family by working at the department store Harrods.

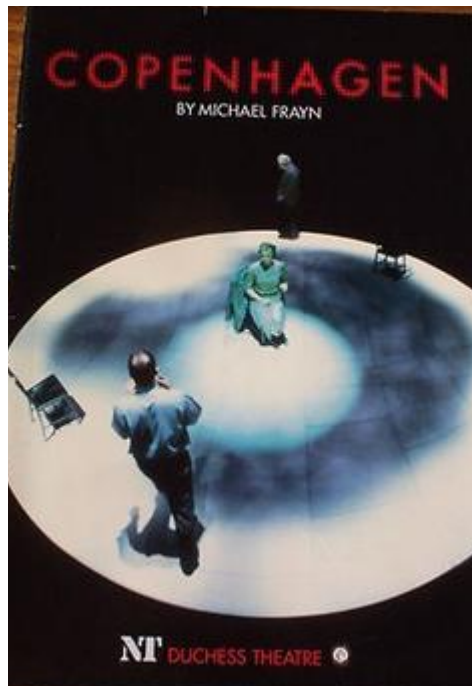
Frayn grew up in Ewell, Surrey, and attended Kingston Grammar School. After completing his National Service, where he learned Russian at the Joint Services School for Linguists, Frayn enrolled at Emmanuel College, Cambridge. There, he studied Moral Sciences (Philosophy) and graduated in 1957. His academic background in philosophy would later influence his writing, particularly his novels and plays with philosophical themes.

## Journalism and Early Fiction

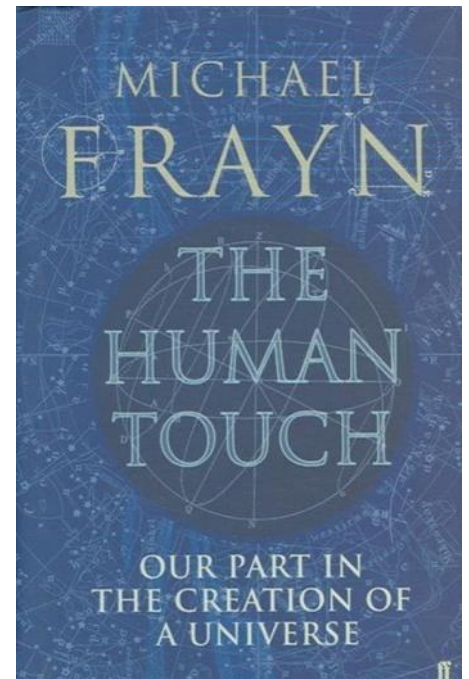
After attending university, Frayn worked as a reporter and columnist for *The Guardian* and *The Observer*, where he established himself as a satirist and comic writer. His columns were



*The Tin Men* is a novel by Michael Frayn, published in 1965. It won the Somerset Maugham Award the following year.



1998 Premiere season playbill of the play *Copenhagen* by Michael Frayn



*The Human Touch: Our Part in the Creation of a Universe* is a 2006 non-fiction book that explores philosophical questions about our place in the universe.

notable for their humor and insight, often critiquing social and political issues.

Frayn's initial success came in the literary world with his first novel, *The Tin Men* (1966), which won the Somerset Maugham Award. He followed this with *The Russian Interpreter* (1967), which won the Hawthornden Prize. These novels, marked by Frayn's sharp wit and keen observations, were precursors to his larger body of work in both fiction and theatre.

### Theatre Career

Frayn's most enduring contribution to the theatre is his play *Noises Off* (1982), widely regarded as one of the greatest farces ever written. The play, which explores the chaos backstage during a touring theatre production, has been lauded for its intricate structure and sharp comic timing. It was met with critical acclaim and continues to be performed worldwide. The New York Times critic Frank Rich called *Noises Off* "the funniest play written in my lifetime."

*Copenhagen* (1998) perhaps his most famous drama, is a play about a meeting between physicists Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg during World War II, exploring themes of scientific ethics and the uncertainties of historical knowledge. The play won

the Tony Award for Best Play in 2000 and garnered numerous accolades.

Frayn continued to explore history and politics in his subsequent play *Democracy* (2003), which dramatizes the events surrounding the German Chancellor Willy Brandt and the East German spy Günter Guillaume. *Democracy* ran successfully in London and on Broadway, further cementing Frayn's reputation as a master playwright.

### Novels and Literary Achievements

In addition to his work in theatre, Frayn has authored several novels, many of which have been critical and commercial successes. *Headlong* (1999), a comic novel about art and obsession, was shortlisted for the Booker Prize. His novel *Spies* (2002) won the Whitbread Prize for Fiction and was long-listed for the Man Booker Prize. *Spies* is a coming-of-age story set during World War II, marked by Frayn's trademark wit and exploration of memory, perception, and truth.

Other notable novels include *Towards the End of the Morning* (1967), *Sweet Dreams* (1977), *A Landing on the Sun* (1991), and *Skios* (2012), a comic novel set on a Greek island. Frayn's ability to blend humor with serious philosophical undertones is a hallmark of his writing across both genres.



### Non-Fiction and Philosophy

Frayn has written several non-fiction works, including *The Human Touch: Our Part in the Creation of the Universe* (2006), in which he examines the relationship between human beings and the universe through the lens of philosophy and science. This work is representative of his intellectual curiosity and his ability to weave complex ideas into accessible and engaging prose. He also penned *Constructions* (2001), a collection of essays that explores various topics, including language, philosophy, and the nature of human knowledge.

