

JUST MY OPINION

By Gary Larcen

I love to go to the theatre, but lately I have been annoyed with the behavior of my fellow “theatre lovers.” Here is my list of DO’S and DON’TS . You may be surprised – you may be guilty of violations. Or, perhaps you will want to mail this anonymously to someone you know for their New Year’s resolutions.

BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE

- Be on time. Don’t inconvenience yourself and everyone else in your row, section, and theatre.
- Have all of your party’s tickets together to give the ticket taker. Actually listen to the directions. “To your left, second aisle.”
- Don’t seat yourself. If you’re wrong, you are a pain. The ushers are there to do their job – in Europe, you have to tip!
- The usher who takes you to your seat will give you the program. Don’t ask other ushers.
- If you have trouble hearing, rent the infrared hearing devices. Don’t ask your companion, “What did they say?”
- Go to the bathroom before the show. If you cannot hold it for an hour-and-a-half, then you must request an aisle seat.
- Turn off your beepers BEFORE the performance. If you are too important to be uninterrupted for 90 minutes, stay home.
- If you are seated in the first row, put nothing on the stage. If you are seated on the first row of the mezzanine or balcony, don’t put your program on the edge!
- Read your program before the show begins.
- No big hair. Be prepared to take off your stylish big hat.
- Check out the location of the bathrooms and phones before the show. Don’t wait until halfway through intermission to begin looking for them.

DURING THE PERFORMANCE

- Don’t eat during the show. For those who need candy or cough drops during the show, unwrap them before the play begins. If, God forbid, you have to open something during the performance, open it quickly and at an appropriate time (during a scene change, applause, or a huge laugh).
- Don’t talk. Rent a movie if you want to talk during your entertainment.
- Absolutely no photos or video cameras. It is rude, dangerous, and illegal.
- If, heaven forefends, you have to leave during the performance, watch the rest of the act from the back of the house. Do not disturb everyone twice.
- No drinks may be carried into the theatre. At intermission, order only something you can drink in a few minutes.
- At intermission and immediately following the production, hold your tongue. Reserve your criticism until you are in private. Don’t let your opinion ruin someone else’s night out.
- Don’t advertise your ticket price.
- Don’t fight with the staff or other patrons.
- If the performer’s name is above the title, a short round of applause is acceptable when she or she first appears.
- Should someone violate the rules of common courtesy, address them directly, quietly, and firmly. If you are sitting behind them and can lean forward to handle the problem – all the better. If the problem is four rows away, attempting to correct it might prove more disruptive than beneficial. A stern look, a “Please,” or a firm “Shh!” can make all the difference.
- If you are truly sick, stay home.

AFTER THE PERFORMANCE

- Make the performers earn a standing ovation.
- Polite applause and remaining until the final bows are taken as signs of respect.

To all ushers: whether you are a volunteer usher, ushering for \$10, or are a union member, please remember that yours is a service position. Your job is to act as “host” and to help make the patron’s theatre experience a pleasant one. Courtesy, efficiency, and sensitivity to the show and its ticket-buyers are essential.