



INDIANA REPERTORY THEATRE

CHRISTEL DEHAAN

STUDENT MATINEE PROGRAM

at the Indiana Repertory Theatre

presented by



STUDY GUIDE FOR

THE PLAY THAT GOES WRONG

BY HENRY LEWIS, JONATHAN SAYER, & HENRY SHIELDS

APRIL 9 - MAY 11 | OneAmerica Financial Stage

Original artwork by Jingo M. de la Rosa. Photos by Zach Rosing.



THE PLAY THAT GOES WRONG

BY HENRY LEWIS, JONATHAN SAYER, & HENRY SHIELDS



Content Spotlight

The Play That Goes Wrong:

Contains mild profanity, gunshots, over-the-top violence/death played for comedy.

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unstoppable farce

The intrepid thespians of the Cornley Drama Society are more or less ready to raise the curtain on the grandest production the village has ever seen, *The Murder at Haversham Manor*—until things go from bad to calamitous. There’s an unconscious leading lady, a corpse that won’t play dead, and actors who trip over everything (including their lines)—and that’s only the first act. It’s nothing you want in a show—and everything you want in a show!

Recommended for students in grades 4-12

The performance will last approximately 2 hours with a 15-minute intermission.

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PLANNING YOUR VISIT



You, the audience, are one of the most important parts of any performance. Experiencing the theatre is a group activity shared not only with the actors, but also with the people sitting around you. Your attention and participation help the actors perform better, and allow the rest of the audience to enjoy the show. Here are a few simple tips to help make each theatre experience enjoyable for everyone:

- Leave mobile phones, cameras, and other distracting and noise-making electronic devices at home or turned off in your bag.
- You may think texting is private, but the light and the motion are very annoying to those around you and on stage. Do not text during the performance.
- The house lights dimming and going out signal the audience to get quiet and settle in your seats: the play is about to begin.
- Don’t talk with your neighbors during the play. It distracts people around you and the actors on stage. Even if you think they can’t hear you, they can.
- Never throw anything onto the stage. People could be injured.
- Remain in your seat during the play. Use the restroom before or after the show, or during intermission.
- Focus all your attention on the play to best enjoy the experience. Listen closely to the dialogue and sound effects, and look at the scenery, lights, and costumes. These elements all help to tell the story.
- Get involved in the story. Laugh, cry, sigh, gasp—whatever the story draws from you. The more emotionally involved you are, the more you will enjoy the play.
- Remain at your seat and applaud during the curtain call; this is part of the performance too. It gives you a chance to recognize a job well done and the actors a moment to thank you for your attention.

STUDENT MATINEE ARRIVAL & PARKING INFORMATION

ARRIVAL & DISMISSAL

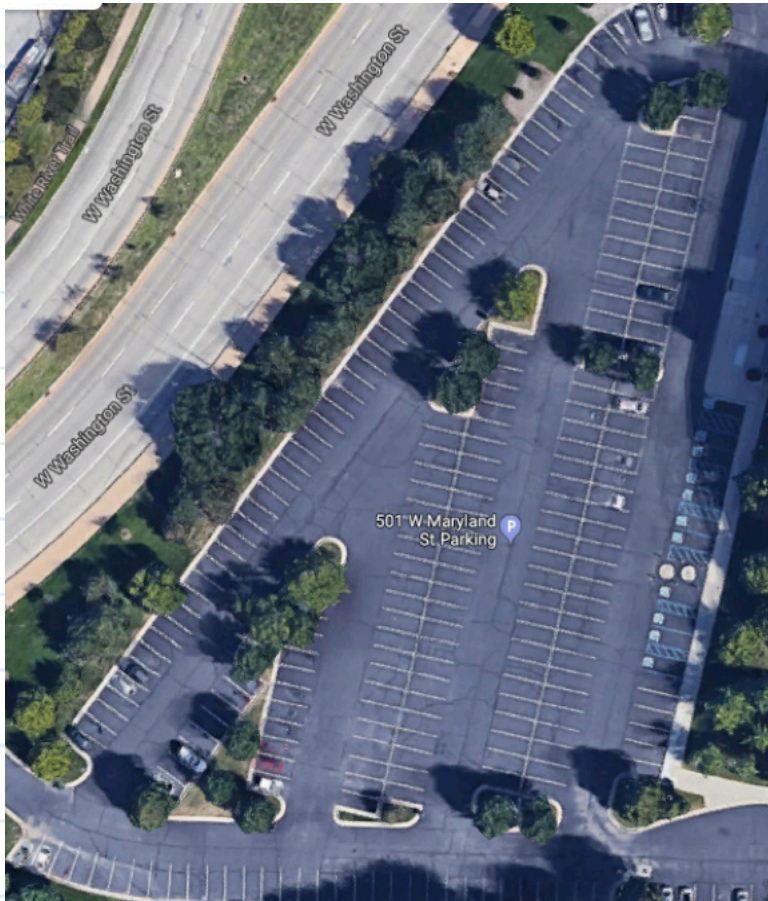
- IRT is located one-half block west of Circle Centre Mall on Washington St., between north bound Illinois St. and southbound Capitol Ave.
- The physical address of IRT is 140 W. Washington Street, Indianapolis, IN 46204.
- Buses should unload and load directly in front of the theatre. (Do not block the entrance to Embassy Suites garage.) Please plan to arrive 20-30 minutes before your performance is scheduled to begin.
- You will be greeted at the curb by an IRT Staff Member and directed to the correct entrance.
- The teacher named on the reservation should check in with the IRT Education staff member stationed in the lobby.
- Your group will be ushered to your assigned seats.
- Students and chaperones should follow instructions of all IRT Staff for your safety.

