

TEACHER STUDY GUIDE 2025/2026 SEASON





School Shows: November 4 - 6, 2025 10:30 AM & 12:15 PM

Atwood Concet Hall

Public Show: Friday, November 7, 2025

Atwood Concert Hall

Alaska Junior Theater * 430 W 7th Ave, Suite 210 * Anchorage, AK 99501 P 907-272-7546 * F 907-272-3035 * www.akjt.org

- Curriculum Connections
- Learning Resources
- Performance Background
- Activities for the Classroom
- Theatre Etiquette



Curriculum Standards

laska Junior Theater, we believe that every child deserves the chance to experience the transformative power of live professional theatre-regardless of their financial circumstances.

Ince 1981, Alaska Junior Theater (AJT), a private nonprofit organization, has been dedicated to bringing the best in professional theatre from around the world to Alaska's young audiences. Each year, more than 25,000 students experience live performances at the Alaska Center for the Performing Arts. For many, these school-time shows are their only opportunity to experience the magic of live performing arts.



ach production we present is carefully selected for its strong educational value and direct connection to Alaska Content Standards. In addition to performances, AJT offers enriching teacher and student workshops, in-depth study guides and classroom transportation to ensure accessibility for schools across the region.

e are deeply committed to equity and access. By keeping our educational ticket price at just \$10, we make live theatre affordable for all students—though that amount covers only half the actual cost of each ticket. To bridge this gap, we actively seek support from corporations, foundations and generous individuals. Their contributions help subsidize ticket prices and provide full scholarships to students with financial need.

To support educators in aligning classroom learning with live performances, Alaska Junior Theater invited area teachers to review our 2025/2026 Season offerings for direct connections to Alaska Content Standards. These curriculum-aligned connections help assure teachers and administrators that AJT programs not only inspire students through the performing arts but also support classroom goals.

Below are the identified content standard connections for **Kattam and his Tam Tams**. These links are designed to assist with lesson planning and enhance the educational value of the performance.

To get a complete copy of the Alaska Content Standards, visit: https://www.asdk12.org/commoncore/.



Discovery Theatre, ACPA

Common Core State Standards

Geography B7

Art B2, B5, B6, C.2d, C4, C5

Language Arts

K - 5. RL. 2

K - 5. RL. 5

K - 5. W. 3

K - 5. SL. 2

4 - 6. RL. 7

Special thanks to Tina Johnson-Harris, Joan Pragman, and Renee Wade for their help in this effort.

Library Resources



Resources related to

Kattam and his Tam-Tams



Africa

Akissi by Marguerite Abouet

Anna Hibiscus by Atinuke

Africa, Amazing Africa by Atinuke

Life and Culture in Sub-Saharan Africa by Tamra Orr

Myths and Legends of Africa

J GN-C AKISSI

J-BEG ATINUKE

J 960 ATINUKE

J 960 ATINUKE

J 916.7 ORR

Myths and Legends of Africa

J 398.2096 MYTHS

Middle East

Life and Culture in Southwest Asia and North Africa by Miriam Coleman

The Storyteller by Evan Turk

The Butter Man by Elizabeth Alalou

Riding a Donkey Backwards: Wise and Foolish Tales of Mulla Nasruddin

retold by Sean Taylor

Morrocco by Alicia Klepies

J 956 COLEMAN

E TURK

E ALALOU

J 398.2093 TAYLOR

India

My Incredible India by Jasbinder Bilan
India by Emily Rose Oachs
My Bollywood Dream by Avani Dwivedi
Kadooboo!: A Silly South Indian Folktale by Shruthi Rao

Mangoes, Mischief, and Tales of Friendship: Stories from India by Chitra Soundar

J 954 BILAN
J 954 OACHES
E DWIVEDI
E RAO
J CHITRA



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About Kattam Laraki-Côté

Kattam Laraki-Côté – who is part Quebeçois and part Morrocan – first trained in classical music, studying piano, singing and percussion. His keen interest in world music and travel has served as the basis for manifold musical experiences abroad. He studied conga, timbales and drum in Havana in 2005, djembe and doum doum in Guinea in 2007 with such international masters as Mamady Keïta and Famoudou Konaté, and derbouka in Morroco with Mustapha Antari. He has also studied dhol through The Dhol Foundation since 2012, and Indian tabla with Hindole Majumdar since 2015. He was able to perfect his skills in pop percussions with Paul Picard, Céline Dion's percussionist.