### Translation Work

Frayn's linguistic talents extend beyond his own writings. Having learned Russian during his National Service, he became one of Britain's foremost translators of Anton Chekhov. His translations include *The Seagull*, *Uncle Vanya*, *Three Sisters*, and *The Cherry Orchard*, as well as lesser-known works such as *Wild Honey* (*Platonov*). His translation of Chekhov's work has earned him widespread praise for its clarity and precision, and his adaptations for the stage, such as *The Sneeze*, have also been well received.

### Personal Life

Frayn was married to his first wife, Gillian Palmer, with whom he has three daughters: Rebecca, a documentary filmmaker; Susanna; and Jenny, a television producer. Frayn later married biographer Claire Tomalin, with whom he lives in Petersham, London.

In addition to his literary and theatrical achievements, Frayn has remained a public intellectual, contributing essays and articles on a variety of subjects. He is an honorary associate of the National Secular Society and has declined both a CBE and a knighthood, remaining focused on his work and intellectual pursuits rather than public recognition.

### Awards and Recognition

Throughout his career, Frayn has received numerous awards and honors. His early successes with novels and plays earned him the Somerset Maugham Award (1966), the London Evening Standard Award (for Best Comedy in 1975, 1980, and 1982), and several



Michael Frayn and Claire Tomalin

Laurence Olivier Awards for his plays. His achievements in the theatre have been widely celebrated, particularly for *Noises Off* and *Copenhagen*. In 2002, he won the Whitbread Novel Award for *Spies*, and in 2005, he received an honorary Doctor of Letters from the University of Birmingham.

Frayn's work has left an indelible mark on both the literary and theatrical worlds. With his wit, intellectual rigor, and exceptional ability to blend humor with philosophical depth, he has become one of the most respected and versatile writers of his generation.



# Noises Off Production History



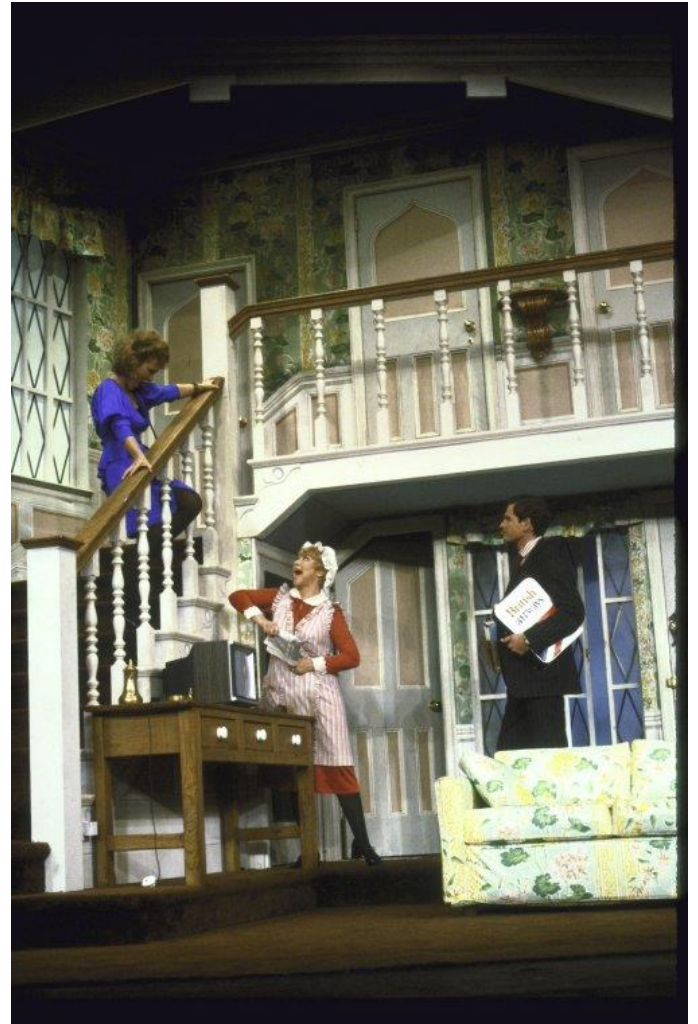
Patricia Routledge as Dotty Otley and Paul Eddington as Lloyd Dallas in *Noises Off* at the Lyric Theatre Hammersmith, London in 1982. Set design by Michael Annals and costumes by Brenda Murphy. Photo by Donald Cooper

## The Production History of Michael Frayn's *Noises Off*

Michael Frayn's *Noises Off*, a brilliantly constructed farce about a disastrous theatre production within a theatre, has endured as one of the most celebrated comedies of the modern stage. Premiering in 1982, *Noises Off* quickly became a staple of the theatrical canon, celebrated for its intricate, slapstick humor, its playful critique of theatre itself, and its delightfully absurd characters. Over the years, the play has seen numerous revivals, both in the West End and on Broadway, as well as in theatres around the world.

### The Premiere and Initial Reception (1982)

*Noises Off* made its world premiere at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, London, on June 11, 1982. Directed by Michael Blakemore, the play starred a talented ensemble cast including Patricia Routledge, Paul Eddington, and Nicky Henson. Upon opening,



Deborah Rush, Dorothy Loudon & Victor Garber in a scene from the 1983 Broadway production *Noises Off*.

the production was met with overwhelmingly positive reviews. Critics hailed it as a masterwork of farce, with its precision and well-timed physical comedy, in addition to its self-aware, metatheatrical humor.

The plot of *Noises Off* revolves around the chaotic backstage antics of a theater company performing a low-brow farce called *Nothing's On*. The comedy unfolds in three acts: the first depicts the actors' difficulties in rehearsing *Nothing's On*; the second act occurs backstage during a disastrous performance; and the third takes place during a performance near the end of the tour, where the actors' personal lives explode in spectacular fashion. This multi-layered structure, with its

complex timing and intricate physical comedy, became a hallmark of the play's enduring appeal.

