

AUDIENCE GUIDE FOR AUTISM-FRIENDLY MARY POPPINS

THANK YOU FOR JOINING US TODAY!

Autism-Friendly Performances are live theater experiences where the theater environment is altered and typical "rules of attendance" have been relaxed to accommodate individuals with autism and other developmental disabilities, and the families, professionals and advocates who support them. A comfortable and judgment-free space is provided that is welcoming for all who are familiar with and accepting of behaviors exhibited by some people with autism.

Today's performance of MARY POPPINS is designed and planned in cooperation with **Paper Mill Autism Advisory Team** which is comprised of experienced behavior analysts, teachers, aides, and the parents and adult siblings of people with autism and other developmental disabilities. We are very grateful for their support! The Paper Mill Autism Advisory Team is led by Linda S. Meyer Ed.D., MPA, BCBA-D, CPT; Kelly A. Carlile M.A. BCBA; Jeffrey Jacobs M.A. BCBA.

Autism-Friendly Accommodations

- The lights inside the theater will remain on, but dimmed.
- The sound level will remain consistent and will be slightly lower in volume.
- Families may bring their own snacks, drinks, reinforcements and motivational systems into the theater and you may leave and re-enter the theater as often as needed.
- Electronic devices such as tablets and smartphones are permitted for use with motivational systems but should be silenced or used wearing headphones. **Despite being allowed inside the theatre, please note that the taking of photographs or making recordings of the show with these devices is strictly prohibited.**
- Kids are free to talk, vocalize and move about the theater as needed under parental supervision.
- An **Activity Area** with a **Chill-Out Zone** is provided on the second floor (*mezzanine level – follow the signs*)
- A live video feed of the show on stage is playing in the Activity Area and in the main lobby.
- A **Gender-Neutral family bathroom** is available on the first floor next to the Box Office (*main lobby level*). All other restrooms are Gender-Specific as indicated.
- A support team is on-site. You may use the signaler to call for support as needed or wanted.
 - Volunteers in **RED SHIRTS** are certified Behavior analysts who can provide expert support.
 - Volunteers in **YELLOW SHIRTS** are Special Education Teacher/Aides (yellow shirt) or people who can provide experienced support.
 - Volunteers in **GREEN SHIRTS** are general volunteers who can provide general or directions around the facility. General volunteers will also be posted at exits to prevent elopement.
- **MARY POPPINS** has two acts with one **20 minute intermission**. **Act 1 runs about 1:20** and **Act 2 runs about 1:00**. Please feel free to get up and move about the theatre or leave and reenter as often as you want or need to. The Activity Area upstairs should be utilized and support team will assist with the goal of returning inside the theater!

Autism-Friendly Signals

- **During some scenes volunteers standing in the front orchestra will wave a glow stick to give a brief warning of the moments when special lighting and/or sound effects may be in use, or there will be characters that are performed with some intensity.** These moments are important to the story and we have lowered the volume of the sound effects and voices as necessary. As always, audience members are welcome to wear headphones or ear plugs as desired.

If you think your child will be uncomfortable by the lighting or sound effects, you may try to use one or a combination of the following strategies if they are appropriate:

- Engage the child in a distracting activity
- Watch a short video with headphones
- Listen to music with headphones
- Play with a preferred item that draws attention away from the stage

- **We will signal the audience just before the following:**

Act 1

- **Act 1, Scene 2:** The Banks family is discussing the type of Nanny they need to hire for the children, and we hear the sound effect of the wind picking up outside the house. **We then see Mary Poppins flying in across the top of the stage, floating by her magical umbrella.** There is a black out, and when the lights comeback up, Mary Poppins has magically joined the family in their house, standing center stage.
- **Act 1, Scene 6:** After Mary Poppins has arrived to work as the nanny for the Banks family, she takes the children, Jane and Michael, on an outing to the park where they meet Mary's old friend, Bert. This the song and dance number **"Jolly Holiday"**. When Mary Poppins is around, magic often follows, and so there is a moment when Bert does a slight-of-hand pyrotechnic trick with a small flame. There's also a moment when a statue in the park of the **Greek God Neleus**,

