



KMR Scripts Preshow

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Why Do a Preshow??

It never ceases to amaze me to be in the audience of a children's show (especially one of mine) and observe children misbehaving during the show. Now, I don't necessarily mean they are being "bad" or hitting each other or anything like that-- I mean they are talking with their neighbor, not applauding after a song, not answering the questions the characters in the play are asking them. How can we possibly expect the children to know how to behave in an audience if we don't TEACH them. The chances of them going to enough plays where they can learn it through osmosis are slim, so we must take it upon ourselves to teach them. I believe that is a very valuable part of "educational" theatre-- teaching kids how to be good audience members. There are few things I feel VERY strongly about. Preshows are one of them. I would never consider producing a play for children without presenting a preshow. It would be missing out on a wonderful opportunity.

A Note about Presenting the Same Preshow Every Time:

I think it is a great idea. I have personally presented this same preshow (with variations as noted) over 400 times. More times than not, the kids had heard it all before from one of our previous productions. Occasionally, the kids would even anticipate some of the lines-- but you know what? They knew how to behave during a show. They knew they could laugh whenever something was funny, they knew they should applaud at appropriate times and they knew when and how to respond to the actors during the course of the show's participatory parts. We NEVER received an after-show evaluation (out of over 500 evaluations received during the years I was involved in the program) that criticized the redundancy of the preshow. There were even times when parts of the preshow were mentioned as favorite parts of the production.

I have observed what happens when preshows are not presented. A theatre who produces a lot of my shows used to do a preshow before every single production. Every once in a while they'd get an audience who didn't applaud after songs, but for the most part, the kids were prepared for what they were going to experience during the show and reacted well. The last couple years, the theatre has decided not to present a preshow. When I set in on one of their performances, I frequently have to lead the applause-- and many times I am the only one who ever DOES applaud.

The preshow is a great time to let the kids know that being in the audience of a live show is different than sitting at home in front of the TV or sitting in a movie house. They're not going to learn to applaud after a song unless we tell them to. Sometimes the adults in the audience needs a refresher course, too. It's also a good time for the theatre to make any announcements, plug up-coming kids' productions and/or their shows for grown-ups or to just give the kids something to do until the show begins (some may have already been sitting a long time by the time the show begins!).

The preshow doesn't have to be long. The one below lasts about 5 minutes. There have been times where a performance had to start late and we stretched the preshow to last over 30 minutes (of course we did much more than is represented below!). You could do just the monologue in about 2 minutes if you are really crunched for time-- but that wouldn't be as fun for the kids.

I guarantee that you will benefit from presenting a preshow similar to the one below. You know, if there was a way I could control the quality of the delivery of the preshow-- I would back that with a money-back guarantee.... Aw, heck, you know what? I will! If you try the preshow at least three times and you see no benefit in presenting it-- I will knock off the royalty for one performance! You just have to contact me personally via phone or email and verify that you tried the preshow three times and it didn't work for you. Then I'll tell you how to denote the discount on your Final Report. I promise I won't grill you about what you did wrong or try to embarrass you for "not doing it right."

Which Actor Should Perform the Preshow?

Someone with great rapport with kids. The whole idea behind the preshow is to let the kids know what kind of show they are in store for and get them into the mood and into the groove of your style of children's theatre. It's like a relay: have a strong start (the preshow) and hand off to a strong finish (the performance). Use someone who can talk to the kids without talking "down" to them. The kids should immediately connect with him/her. Have your actor dressed in a fun sweatshirt or colorful costume. It's ideal if it could be the same person every time from show to show, so the kids could identify with them immediately.

Watch the Video

We have a couple videos of Kevin M Reese performing his preshow before some of his shows. You can check them out on our website. Just look for the "Videos" section on our menu. This gives a great example of the preshow in action.

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INTRO:

[Actor enters and hides behind a flat in a comic "sneaking on" way, waves to various kids in the audience. Eventually the whole audience is waving, so he crosses to Center Stage. Nonverbally getting the audience to be quiet, the actor hold up two fingers (the peace sign), then three, four, five, etc., to ten--most likely the kids will count along. When you get ready to do "ten", pull a fast one and hold up eight fingers again-- then laugh that you tricked them. Hands down. Hands up (aud: "ten"). hands down. One hand up (aud: "five"). Other hand up (aud: "ten"). One hand down (aud: "five"). Both hands down (aud: "zero"). Raise both hands above head (they'll probably try to continue yelling "ten", non-verbally get them to stop. If they don't, say "Let's play Follow the Leader, OK? I'm the leader." (then comically run off stage. Re-enter looking surprised that they didn't follow. Now put arms above head and get the aud to clap WITH you:) Clap hands once. Clap once. Clap twice. Clap hands 4-5 times, on the last on, stop just before making contact--fake out--then laugh that they "messed up."]