Following its success at the Lyric Theatre, *Noises Off* transferred to the Savoy Theatre in London's West End, where it ran from 1983 until 1987. The West End run featured five different casts, a testament to the play's popularity and its ability to attract top talent. During this period, the production won the Evening Standard Award for Best Comedy, reinforcing its place as one of the great comedic works of the 1980s.

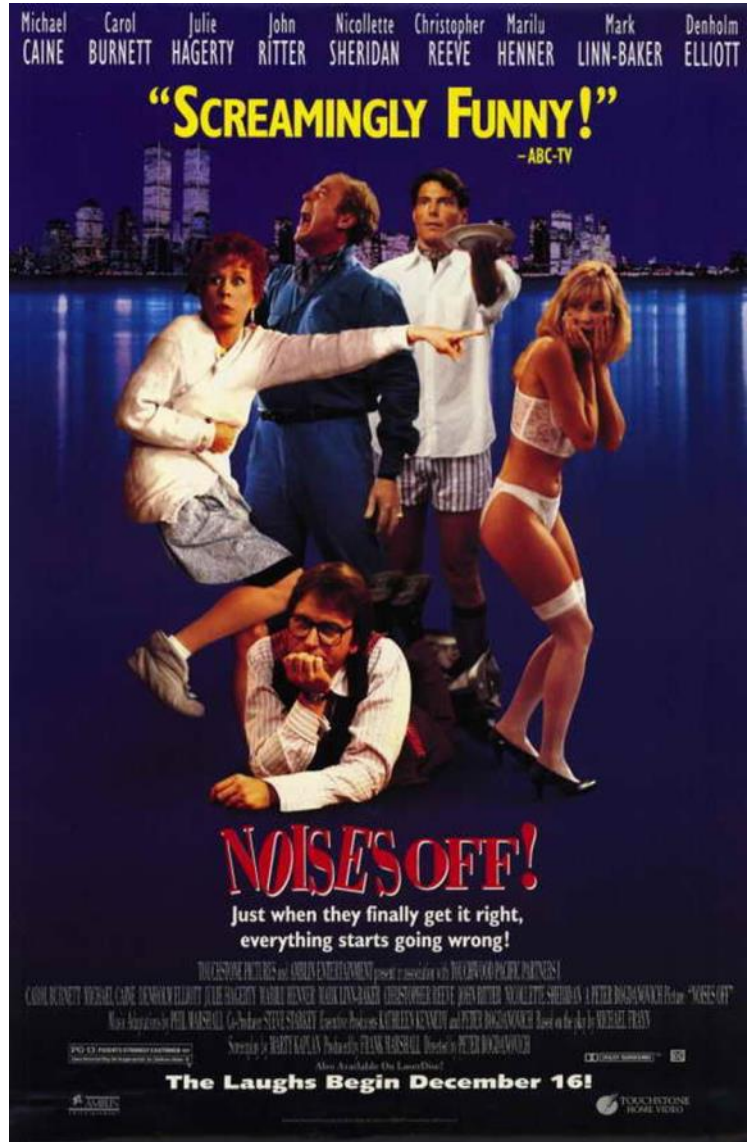
### The Broadway Debut (1983)

In December 1983, *Noises Off* made its Broadway debut at the Brooks Atkinson Theatre, again under Michael Blakemore's direction. The American production starred Dorothy Loudon, Victor Garber, Brian Murray, and Jim Piddock, among others. The Broadway production ran for 553 performances, and earned several accolades, including Tony Award nominations for Best Play, Best Director (Blakemore), and Best Featured Actress (Deborah Rush). It also received a Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Ensemble.

### Revivals and the Film Adaptation

After its initial success on both sides of the Atlantic, *Noises Off* remained a popular choice for professional theatre companies and community theatres alike. Its intricate staging and physical demands made it a challenging yet rewarding show to perform, and its farcical nature allowed for a great deal of interpretative freedom in the hands of directors and actors.

In 1992, *Noises Off* was adapted for the screen by Marty Kaplan, with Peter Bogdanovich directing a star-studded cast including Carol Burnett, Michael Caine, Christopher Reeve, and John Ritter. Despite the impressive ensemble, the film received mixed reviews. Critics, including Frank Rich of The New York Times ("one of the worst [films] ever made") felt that the play's theatrical qualities didn't translate well to film, leading to failure at the box office.



Movie poster for the 1992 film of *Noises Off*.

The new millennium saw *Noises Off* revived multiple times, both in the West End and on Broadway, with significant updates to the original staging and scripts. One of the major revisions occurred in 2000 when Frayn rewrote parts of the script at the request of director Jeremy Sams, who was preparing a revival of the play. The revised script included several new sequences, such as a comedic introduction to Act Three in which the stage managers apologize for the delays in the performance. Other sequences were cut or altered to modernize the play and eliminate outdated references. The changes allowed *Noises Off* to remain fresh while still retaining the core of its comedic brilliance.



Sams' 2000 production of *Noises Off* first opened at the National Theatre in London, where it ran for two years before transferring to the Piccadilly Theatre in the West End in 2001. The production featured a stellar cast, including Patricia Hodge, Peter Egan, and Aden Gillett. The West End revival was highly successful, earning critical praise and a nomination for Best Revival of a Play at the Tony and Drama Desk Awards.

The production subsequently transferred to Broadway in November 2001, where it ran at the

Brooks Atkinson Theatre. This revival, with Patti LuPone, Peter Gallagher, and T. R. Knight among the cast, was nominated for several Tony and Drama Desk Awards, including Best Revival of a Play. The production's success further solidified *Noises Off*'s reputation as a timeless piece of theatre, beloved by audiences for its absurdity and the physical dexterity required from its performers.

