

# Preparing for your visit

We hope that you and your students will enjoy your visit to the Royal Exchange Theatre. Here is some information and suggestions that will help you to get the most from your visit and to prepare for your important role as audience members.



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## **PRACTICALITIES**

### **When You Receive Your Tickets**

- Check that all the details on your booking confirmation are correct
- Whilst we cannot refund tickets once payment has been made, we will endeavour to exchange all or part of a group booking for a different performance wherever possible. *Please note that tickets cannot be exchanged for different productions.*
- If your group is seated in more than one block, we recommend that you make seating arrangements before you come to the theatre. In all cases we ask that teachers and supervisors are seated amongst their students, ideally at the ends of rows to enable theatre staff to access you during the performance if necessary. Personalised seating plans of the Theatre can be requested from the Group Bookings Co-ordinator on 0161 833 0483.
- If you need to complete a risk assessment, you may find our downloadable risk assessments useful. You'll find them on available from the Group Booking page at [www.royalexchange.co.uk](http://www.royalexchange.co.uk).

### **On the Day**

- Plan to arrive at least 20 minutes before the start of the performance, as the Hall can be very crowded and it can take time to seat a large group.
- The closest parking to the Theatre is NCP Market Place, situated on Blackfriars Street behind the Renaissance Hotel. Please note Cross Street is closed between New Market and Withy Grove from 11am – 7pm. There is a coach drop-off point for coaches on Cross Street. Waiting is restricted to 15 minutes. The nearest coach park is on Sheffield Street, near Piccadilly Railway Station. For more information contact NCP on 0161 817 8900.
- Intervals at the Royal Exchange are usually just 20 minutes long and can be hectic so there is not much time to get something to eat. We suggest that groups eat before the performance. Ice creams can be pre-ordered for groups by calling 0161 615 6666 after 12pm.
- If at all possible, please avoid bringing large bags and rucksacks to the theatre. Only small bags will be allowed into the auditorium – other luggage and larger school bags will need to be checked in and left at the cloakroom.
- If you are delayed in any way please contact the Box Office before 6.30pm (0161 833 9833) or call the Stage Door on **0161 833 9333** and ask to speak to the Duty Manager.

## THE ROYAL EXCHANGE THEATRE: A UNIQUE SPACE

The Royal Exchange Theatre is a unique space. Its location, within the historic Cotton Exchange, and the fact that it is “in the round”, not only makes for a very special experience – for audience and actors alike – but also impacts in practical ways on your visit. For example:

- No audience member is ever further than 9 metres from the actors on stage
- The “stage” usually blurs seamlessly with the audience seating area
- Audience and actors share a unique relationship – even in low-lighting, all audience members can be clearly seen and heard both by other audience members and by the actors on stage
- What would usually be public areas – the stairs down from the galleries, the foyer, bars and toilets – are also backstage areas during the show. This means that access has to be restricted to the public during the show otherwise you may be getting in the way of scenery or an actor coming on stage.

In general, all of the above makes for a particularly intimate and dynamic relationship between audience and actors.

**WHY NOT:** Write a story, or even a play, imagining everything that happens behind the scenes during a performance. What props (or actors!) almost didn't make it on to the stage and why? What rivalries or romances might have been going on?

**WHY NOT:** Discuss with your students some of the many benefits of seeing a play in the Royal Exchange space, and how it might effect the relationships between audience and actors.

## EXPLORING THE PLAY

There's not much to be gained from treating a theatre visit as a blind date. Your students will get much much more from the performance if they have some understanding of the play and production in advance. We offer various ways to help with this:

- Pre-show talks, tours and workshops for Education groups
- Printed and on-line resources to accompany most productions
- *Exchange Education* (our Education Membership Scheme) gives teachers the opportunity to see selected productions, free of charge, prior to their visit with students.

Visit our website at [www.royalexchange.co.uk](http://www.royalexchange.co.uk) or call us in Education on 0161 615 6721, to find out more about these and other ways we can help.

## **DISCUSSING THEATRE ETIQUETTE**

For many young people this will be a first visit to a theatre – and certainly a first visit to this particular space. Therefore, it is important to discuss with them the expected behaviour of an audience. We would ask that, prior to your visit, your group is made aware of the following:

- Even whispering voices sound very loud to others in this Theatre, so please, no talking or fidgeting around.
- We don't allow anyone – even the actors in rehearsals – to bring any food or drink into the Theatre. This includes chewing gum.
- A ringing or vibrating phone sounds very loud in the Theatre. It's very important that you switch yours off. Actors have been known to forget their words because they are put off by the a phone, and other audience members will be upset if a phone rings as it will disturb their enjoyment of the play.
- If you think you might need the toilet, go before the play starts and/or in the interval. If you absolutely have to go during the play, you will be led to the toilet by a member of staff, and you may not be allowed back in until the end of a scene – or even the interval.

**WHY NOT:** Imagine a group younger than you were visiting the theatre – what advice would you give them? Design a leaflet with ideas and activities explaining the do's and don'ts for visiting the Royal Exchange.

**WHY NOT:** Discuss the whys and wherefores of "appropriate behaviour" with your students. We don't want to give a long list of *don'ts* to visitors to the theatre: there are really good, practical reasons why the points above are important and hope that teachers can take a little time to explore them in a student-friendly way. Here's one idea...

**SEVEN-SIDED BEHAVIOURS** (the Theatre itself is seven-sided): This activity is designed to give students an understanding of why certain behaviours might be important in a theatre. Begin with a discussion re ways in which we behave in various settings. Come up with 6 e.g. at the cinema, in a library, at a football match, in a church, in a playground, at a funeral. Then introduce 'in a theatre'. When the students have determined the different expectations / appropriateness of behaviour, split the room into 7, one for each location. Get the pupils moving round the space. When they are in the library area, for example, they must behave as though they are in a library and so on. After the activity, get pupils to make a list of ground rules, with reasons attached, for attending the theatre. *You can adapt this to suit the age of your group. Students could develop role plays where the same dialogue is re-enacted in these different settings to show how the location might impact on behaviour.*

**To discuss any other aspect of Preparing for Your Visit, please call Eleanor, our group sales organiser on 0161 833 0483.**