On the music scene, Kattam is currently part of Ayrad, winner of a Felix Award and several other distinctions, and has been an active member of several other bands, including Wesli Band and Bambara Trans, named Révélations Radio-Canada, La Mandragore, nominated at ADISQ and winner of an Opus Award, La Famille Zon and the multi award-winning Niyaz. His experiences have included collaborations with such renowed artists as Marie-Mai, Lynda Thalie, Mes Aïeux, Mélissa Lavergne, Manu Militari, The Losts Fingers, Luc Boivin and the Belle et Bum team, Kissima Diabaté and Saïda Fikri, etc. Kattam also earned his stripes as a teacher and team-building instructor.

Kattam's artistic path has also been enriched by other experiences. In 2009, he joined Cirque du Soleil for a special event in Washington. In 2010, he performed at the Vancouver Winter Olympic Games, and in 2012, he was dancer among the cast that presented a Bollywood dance performance at the Gala des Jutras. In 2013 and 2015, he recorded the percussion under the direction of Martin Léon for the movies *A Good Lie* and *Guibord s'en va-t-en Guerre* by Philippe Falardeau. **Kattam** has also been featured in several television performances, including the Série Montréal Québec reality show, for which he created the opening dance-percussion choreography. He played also the lead role in the play *Ali au pays d'Alice*, presented at Place des Arts as part of the 2012 Festival du Monde arabe.

Drawing on his extensive experience with youth and family audiences – with close to 200 shows per year – **Kattam** created his first solo performance, titled **Kattam and his Tam-Tams.** The show has been successfully presented in daycare centres and elementary schools, as well as in performance venues across Quebec and Canada. In addition to his solo show, **Kattam** released his debut music album *De Tombouctou à Bombay* in 2016, lending renewed momentum to his career due to various prizes and nominations. In 2017, he released his English album *Timbuktu to Bombay*, and in 2018, the DVD of his live show. In 2019, he started touring in US (his agent in US is Shaw Entertainment Group) and is officially part of the Recording Grammys Academy.



History of the Djembe



The **djembe** is one of West Africa's best-known instruments. This goblet-shaped drum is traditionally carved from a single piece of African hardwood and topped with an animal skin as a drumhead. This hand drum belongs to the membranophone class of instruments and usually stands between twelve and twenty-four inches tall.

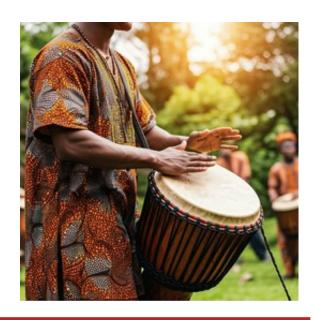
Some say the name of the djembe came from the Bamana in Mali, who said "Anke dje, anke be" to call their people together, as the saying translates "everyone gather together." "Dje" means gather and "be" means everyone, which gave the drum used in these calls to order its name. The Bamanakans' mythology tells of the original djembe, which was made of the hide of a giraffe-zebra hybrid called the gebraffe. There are over a dozen stories of the history of the drum told by many master drummers.

The djembe drum is most likely about 400-800 years old and was created during the Malian Empire by the Mandé people. It spanned the modern-day countries of Senegal, southern Mauritania, Mali, northern Burkina Faso, western Niger, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, the Ivory Coast and northern Ghana. The empire was originally established as a federation of Mandinka tribes called the Manden Kurufa (meaning Manden Federation), but it later became an empire ruling millions of people from nearly every ethnic group in West Africa.

It is taught that the Blacksmiths made the first djembes, making each drum custom-fitted to the drummer who would play it. The making of the drum was spiritual, and the blacksmith was obliged to make offerings to the spirits of the trees he cut down. With the lengue tree, a sacrifice would be made to ask for permission to cut the tree for a djembe. Once the blacksmith finished the djembe, it was delivered to the drummer who commissioned it, a member of the djeli caste. The djeli are musicians, who are responsible for the oral history of their people. The djeli caste still exists today and is responsible for the traditional music. The djeli sing and perform during rituals, baptisms, weddings and funerals and are trusted with the music of their ancestors.







History of the N'goni

N'goni are west African rhythm harps. There are three main types, the djeli, donso and the kamale. The donso and kamale n'goni are similar to the kora, only having less strings and being slightly different in build.

