Theatre Etiquette

courtesy of Jim Christian

THEATRE IS A DISCIPLINE ! Part of the great tradition of the theatre is a code of ethics which belongs to every worker on the legitimate stage. This code, while unspoken, has been observed throughout the centuries and will continue long after us. It is neither superstition, nor dogma, nor a statute enforced by law. It is an attitude toward craftsmanship, a respect for associates, and a dedication toward the audience. This code outlines a self-discipline which, far from robbing one of individuality, increases personal esteem and dignity through cooperation and common purpose. The result is a perfection which encompasses all that is meant by “GOOD THEATRE.”

1. I SHALL ALWAYS BE PROMPT FOR REHEARSALS ! (in fact, a bit early) The

director will start on time.

2. The show must go on! I will never miss a performance.

3. I shall play every performance to the best of my ability, regardless of how small my role or large my personal problem.

4. I will respect my audience regardless of size or station.

5. I shall never miss an entrance or cause a curtain to be late by my failure to be ready.

6. I shall forego all social activities which interfere with rehearsals and will always be on time.

7. I shall never leave the theatre building or stage area until I have completed my performance.

8. I shall remember that my aim is to create illusion; therefore, I will not destroy that illusion by appearing in costume or make-up offstage or outside the theatre.

9. I will not allow the comments of friends, relatives, or critics to change any phase of my work without proper authorization. I will not alter lines, each person is needed to create a good production.

10. I shall accept the director’s advice in the spirit in which it is given, for s/he sees the production as a whole and my role as a portion thereof

11. I shall look upon the production as a collective effort demanding my utmost

cooperation; hence, I will forego the gratification of ego for the demands of the

play.

12. I will be patient and will avoid temperamental outbursts for they create

tension and serve no useful purpose.

13. I shall respect the play and the playwright, remembering that “a work of art is

not a work of art until it is finished.”

14. I shall never blame my co-workers for my own failure.

15. I will never engage in caustic criticism of another artist’s work from jealousy

or an urge to increase my own prestige.

16. I shall inspire the public to respect me and my craft through graciousness in

accepting both praise and constructive criticism

17. I will use stage properties and costumes with care, knowing they are tools of

my craft and a vital part of the production.

18. I will observe backstage courtesy and shall comport myself in strict

compliance with the rules of the theatre in which I work.

19. I shall never lose my enthusiasm for the theatre because of disappointment or

failure for they are the lessons by which I learn.

20. I shall direct my efforts in such a manner that, when I leave the theatre, it will stand as a greater institution for my having labored there.

21. Come to rehearsals focused and prepared to work . . . not for social activities.

22. Study your part when you are not on stage; also, study it at home. A

rehearsal is where you try things out that you have given careful thought to

beforehand.

23. I When not studying your part, actively watch the others on stage. You will learn from their errors and achievements.

23b. Don’t leave the rehearsal until you have been dismissed by the director.

24. Cooperate with all cast and crewmembers. There are no “stars” in a show; each person is

needed to create a good production.

25. Accept criticism from the director cheerfully. It is the director’s duty to change things, to repair actions, to fix lines, which are going badly, and to strive to achieve a perfect production.

26. Allow the director to direct. When s/he gives you directions, listen to her/him. If s/he asks you to write down her/his criticism, do so and then incorporate her/his suggestions in the next rehearsal.

27. Be quiet in the wings and auditorium. The arts cannot survive in chaos.

28. Remain in character whenever on stage. Never break and laugh.

29. Don’t look at the prompter if you forget a line. Remain in character and wait for the prompt. Listen to it carefully. If you forget a line, you can always call for it (in rehearsals) by saying “Line.”

30. Do not mouth other actor’s lines or the counts of a dance routine.

31. When the director interrupts the rehearsal for another actor, stand quietly in character, ready

to start again when the interruption is finished.

32. If anything accidentally falls on the floor, pick it up as soon as it’s appropriate.

33. After final curtain, have your friends meet you in the designated areas — not in the house or on the stage. The stage should remain empty until the house is empty.

34. Don’t touch items such as lights or props that are under the jurisdiction of another crew.

35. When entering the theatre, leave personal problems behind. Save your “DRAMA” for the stage.

36. Don’t confuse acting with living.

37. Never peek through the main curtain at the audience (before, during, or between the acts). If you must enter the house, enter from the back of the house, not the front.stage.

38. Write down all the dates of rehearsals and what time they start and then see to it that you arrive early enough to remove your coat, etc. and be ready to start on time. If you have a dress rehearsal with make-up, allow yourself enough time so you will not have to rush in order to get into costume and make-up.

39. Do not gossip about your fellow actors, directors, staff, teachers, etc. In the world of the theatre, a misplaced word of gossip about a director or actor or crewmember may in the future cost you a

job. The world of the theatre is often plagued with rumors. Do not contribute to rumors. In

this profession, your attitude may very well cost you a position in future productions. It is a

small world and your reputation IS your strongest resume.

40. Take direction from only the director(s) or immediate supervisor. Do not give helpful

instructions to fellow actors — they will only hate you for it.

41. Take directions as quickly and efficiently as possible. People who constantly stop to complain or fight with the director or others in the production are people who do not work much. If you feel that the director is wrong in a particular direction, see her/him after the rehearsal. ABOVE ALL — DON’T PUT THE DIRECTOR IN A POSITION WHERE S/HE CANNOT

RETREAT, WHERE S/HE IS BACKED INTO A CORNER!

42. If you are responsible for a personal prop, be sure that you have it before you go on. Keep rehearsal areas clean. If you make a mess — clean it up.

43. Don’t be a “dressing room hop.” Give the other actors time to concentrate on their parts.

44. Don’t eat the props. (Generally theatres are operated on tight budgets.)

45. Give attention to personal hygiene — especially when you’re playing close scenes or involved in strenuous dancing.

46. Don’t covet other people’s roles. Concentrate on becoming proficient in your own.

47. Don’t attempt to usurp the director’s authority by directing other actors in rehearsals OR PRIVATELY.

48. Take care of your minds and bodies. Those are your tools. Alcohol and drugs have no place in the theatre.

49. Treat others with the same respect, dignity and tolerance with which you would like to be

treated.

50. Find joy in the process of rehearsing, perfecting and presenting great theatre. After all, isn’t that why we’re here?