### Continued Success

In recent years, *Noises Off* has continued to be revived in various locations across the globe. In 2019, a new production directed by Jeremy Herrin returned to the Lyric Theatre in Hammersmith before transferring to the West End's Garrick Theatre. This production, starring Meera Syal and Simon Rouse, was well-received by audiences and critics alike. The play's popularity shows no signs of waning, and in 2023, a 40th-anniversary production, also directed by Lindsay Posner, ran at the Phoenix Theatre in London, with an extensive UK tour following in its wake.

Michael Frayn's *Noises Off* has proven to be one of the most enduring comedies in the history of theatre. From its triumphant premiere in 1982 to its continued success in the present day, the play has captivated audiences with its clever structure, its physical comedy, and its ability to lampoon the world of theatre itself. With its intricate timing, lively characters, and slapstick humor, *Noises Off* remains a quintessential example of farce, and its numerous revivals attest to its continued relevance and popularity in the world of professional and community theatre.



Patti LuPone as Dottie Utley in the 2001 revival of *Noises Off* in the Brooks Atkinson Theatre on Broadway.





LLOYD



Mrs Clackett



TIM



POPPY



SELSDON

ROGER TRAMPLEMAINE



VICKI



PHILIP BRENT



FLAVIA BRENT

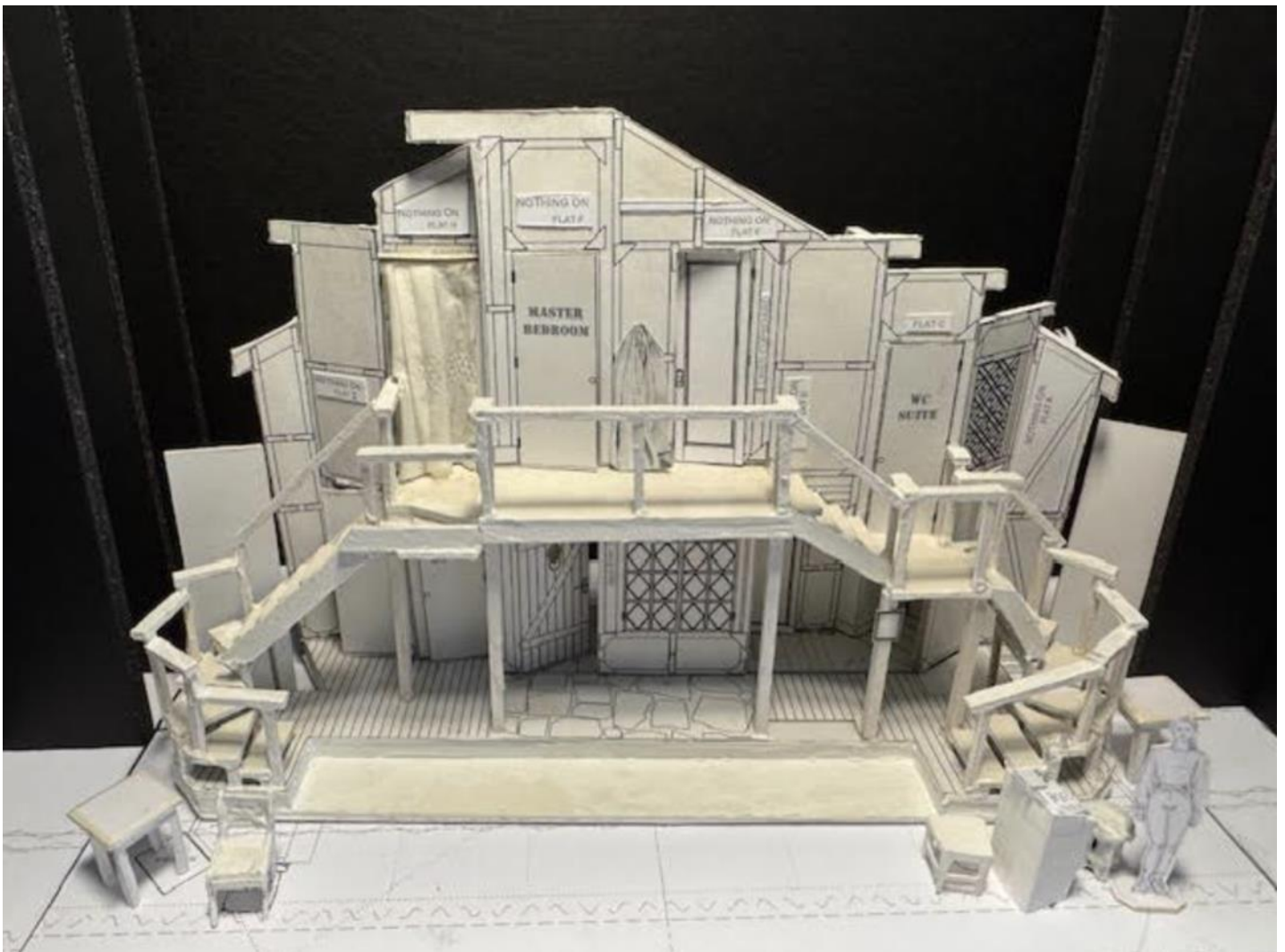




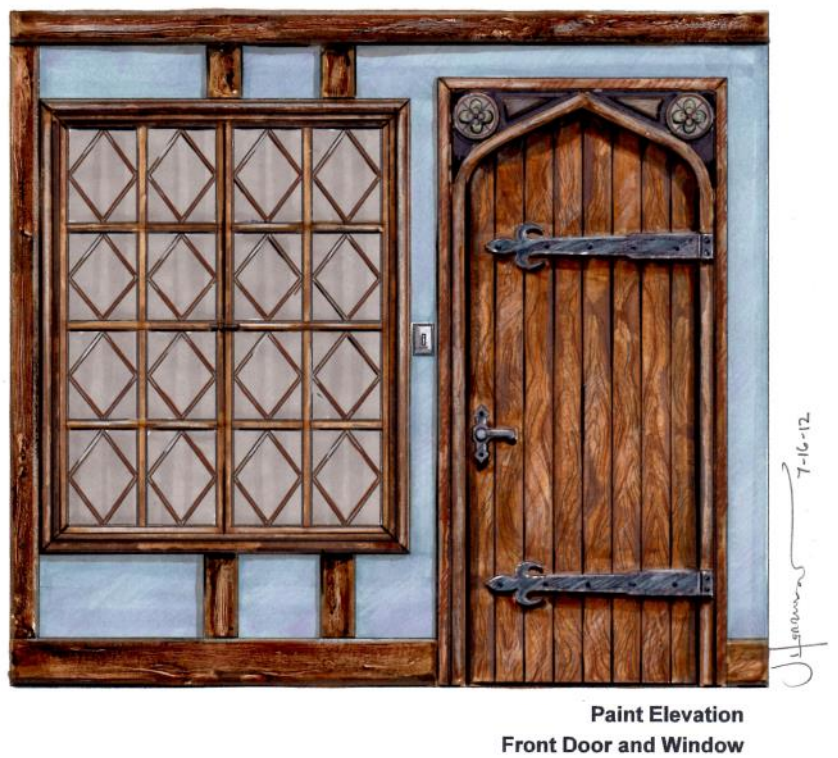
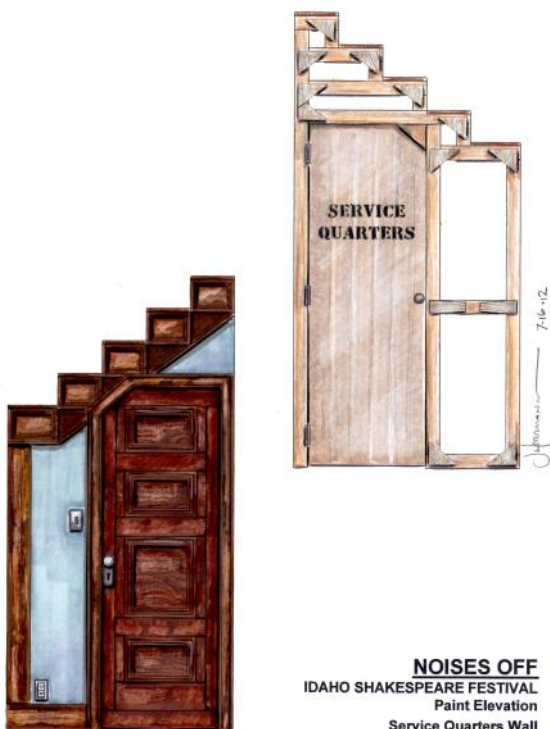
Scenic model,  
Acts I & III







Scenic model, Act II





## Discussion Questions

### Prior to attending the performance

1. *Noises Off* is known for being a farce, a genre that relies heavily on exaggerated situations and physical comedy. What do you already know about farce, and how do you think it might play a role in this production?
2. The plot of *Noises Off* revolves around a play being performed by a group of actors. What do you think might be the challenges and comedic potential of staging a play about a play?
3. Farce often features specific character archetypes, like the bumbling fool, the romantic, and the scheming villain. What character types do you expect to see in *Noises Off*? How do you think these roles will contribute to the humor?