The djeli (pronounced jelly) is a traditional west african instrument that dates back hundreds of years. It is said to be one of the ancestors of the banjo. There are five, six, and seven string versions of the instrument. This Djeli N'goni is a contemporary take of the traditional Djeli N'goni with many improvements. It's related to other rhythm harps across africa and the middle east. It's ancestry dates back to ancient egyptian and mesopotamian times. Its form later evolved into typical bridge-harps like the Ngoni and Kora, that can be find also in many african countries. It is played by griots to perform at celebrations and other special occasions to play the traditional songs.



The donso n'goni is the six-string harp of the traditional hunter societies from the historic Wassoulou region of Mali, Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso. The word donso can be translated as "hunting" or "hunter". For this reason, the donso n'goni are also known as the hunter's harp. Donso n'goni are ceremonial instruments, used by hunters to accompany traditional chanting and storytelling. They often have a shaker called a kesing kesing (also known by many other phoenetic names) that is attached to the top of the instrument and vibrates when being played. Donso n'goni are usually played with the karagnan (also called kariyan or kassa kassa), a serrated metal tube that is scraped with a metal stick. Typically, there are many donso n'goni players in a ceremony.

The kamale n'goni is a modern variation of the donso n'goni. Kamale can be translated as "youth", so the kamale n'goni is said the be the harp of the new generation to play modern arrangements on, rather than the traditional compositions. There are several stories regarding how the kamale n'goni was first made. Alata Brulaye is said to have first made this variation in

the 1960's by adding more strings to the donso n'goni. Structurally, that is the only significant difference between the donso and the kamale n'goni. Today kamale n'goni are usually made with ten, twelve or fourteen strings.

Both the donso and the kamale n'goni are made from a large gourd with a goat skin stretched over an opening in the top and fastened with tacks on the sides. The bridge sits on top of the goat skin and connects the strings from the base of the n'goni to the stem where they are tuned. In West African countries, traditionally the stem of n'goni are made from a species of bamboo that is solid. Traditional strings are made from animal intestine and bound to the bamboo stem of the n'goni. Today plastic strings are most often used as well as a variety of types of wood for the neck together with guitar machine heads for tuning.

Wassoulou Region

Wassoulou is a cultural area and historical region in the Wassoulou River Valley of West Africa. It is home to about 160,000 people and is also the native land of the Wassoulou genre of music. Wassoulou surrounds the point where the borders of three present-day countries meet: Mali, Ivory Coast and Guinea. It is bordered by the Niger River to the northwest and by the Sankarani River to the east.

Wassoulou is best known internationally as the birthplace of Wassoulou music, a style which blends traditional and modern influences with strong female vocalists and a pentatonic hunter's harp. Wassoulou music is one of the two forms of West African music ethnomusicologists believe to be the origin of the American blues, which developed out of music forms dating back to the American slave trade from West Africa. Some of the most famous residents of Wassoulou include the singers Oumou Sangare, Ramata Diakite and Coumba Sidibe.

d'Ivoir



History of the Balafon



The **balafon** is a gourd-resonated xylophone, a type of struck idiophone. It is closely associated with the Mandé peoples of West Africa, particularly the Guinean branch of the Mandinka ethnic group, but is now found across West Africa from Guinea to Mali. Oral histories of the balafon date it to at least the rise of the Mali Empire in the 12th century CE.

Balafon is a Manding name, but variations exist across West Africa, including the balangi in Sierra Leone and the gyil of the Dagara, Lobi and Gurunsi from Ghana, Burkina Faso and Ivory Coast. Records of the balafon go back to at least the 12th century CE. In 1352 CE, Moroccan traveller Ibn Battuta reported the existence of the ngoni and balafon at the court of Malian ruler Mansa Suleiman. European visitors to West Africa described balafons in the 17th century largely identical to the modern instrument.

The balafon has seen a resurgence since the 1980s in the growth of African Roots Music and World Music. Most famous of these exponents is the Rail Band, led by Salif Keita. Even when not still played, its distinctive sound and traditional style has been exported to western instruments. Maninka from eastern Guinea play a type of guitar music that adapts balafon playing style to the imported instrument.

In the Malinké language, balafon is a compound of two words: balan is the name of the instrument and fô is the verb to play. Balafon therefore is really the act of playing the bala. Bala still is used as the name of a large bass balafon in the region of Kolokani and Bobo Dioulasso. These bala have especially long keys and huge calabashes for amplification. Balani is then used as the name of the high pitched, small balafon with small calabashes and short (3 to 4 cm long) keys. The balani is carried with a strap and usually has 21 keys, while the number of keys on a bala vary with region.

