

Questions to Ask Myself at a Theater Performance

1. Before seeing a theater production:

- What do I know about the play, musical or theatrical event? What do I know about this particular production of this piece if this is not a new work?
- What do others say about this production and what do I want to know before seeing it? What theater reviews, informal word of mouth, and publicity items give me more information?

2. Before entering the theater:

- How, if at all, does the exterior of the theater capture my attention?
- How does this theater exterior compare to other theaters I have seen or are nearby?
- Who else seems to be attending the show? What is the make-up of the other audience members (i.e. age, gender, ethnicity, race, etc?)

3. As I enter the theater:

- What is the energy of the theater space compared to the street I just left?
- What senses seem to be most activated for me? (Touch, sight, sound, smell?)
- How do I navigate the building to find my seats? Who helped me? Are my seats easy to find? Why?

4. Once in the theater:

- What strikes me about the design of the theater? The physical space? The lighting? Looking up—what do I see? Looking at the frame of the stage (proscenium), does anything catch my eye?
- What do I notice about the “house” or audience seating. Are there accommodations for those who need assistance with stairs? Special seating for wheelchairs, etc.?
- What do I notice about the set design or curtain when looking at the stage? What might I understand about the production before it even starts?

5. Observations about the production:

- What captures my attention during the play? Is it the actors? The set? Music? Why?
- Does the plot engage me? Do I care about the characters? Why?
- What do I think about the performances? Are they believable? If not, why not?
- How do the actors seem to interact with one another? With the set and the world of the play?
- How does the director, actors and designers (costume, lights and set) stage the action to focus the drama for me? (*Theater artists work to tell dramatic stories in varied and very specific ways.*)
- How might I describe this work to a visually impaired person? What might a deaf or hard of hearing person understand about the play if not able to hear it traditionally?
- What questions do I have about this production? What is the meaning of the play? (This may not as easy as it seems!)
- How did it feel when the lights came up and I was brought back to the reality that I was in a theater and it is now time to leave?

6. Who else in the theater audience with me?

- I took note of who entered the theater with me. Now who captures my attention before the play begins, during the production and at intermission? Why?
- How do people interact with the production? Do they seem to laugh when I laugh? Gasp when I am concerned about the action? Applaud? When? Why?
- What is the interaction, if any, among the cast members and the audience?