4. Comedy in *Noises Off* often comes from misunderstandings and miscommunication between characters. Why do you think these mistakes and misunderstandings are so central to comedy? Can you think of any examples from other works where miscommunication led to humor?
5. *Noises Off* relies heavily on physical comedy. How do you think actors will use body language, timing, and movement to create humor in this play? What physical comedy moments are you looking forward to seeing?
6. A farce often involves chaotic action on stage, and in *Noises Off*, the set and props (for example: hard-wired telephones, sardines) play a big part in the comedy. How do you think the set design will be used to support the farcical elements? What role might props play in creating humorous situations?
7. What type of humor do you expect to encounter in *Noises Off*? Do you think it will be more slapstick, wordplay, or situational comedy? Why?
8. In *Noises Off*, part of the plot revolves around a disastrous theater rehearsal. Why do you think the play might focus on both the rehearsals and the actual performance? How do you think these two settings will differ in terms of comedy?
9. While *Noises Off* focuses mostly on the actors, the role of the director is also important in a production like this. How do you think the director's role will be portrayed in the show? What challenges do you think a director might face when working with this chaotic cast?
10. Farces are often unpredictable and full of surprises. What are some of the things you might expect to be surprised by in *Noises Off*? How do you think the unpredictable nature of the show will affect your experience as an audience member?

## Activities & Writing Prompts

### After Attending the Performance

#### THE PLAY THAT DOESN'T GO AS PLANNED:

Version 1: Choose a famous scene from a play in the curriculum, one that involves an important prop. Not a long scene, perhaps only a monologue.

Examples:

“Alas, poor Yorick!” – or – The Gravedigger Scene: *Hamlet* Act V, Scene 1

“What if this be a poison ...” – or – The Vial Scene: *Romeo & Juliet* Act IV, Scene 3

“I took his fountain pen.” – or – The Restaurant Scene: *Death of a Salesman*, Act II, Scene 7

*The Crucible*/poppet

*The Important of Being Earnest*/cucumber sandwiches

Student(s) volunteers to perform the scene before the class. Send them out into the hall to read it over. While they do this, the rest of the class choose an object in the classroom to take the place of the central prop in the monologue.