The balafon is generally capable of producing 18 to 21 notes, though some are built to produce many fewer notes (16, 12, 8 or even 6 & 7). Balafon keys are traditionally made from béné wood, dried slowly over a low flame and then tuned by shaving off bits of wood from the underside of the keys. Wood is taken off the middle to flatten the key or the end to sharpen it.

In a fixed-key balafon, the keys are suspended by leather straps just above a wooden frame, under which are hung graduated-size calabash gourd resonators. A small hole in each gourd is covered with a membrane traditionally of thin spider's-egg sac filaments (nowadays more usually of thin plastic film) to produce the characteristic nasal-buzz timbre of the instrument, which is usually played with two gum-rubber-wound mallets.

As the balafon cultures vary across West Africa, so does the approach to the instrument itself. In many areas the balafon is played alone in a ritual context, in others as part of an ensemble. In Guinea and Mali, the balafon is often part of an ensemble of three, pitched low, medium and high. In Cameroon, six balafon of varying size perform together in an orchestra, called a komenchang. An Igbo variation exists with only one large tuned key for each player. And while in most cases a single player hits multiple keys with two mallets, some traditions place two or more players at each keyboard.

Mandé Peoples

Mandé is a family of ethnic groups in Western Africa who speak any of the many related Mande languages of the region. Various Mandé groups are found in Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone. The Mandé languages are divided into two primary groups: East Mandé and West Mandé.

The Mandinka and Malinke people, two western branches of the Mandé, are credited with the founding of the largest ancient west African empires. Other numerous Mandé groups include the Soninke, Susu, Bambara, and Dyula. Smaller groups include the Ligbi, Vai, and Bissa.



History of the Dhol

Dhol can refer to any one of a number of similar types of double-headed drum widely used, with regional variations, throughout the Indian subcontinent. Its range of distribution in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan primarily includes northern areas such as the Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Kashmir, Sindh, Assam Valley, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Konkan, Goa, Karnataka, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. The range stretches westward as far as eastern Afghanistan. A related instrument is the dholak or dholki. Someone who plays the dhol is known as dholi.

The dhol is a double-sided barrel drum played mostly as an accompanying instrument in regional music forms. In qawwali music, the term dhol is used to describe a similar,



but smaller drum used with the smaller tabla, as a replacement for the left hand tabla drum. The typical sizes of the drum vary slightly from region to region. In Punjab, the dhol remains large and bulky to produce the preferred loud bass. In other regions, dhols can be found in varying shapes and sizes and made with different woods and materials (fiberglass, steel, plastic). The drum consists of a wooden barrel with animal hide or synthetic skin stretched over its open ends, covering them completely. These skins can be stretched or loosened with a tightening mechanism made up of ropes, or nuts and bolts. Tightening or loosening the skins alters the pitch of the drum sound. The stretched skin on one of the ends is thicker and produces a deep, low frequency (higher bass) sound and the other thinner one produces a higher frequency sound.

The dhol dates back to the 15th century. It was most likely introduced to the Indian subcontinent via the Persian drum type dohol (duhul). Evidence of this is found in Ain-i-Akbari, which describes the use of duhul in the orchestra of the Mughal emperor Akbar the Great. The Indo-Aryan word "dhol" appears in print around 1800 in the treatise Sangitasara.

In Western Punjab, the beats of dhol have been an element in the ceremonies of the great Sufi mystics and their followers. The patterns of dhol have been developed to catalyze the mind of the devotee who is seeking spiritual trance. Traditionally the Punjabi dhol has been the domain of men.

In Assam, dhol is widely used in Rongali Bihu (Bohag Bihu), the most beloved festival of the Assamese people. Rongali Bihu marks the start of harvest season the first day of the Hindu solar calendar. It is celebrated in mid of April every year. Usually on the 13th or 14th of April according to the Assamese traditional calendar. Assamese people consider dhol to be a devo badyo, or instrument of god, brought to Earth by the Pandavas.

Dhol (which is always accompanied by tasha, cymbals etc.) is an important part of Goan shigmo celebrations. It also is an important part of Goan temple music; the temple dhol was traditionally played by a specific caste. The dhol was used by Gujaratis during celebrations such as Navaratri to accompany garba. Garba are the folk songs which describe the grace of the divine mother. It is one of the important musical instruments in Goa.





Punjabi culture, found in the historic region of Punjab in India and Pakistan, is deeply rooted in agricultural heritage, warrior tradition and vibrant spiritual life, leading to a strong emphasis on community, hospitality, and resilience. Key elements include a rich tradition of folk music and dance (like bhangra), colorful festivals such as Baisakhi and Diwali, distinctive cuisine featuring Tandoori dishes and traditional attire like the salwar kameez. The Punjabi language and epics are vital to its identity and oral traditions.