- comes alive and steps down from his stone pedestal to dance.** This action is accompanied by a sound effect that sounds like stone being crushed. The volume will be lowered for this sound effect.
- **Act 1, Scene 7:** Before the song **“Spoonful of Sugar”** the actions takes place in the kitchen at the Banks house. The servants are preparing food for a party when the butler, Robertson, trips and falls clumsily about the kitchen, causing shelves to fall and table legs to break. This is a moment with some sound effects and a lot of comedic prat falls that leave the poor butler lying passed out on the floor. He is soon revived by Mary Poppins and her **“spoonful of sugar”**. Mary also magically restores the kitchen shelves and tables at a snap of her fingers.
 - **Act 1, Scene 9:** Staging and dance sequences for **“Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious”** are very high energy, bright and very colorful!
 - **Act 1, Scene 11,** Mary Poppins and the children retire to the nursery where Jane and Michael are dismissive and neglectful of their toys. Mary Poppins cautions them that if they treat their toys poorly, their toys may treat not want to play with them any longer. Then, Mary Poppins uses her magic to awaken the toys to speak for themselves. A toy clown, a ballerina and a wooden soldier - all played by actors in costumes - come to life and sing the song, **“Playing the Game”** to Jane and Michael. During the song there are some special effects, such as black lighting that makes it appear that more clowns are dancing about above the room. This song and sequence are intended to teach the children a lesson, and so it is designed to be slightly scary and unusual.
 - **In Act 1, Scene 12:** At the end of Act 1, Mary Poppins has decided she must leave the Banks family employment, if only temporarily, to help the parents see her value, and for the children to learn that they must listen carefully to her instructions. Mary goes to the roof top of the house and meets Bert once again, who is now working as a chimney sweep. She says goodbye and floats up and away across the stage by her magical umbrella.

Autism-Friendly Signals

Act 2

- **Act 2, Scene 1:** After Mary Poppins leaves the family, they hire **Miss Andrews** who had been the Nanny to Mr. Banks when he was a boy. Miss Andrews is cold, and uncaring and treats the children poorly. She sings a song called **“Brimstone and Treacle”** about using discipline to raise children that may comply with her demands, but who will also lack imagination and spirit. The character of Miss Andrews is intended to be a stark contrast to the cheerfulness of Mary Poppins and she is portrayed in an intense manner. The volume of the actress playing Miss Andrews will be reduced. The intensity of her character will be maintained because it becomes the motivation for Mr. Banks to see his error in being unsupportive of Mary Poppins leading to her departure. This realization leads him to become a more engaged and loving father to his own children.
- **In Act 2, Scene 2:** The intensity of Miss Andrews startles the children, and they decide to run away. They go to the park close by and meet Bert where they stay with him and the park ranger to sing **“Let’s Go Fly a Kite”**. At the end of the song we again hear the sound effect of the wind picking up and see Mary Poppins flying across the top of the stage, returning to the children and family.
- **In Act 2, Scene 5:** Mary Poppins and the children return to the Banks house and Mary meets Miss Andrews. Knowing that Miss Andrews’ services will no longer be need, **Mary uses magic to have Miss Andrews leave the house through fireplace and up the chimney.** This moment is accompanied by dry ice (simulating smoke, but is not harmful) sound and lighting effects to make it look like the fire flares up. The volume will be reduced.
- **In Act 2, Scene 7:** After Mary has returns to the family, she and the children go to the nursery where magic happens again and all three are whisked up to the roof top through the fireplace in the nursery. On the roof top they meet up with Bert and his chimney sweep friends. **Soon, actors dressed like chimney sweeps will come walking down the aisles of the theatre and use the stair cases to go up on stage from the seating area.** They break into a big tap number **“Step In Time”**. Tap dancing is high energy and louder than other dance sequences in the show. The chimney sweeps also tap their broomsticks on the stage floor many times in rhythmic ways.
- **At the end of the show** Mary Poppins is satisfied that the family no longer need her, nor any Nanny, and she says farewell to the Banks family and **floats by her magical umbrella up and off stage** as the family watches.
- **During the curtain call,** Mary Poppins is the last actress to take a bow. She arrives back on stage by floating down on her magical umbrella.

THANK YOU FOR COMING TO PAPER MILL PLAYHOUSE!

“Theater For Everyone” Autism-Friendly performances

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