The student is then asked to perform the monologue as seriously as possible, but are provided the substitute prop, calling it what it is and changing any other words necessary to make this prop make sense in the context of the scene.

Version 2: Ask the class to make a list of “genres” of plays, movies, or television programs. Examples; science fiction, rom-com, horror, adventure. Choose a famous scene from a play in the curriculum, one with more than one character. Cast volunteers to play the scene, and as they perform it, every ten or fifteen seconds call FREEZE, and then give the actors a different genre with which to continue the scene.

Discussion: How did these scenes go? Ask the performers what it was like to perform this way. Ask the audience how they enjoyed watching the scenes. Was it funny? Was it awkward? How does the element of surprise or uncertainty affect the way we are able to perform a task, or experience a performance?

## FARCE VS. OTHER COMEDY GENRES

To help students identify how *Noises Off* fits into the comedy genre and what makes farce unique (e.g., physical humor, mistaken identities, rapid entrances/exits), have students break into small groups and research and present brief definitions and examples of farce, satire, parody, slapstick, and situational comedy.

## WRITING PROMPTS

1. Have students write diary entries from the perspective of one of the actors in *Noises Off*, reflecting on the mayhem of the production. Diary entries should reflect each of the three acts in *Noises Off*.
2. Write a journal entry from the perspective of Lloyd, the frustrated director, after a particularly disastrous rehearsal or performance. Let his voice, tone, and personality shine through as he reflects (or vents).
3. Choose one character and explore their personal struggles behind the scenes. What do their actions backstage reveal about them? How does their offstage persona compare to the role they play in *Nothing On*?
4. Farce relies on precise timing, entrances, exits, and misunderstandings. Choose a specific moment in the play where timing led to a major laugh—or a major disaster—and describe how it worked. Why was that moment effective?
5. Consider how *Noises Off* might reflect real-world experiences with collaboration and miscommunication. Have you ever worked on a group project or performance that didn't go as planned? How did you handle it, and what can you learn from the characters' attempts (or failures) to problem-solve?
6. The actors in *Noises Off* perform two roles: themselves and their characters in *Nothing On*. How does this layering affect your understanding of identity, performance, and reality? How might the play be commenting on the nature of theater—or even human behavior?
7. Imagine what happens after the final curtain falls in *Noises Off*. Do the actors ever recover from their disastrous tour? Write a short continuation or epilogue from one character's perspective.
8. Rewrite the final scene of *Noises Off* so that everything miraculously goes perfectly... or even worse. How does this change the tone or message of the play?
9. You've just been cast as an understudy in *Nothing On* and thrust into the middle of a touring production falling apart. Write a letter to a friend or blog post describing your first day with the company.



## Discussion Questions

### After Attending the Performance

1. How did the relationships between the characters evolve throughout the play? How did misunderstandings and miscommunications drive the plot?
2. Which moments of physical comedy stood out to you the most? Why do you think the actors' timing and movement were so important to the humor of the play? How crucial do you think timing is in a play like *Noises Off*? In what ways did the actors' comedic timing enhance your enjoyment of the performance?
3. How does the concept of a play within a play (the rehearsal and performance of *Nothing's On*) affect the audience's perception of the characters and the plot? Do you think this structure enhances the comedy? Why or why not?
4. *Noises Off* is a classic example of farce. What are the key elements of farce that you saw in this production? Do you think farce is an effective way to convey humor? Why or why not?
5. In *Noises Off*, many characters have personal struggles and motivations that affect the way they interact with each other. Which character's motivations seemed the most complex, or interesting, to you, and why?
6. The characters in *Noises Off* often make mistakes during the show. How do these mistakes contribute to the humor and chaos of the play? Can you think of any moments where an onstage mistake felt particularly funny?
7. How does the set design contribute to the comedic elements of *Noises Off*? What role does the physical environment play in creating comedic situations?
8. Throughout the play, characters attempt to maintain control over the chaos around them but ultimately fail. What do you think the play is trying to say about the nature of control and chaos in life or in theater?

## How to Write A Review

### MORE HOW AND LESS WHAT

A theater review is not a book review, you do not need to summarize what happens. Provide the necessary background so the reader knows the name of the play and the basics of what kind of play it is, and then move into your commentary. You do not need to explain WHAT the play is, instead write about HOW successfully it was presented.

### THE ACTOR NOT THE CHARACTER

You can disapprove of the decisions a character makes, but how well did the ACTOR perform the role? Was their behavior appropriate to the part as written? Feel free to share your opinions, comparing or contrasting their work with other actors with whom you are familiar.

### WHAT IS DIRECTION?

Maybe you have heard of a “director” in theater or film, but do you know what they do? It is not a director’s job to tell the actors how to say every line, but they are the person responsible for creating the general mood and concept for the production. What was your impression of the production as a whole? Was it too funny for a serious play? Or not amusing enough for a comic play? Use words to reflect back to the director how successful the production is as a whole.

### DON’T FORGET THE DESIGN

The set you see and the sounds you hear are also unique to this one production of this play. Describe what you see and hear, but also be sure to make clear how successful these designs are in telling the story of the play.

### IN CONCLUSION ...

While it is not necessary to give a “thumbs up” or “thumbs down” your concluding sentence should summarize your impression of the production as a whole.

### THEATER REVIEWS IN THE NEW MEDIA

Reviews in news websites may be 1000 words, they may be as brief as 300 words. Can you write a one-page review? Can you write a 100 word review, to post on Facebook? Do you think you could create a 140-character review that sums up the production for posting on Twitter?

A sample review written by a student follows this page.

## A Sample Review Written by a Student

### **"Gambit": More Poetry Than History** — Mark Wood

If Aristotle was correct when he said that poetry "is a higher thing than history," then "Royal Gambit," which opened Friday night at Pentacle Theater, is, I suppose, on the right track.