As the "breadbasket" of the region, agriculture is foundational, and land ownership traditionally dictated social status. Due to its location as a gateway to the subcontinent, a history of conflict fostered a warrior culture that emphasizes community honor (izzat). The Punjabi people are known for their warmth and open-hearted welcome to guests, often offering food and drink. Folk music, played on instruments like the dhol and dances such as Bhangra are integral to celebrations.

Connect the Dots

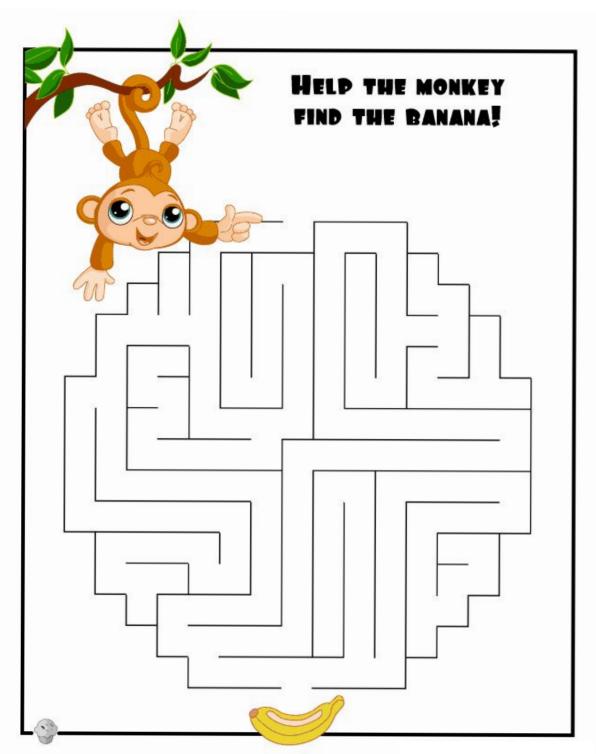


Word Search

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Middle East Tam Tams Djembe Djeli Balafon Kattam Kamale Dhol Africa Ngoni Donso India

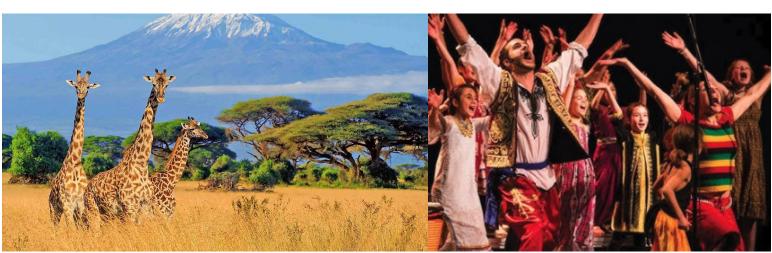






Can you define these words?

Djembe:
N'goni:
Balafon:
Dohl:
Middle East:
Drum:
Percussion:



Name:

Body Percussion Games

Echo a Beat

Directions:

- The leader taps a simple rhythm using hands, feet or claps.
- Children echo the exact rhythm back.
- Start easy then make rhythms longer or more complex.

Connection to Kattam and His Tam Tams:

This mirrors how Kattam teaches rhythms from different cultures. Students learn to listen closely and respond just like in his interactive shows.





Clap, Stamp and Pat

Directions:

- Play a fun upbeat track (world music works great or even something from Kattam himself!).
- Students clap hands, stamp feet and pat thighs along with the beat.
- Encourage them to switch up the pattern or create their own.

Connection to Kattam and His Tam Tams:

Kattam uses body percussion and dance to explore rhythm across cultures. This activity helps kids feel the beat in their whole body just like in his performances.

Add a Sound

Directions:

- The leader starts a rhythm using a body sound (like a clap).
- Going around the circle, each child adds one new sound (such as a snap or stomp).
- Repeat the full sequence with each additional sound.

Connection to Kattam and His Tam Tams:

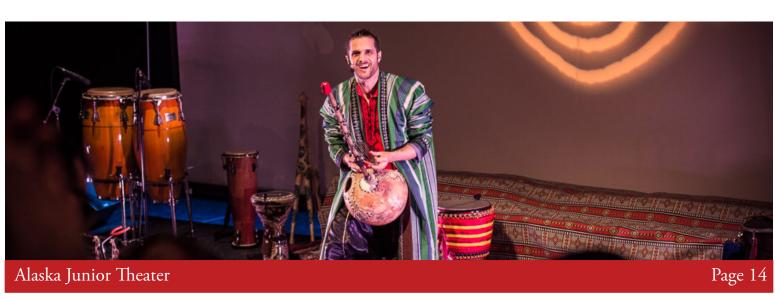
Kattam layers rhythms from around the world. This activity teaches students about musical collaboration and building rhythmic patterns just like the layered sounds in Kattam's performance.