Variations for the Intro:

- ▶ Tell jokes
- ▶ Juggle
- ▶ Do a couple magic tricks
- ▶ Pretend to continually trip on a spot on the floor.
- ▶ Tell a funny story
- ▶ Bring out a hand puppet and talk to it
- ▶ Sing a song ("Once Upon a Time" by Kevin M Reese is PERFECT for this!)
- ▶ Whatever you can think of to break the ice and get the kids' attention

MONOLOGUE:

ACTOR: OK, now how many of you have ever seen a real, live play before with live actors on a stage? (aud resp) Great. Now, how many of you have NEVER seen a real live play before with live actors on a stage? (aud resp) Ok! Great! You guys who have seen plays before, you guys probably already know how to behave when you're watching a play, don't you? (aud resp) Well let's go over the rules for those who are here for the first time. There are rules for everything, aren't there. Rules for school, rules at home-- well, there are rules in the theatre, too. Is it a good thing to talk to your neighbor while the play's going on? (aud resp) No. Cause if you're talking to you're neighbor, you can't hear all the funny stuff the actors are gonna say, can you. And trust me, the actors have a lot of funny things they're gonna say, that you're not gonna want to miss--so be really, really quiet when the play's going on. OK? (aud resp) Is it a good thing to laugh when something's funny? (aud resp) Sure, it is! That's why we're here, isn't it, to have fun! Is it a good thing to clap or applaud after a song? (aud resp) Yep! That lets the actors know you like what they did, doesn't it. Do you guys know HOW to clap? Let's hear it! (aud resp) Is it a good thing to yell things out at the actors? (aud resp) No. It might distract them-- or the rest of the audience-- and we don't want that to happen, do we. So, usually when you're watching a play with real actors on a stage, you never talk-- but the play you're gonna see today is kind of special because there are going to be times when the actors will ask you guys questions. Now, when they ask you a question, THEN it's OK to answer them. OK? (aud resp. Most likely it won't be wholeheartedly, so add:) That was a question: O-KAY? (aud resp) OK! So, if the actors are (facing profile, as if pontificating to a partner:) talking to each other and acting and talking to each other-- (step out and face front) are you guys going to say anything? (aud resp) No. BUT-- (steps back to imaginary partner) if the actors are talking to each other and acting and talking to each other, then one of them turns to you and says: "Hey, guys, how are you

doing?" – what are you going to say? (aud resp) Right! You guys are going to have fun, I can tell. (The following part about mail is usually only done to school performances.) Do you guys like to get mail? Well, we do, too. I'll tell you what-- after you get back to class, if you had fun, draw a picture of your favorite part of the show or write a letter to your favorite character and give them to your teacher and send them to us-- and we'll write you a letter back! Wouldn't that be fun? We get lots and lots of mail, so we can't reply to each individual letter-- we'll send one to your whole class, so, teachers, please make sure your name, your class name, and your complete mailing address is attached to your classes letters so we can get a reply out to you. That'll be fun!

Variations for the Monologue:

The important thing for the monologue is that the information be given to the kids about what behavior is expected of them during the show. We suggest keeping the monologue part of the preshow consistent with every production. You may certainly add jokes for variation, but please don't make the mistake of thinking "we told them all that during the last preshow so we don't need to say it again." Repetition, Reiteration, Reinforcement! You have newcomers at each performance who need to learn how to behave at a live theatrical event. This is an "educational" part of their theatre experience.

You might also include any special information that is peculiar to your theatre: announcements about your upcoming shows or events, opportunities for the kids to have pictures taken with the cast or autographs after the show, recognize any birthday boys or girls in the audience, instructions on exiting the theatre after the show, etc. You have their attention, you might as well use it!

ENDING:

ACTOR: Well, I think we're about ready to start the show. Are you guys ready for the show to start? (aud resp) Great! You're here to see Cinderella, right? Well, we're all ready to go--(aud resp) No? Oh, that's right, you're here to see Aladdin, so we'll-- (aud resp) What? You're not here to see Aladdin? Oh! I'm so embarrassed! Oh, yeah, you're here to see Pocahontas-- (aud resp) No? Well, what are you here to see? (aud resp) Oh, Beauty and the Beast (or, whatever the name of the show is)! Well, if that's the show you want to see, that's the show we're going to do! See you later. Have fun! (exits and the show begins immediately)

Variations for the Ending:

- ▶ Sing a song - "Once Upon a Time (Preshow)" by Kevin M Reese is PERFECT for this!
- ▶ Any "Pep Talk" type routine would be perfect.
- ▶ Do whatever you can think of to fire the kids up for the show! This of this as the cheerleader routine that precedes the entrance of the football team at a pep rally. They should be going nuts!!