For those who were expecting a representational treatment of the life of England's Henry VIII, "Royal Gambit" was a shock, if not a disappointment. Those who sought poetry got it, although of a very dogmatic and simplistic sort.

This unusual, highly presentational play by Hermann Gressieker, directed by Ed Classen, is an indictment of modern man as a ruthless opportunist. The Tudor king is a representative of a rationalizing, shiftily society which has become "superior to the highest" while "wallowing in the depths."

As Henry uses the banners of "reason" and "humanism" to obtain then dispose of his six wives, so modern man uses them for his own pleasure and glorification, uses them to wage war in the name of peace, to hate in the name of love.

Such is the grim theme pleasingly presented by a company of seven actors, who performed their roles energetically, if unevenly. The presentational acting style employed here is difficult to perfect. It should be theatrical, yet believable; aimed at the head, yet acceptable to the heart.

Louise Larsen was a standout as Catherine of Aragon, Largely because she utilized this presentational approach and was not afraid of open theatricality. Her flamboyant stage presence, which needed to be toned down in her recent role in "Last of the Red Hot Lovers," found full vent here.

Henry's fourth wife, Anne of Cleves, was portrayed by Gale Rieder, who quickly became an audience favorite. Her thick accent was letter-perfect and her direct humor was a welcome contrast to the bitter satire of the rest of the play.

The other four actresses—Kathy Stratton, Marcia Engblom, Polly Bond and Patricia Sloan—each had their exceptional moments. However, they generally seemed tied to more conventional, representational acting styles.

Ron Fox was superb in the role of Henry. Tuxedoed, leering with the look of a demonic marionette, the vacant stare of a deranged orator, Fox dominated the stage fully, commanding both in voice and stage presence.

The technical elements of the play were more than adequate. Musical accompaniment was appropriately sparse and simple.

At one point the play, King Henry roared, "In my realm I decide what constitutes tragedy!" Ironically, Gressieker strips modern man not only of his possibilities as a tragic figure worthy of any sympathies at all. In the final moments of the play, Catherine of Aragon announces the death of modern man and the birth of a new era. It is a scene of great hope, but it is not as profound as her earlier pronouncement to her husband that "the ways of the world are not so cut and dried!"

For my own part, I wish that "Royal Gambit's" statement were not so cut and dried. By making man out to be such a simple monster the play defeats its own purposes and turns poetry into scathing dogma, which is probably even less interesting than, say, history.