Alaska Junior Theater

Word Scramble

ATAMTK	
OMCRORAN	
EUAIGN	
ETSW ICAFAR	
SPAHR	
OBOBAM	
URLLACTU	
EAIGNIR	
GMAULH	
ISOTHYR	
MAANISL	



How to solve a Cryptogram

Cryptograms are basic substitution ciphers, meaning the letters of the alphabet are being represented by numbers. Start with one-letter words, then move onto the two and three letter words. Make your best guess, and then guess again. Make sure you are working in pencil!

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Coloring Sheet



Word Search Answer Key



Cryptogram Answer Key

To the sound of the n'goni, balafon, djembe, naffar, derbouka and dhol, percussionist Kattam invites you to discover Africa, the Middle East and India.



Definition Answer Key

Word Scramble Answer Key

ATAMTK OMCRORAN MORROCAN **EUAIGN** GUINEA **ETSW ICAFAR WEST AFRICA** HARPS **SPAHR OBOBAM** BAMBOO **URLLACTU** CULTURAL **EAIGNIR** NIGERIA **GMAULH** MUGHAL **ISOTHYR** HISTORY MAANISL ANIMALS

Djembe: a kind of goblet-shaped hand drum originating in West Africa

N'goni: a string instrument originating in West Africa; its body is made of wood or calabash with dried animal (often goat) skin head stretched over it

Balafon: a large xylophone having hollow gourds as resonators, used in West African music

Dhol: a large, barrel-shaped or cylindrical wooden drum, typically two-headed, used in South Asia

Middle East: the transcontinental region of Southwest Asia and North Africa

Drum: a percussion instrument sounded by being struck with sticks or hands

Percussion: striking of one solid object with or against another with some degree of force



Theater Etiquette and Experiences

We have a wonderful opportunity at this performance to help youth learn about attending live performances. Please discuss the following with your students:

- 1. Concentrate to help the performers. The audience gives energy to the performer who uses that energy to give life to the performance. Sometimes young people do not realize how a live performance differs from watching a movie or television show. A live presentation has not been pre-recorded with the mistakes edited out. This makes it riskier for the performer and more exciting for the audience. It also means the audience has a real contribution to make to the overall event. Each audience member affects those around him/her as well as the performer. An usher will show you where to sit. Walk slowly and talk quietly as you enter the theater.
- 2. For safety's sake, do not lean over or sit on the balcony railings or box ledges. Please be careful on the stairs. Avoid horseplay and running throughout the building.
- 3. If necessary, use the restroom before the performance begins. Adults need to accompany young students. After the show, we need the entire audience to go directly to their buses.
- 4. You may talk quietly to the people next to you until the performance begins.
- 5. When the lights in the theater begin to dim, it is the signal that the performance is about to start. **Stop talking and turn your attention to the stage.**
- 6. Stay in your seat throughout the entire performance.
- 7. During the performance, listen quietly and watch closely. **Talking during the performance will distract** other audience members and performers. Try not to wiggle too much and don't kick the seat in front of you. These disruptions make it hard for others around you to concentrate on the show.
- 8. Sometimes during a performance you may respond by laughing, crying, or sighing. By all means feel free to do so! LAUGHING IS APPROPRIATE. (Teachers, please do not hush the students while they are laughing.) If something is funny, it's good to laugh. If you like something a lot, applaud. This will let the performers know that you are enjoying the show. BUT PLEASE DO NOT TALK TO YOUR NEIGHBOR DURING THE SHOW!
- 9. At the end of the show, **applaud to say thank you** to the performers. The performers will bow to acknowledge your appreciation and thank you for coming.
- 10. When the lights get brighter in the theater, the show is over. Stay in your seats until the OnStage Coordinator dismisses your school.
- 11. Please remember:
 - Taking photographs or using recording devices is strictly prohibited.
 - •Beverages and food, including gum and candy, are not allowed in the theater.
 - •You are only one person among several hundred in the audience.
 - •Please respect the performers and your fellow audience members.

Please inform your adult chaperones that ushers will be available throughout the performance if there are any difficulties.

Thank You!