<http://faculty.chemeketa.edu/jrupert3/eng105/Annrev.html>

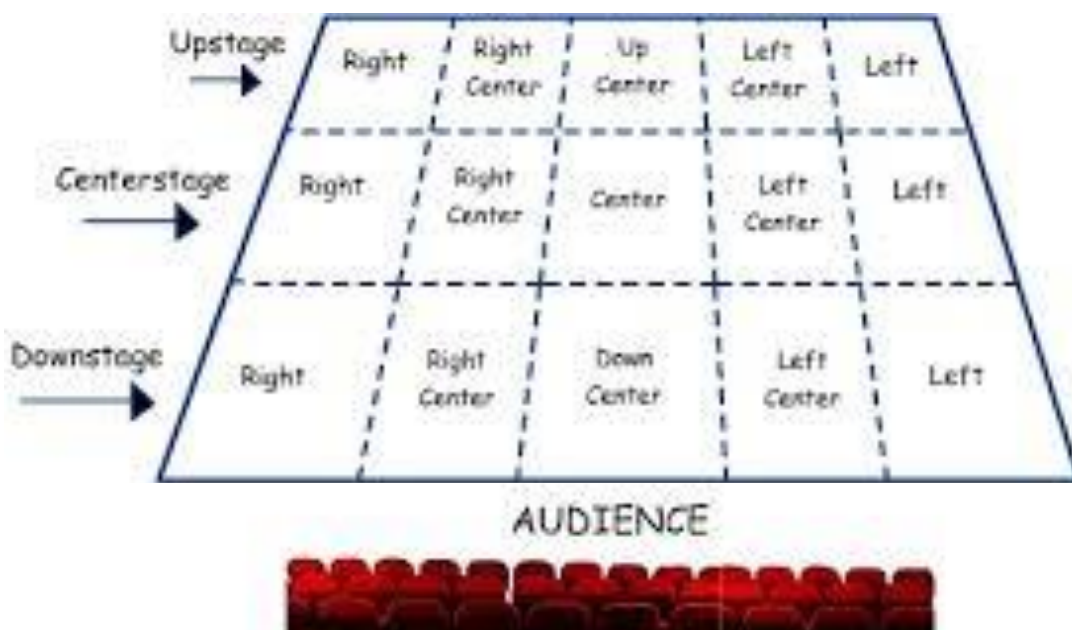


# A Brief Glossary of Theater Terms

<b>Apron</b>	The part of the stage in front of the curtain
<b>Auditorium or House</b>	Where the audience sits
<b>Beam Spread</b>	The area a single light covers
<b>Blackout</b>	Turning off all the lights in the theatre at once
<b>Board</b>	The control center for lights, sound, or both
<b>Book (The)</b>	A copy of the script containing all notes and blocking
<b>Box Office</b>	Where the audience buys tickets
<b>Box Set</b>	A set in a proscenium with three walls
<b>Call</b>	The time certain members of the production need to be at the theatre
<b>Cheat</b>	When an actor takes a realistic action and modifies it for the audience to see
<b>Cloth</b>	Scenery painted on fabric
<b>Cue</b>	A line or action that immediately leads to another action by the actor (for them to speak) designer or stage manager (to change the lights or sound)
<b>Curtain Call</b>	The bows at the end of the show
<b>Dimmer</b>	Equipment that controls the brightness of a light
<b>Director</b>	The creative head of a production. They create a vision for the show and work with actors, designers, and crew to bring that vision to life
<b>Flat</b>	A frame covered with canvas, cardboard, or some other light material which is then painted as part of the set
<b>Floodlight</b>	A light that has a wide unfocused beam covering most of the stage
<b>Fly</b>	A system used to raise set backgrounds, set pieces, or potentially actors
<b>Follow-spot</b>	A spotlight that can follow an actor as they move across around the stage
<b>Footlights</b>	Floodlights on the floor at the front of the stage.
<b>Gel</b>	A piece of plastic placed over the light to change its color
<b>Greenroom</b>	A room where the company can relax, eat, or potentially watch the show if a TV and a camera has been rigged
<b>Notes</b>	The director's notes on the performance or rehearsal
<b>Pit</b>	An area between the stage and the audience where an orchestra can sit (typically below audience level)
<b>Producer</b>	The person responsible for all logistical and financial aspects of a production (as opposed to the creative head, the director).
<b>Properties or Props</b>	Items used by actors in a show (such as swords, plates, watches, etc.)

<b>Proscenium</b>	A type of stage defined by a proscenium arch. Proscenium theatres typically distinctly separate the audience and stage by a window (defined by the proscenium arch). The stage typically will not go far past the proscenium arch (the Ohio Theatre, for example).
<b>Raked Stage</b>	A stage that is angled (upstage is the top of the hill and downstage the bottom) so that the audience can see the action more clearly
<b>Set</b>	The scenery used in a scene or throughout the play
<b>Set Dressing</b>	Parts of the set that don't serve a practical function but make the set look realistic.
<b>Spotlight</b>	A type of light that is focused so that it can light a very specific area
<b>Strike</b>	Taking apart and removing a set from the theatre
<b>Thrust</b>	A stage that goes beyond the proscenium arch so that the audience is sitting on three sides of the set - in front, and on either side (the Hanna Theatre, for example).
<b>Tracks</b>	The rails on which curtains (tabs) run.
<b>Trap</b>	A hole in the stage covered by a door where actors or set pieces can exit or enter
<b>Understudy</b>	An actor who learns all of the lines and blocking of another actor (typically one of the actors in a lead role) who can perform in case the main actor cannot go on
<b>Upstage</b>	The rear of the stage
<b>Wings</b>	The sides of the stage typically blocked off by curtains where actors and crew can stand and wait for their cues

## STAGE DIRECTIONS



# Learning Standards

## CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.A

Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.

## CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.4

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

## CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.7

Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text. (Include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist.)

## CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.D

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

## CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.D

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

## CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.5

Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

## CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.5.A

Analyze nuances in the meaning of words with similar denotations.

## CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.D

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

## CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)

## CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.1.A

Apply the understanding that usage is a matter of convention, can change over time, and is sometimes contested.

## CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.5

Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

## CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.5.A

Interpret figures of speech (e.g., hyperbole, paradox) in context and analyze their role in the text.

## CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.5.B

Analyze nuances in the meaning of words

## CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.D

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

## CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.2

Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.

## CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.5

Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

## CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.6

Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).





# Student Matinee Series 2024-2025 Season

**Sunday in the Park with George** by Stephen Sondheim & James Lapine

**Dial M for Murder** adapted by Jeffrey Hatcher, original by Frederick Knott

**A Christmas Carol** by Charles Dickens

**The Heart of Robin Hood** by David Farr

**Macbeth** by William Shakespeare

**Ms. Holmes & Ms. Watson—Apt. 2B** by Kate Hamill

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From *The Sneetches* to *Romeo and Juliet* (and so many more in between!) each week-long residency uses an interactive, hands-on approach, and is designed to meet the common core education standards. We visit your school with scripts, props, costumes—and for high schools, swords, daggers and stage blood—to explore classic literature in an unforgettable way!

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**Sara Bruner, Producing Artistic Director**

The mission of Great Lakes Theater, through its main stage productions and its education programs, is to bring the pleasure, power and relevance of classic theater to the widest possible audience.

Since the company's inception in 1962, programming has been rooted in Shakespeare, but the company's commitment to great plays spans the breadth of all cultures, forms of theater and time periods including the 20th century, and provides for the occasional mounting of new works that complement the classical repertoire.

Classic theater holds the capacity to illuminate truth and enduring values, celebrate and challenge human nature and actions, revel in eloquent language, preserve the traditions of diverse cultures and generate communal spirit. On its mainstage and through its education program, the company seeks to create visceral, immediate experiences for participants, asserting theater's historic role as a vehicle for advancing the common good, and helping people make the most joyful and meaningful connections between classic plays and their own lives. This Cleveland theater company wishes to share such vibrant experiences with people across all age groups, creeds, racial and ethnic groups and socio-economic backgrounds.

The company's commitment to classic theater is magnified in the educational programs (for both adults and students) that surround its productions. Great Lakes Theater has a strong presence in area schools, bringing students to the theater for matinee performances and sending specially trained actor-teachers to the schools for weeklong residencies developed to explore classic drama from a theatrical point of view. GLT is equally dedicated to enhancing the theater experience for adult audiences. To this end, GLT regularly serves as the catalyst for community events and programs in the arts and humanities that illuminate the plays on its stage.

Great Lakes Theater is one of only a handful of American theaters that have stayed the course as a classic theater. As GLT celebrates over a decade in its permanent home at the Hanna Theatre, the company reaffirms its belief in the power of partnership, its determination to make this community a better place in which to live, and its commitment to ensure the legacy of classic theater in Cleveland.

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