LATE ARRIVAL

- If you believe that you are going to be late, please contact the IRT House Manager, Katy Thompson at 317.916.4803. Provide them with a phone number and the name of the school so that Education staff may be in contact with you.
- You can contact IRT Education (education@irtlive.com) with non-emergency information on the day of the show.

PARKING

- Buses may park for free at Victory Field unless they are having an event - we will inform you if that is the case. The House Manager will give you a parking pass for each bus when you arrive at the theatre. It should be displayed in the windshield.
- Continue east on Washington St. past the JW Marriott and turn left across Maryland St. into the Victory Field lot.
- **PLEASE NOTE that Victory Field no longer has public restroom spaces available. We apologize for any inconvenience.**
- See the map on the next page for full details.
- Additional parking options are located on the next page.
- **While IRT will make every effort to communicate parking information in advance, it is the responsibility of schools and drivers to make alternate arrangements.**



VICTORY FIELD PARKING MAP

Victory Field parking lot is located on the West side of the stadium. From IRT, continue west on Washington Street past the JW Marriott. Turn left on Schumacher Way, and cross Maryland Street into the Victory Field lot.

Some buses may need to double park in the lot. The image is of the Victory Field parking lot.

PLEASE NOTE that Victory Field no longer has public restrooms available to drivers. This is a change from years past. We apologize for any inconvenience.

Thank you,
Indianapolis Indians and
Indiana Repertory Theatre

ADDITIONAL PARKING OPTIONS

In the event that Victory Field is unavailable for free parking, here are some other potential options. **While IRT will make every effort to communicate parking info in advance, it is the responsibility of schools and drivers to make alternate arrangements.**

White River State Park: Paid surface parking is located on Washington Street, across from Victory Field. May require advance notice; event rates may apply. (Approximately .6 mi from IRT.)



Indianapolis Zoo: Paid parking is available on Washington Street, west of White River State Park. First come, first served. (Approximately 1.2 mi from IRT.)



Downtown Indy: Explore all available parking options at the Downtown Indy website. Buses are welcome to utilize street parking if all used spaces are paid.

CAR AND VAN PARKING OPTIONS

COURT STREET GARAGE

Ask a Theatre employee for a voucher that will reduce your parking fee to \$10. This voucher is available at the Court Street Garage when attending an IRT show. This is only valid during the IRT's season.

Address for the Court Street Garage

110 West Washington Street

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

IndyGo's Red Line, the city's rapid bus transit system, connects Broad Ripple and Fountain Square to the heart of downtown and other neighborhoods in Indianapolis. With buses running every 10-20 minutes and a stop directly next to the IRT on Capitol Avenue, the Red Line provides another convenient option for your transportation to the Theatre.

To plan your trip or for more information about the Red Line and other nearby routes, visit [IndyGo.net](https://www.indygo.net) or call IndyGo Customer Service at 317-635-3344.

INDIANA STATE STANDARDS

Seeing a performance at Indiana Repertory Theatre is a great way to help make connections for students and facilitate their understanding of a text. Some key education standards to consider on your trip can be found by scanning this QR Code:



THE PLAY RIGHTS

Henry Lewis, Jonathan Sayer, and Henry Shield founded Mischief Theatre when they were students at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art in West London. The group’s first productions, *Let’s See What Happens* (2008) and *Lights! Camera! Improvise!* (2009), were improvised comedy shows, but eventually they expanded into comedic theatrical performances that include choreographed routines, jokes, and stunts. In 2012 the three writers and performers devised *The Play That Goes Wrong*. In 2014 the production moved to the Duchess Theatre in the West End, winning Best New Comedy at the 2015 Laurence Olivier Awards. It continues to run there today.

A Broadway production ran from 2017 to 2019 and then moved off-Broadway to New World Stages, where it still performs today. The play has also had five tours in the United Kingdom and a national tour in the United States. Mischief Theatre’s other plays include *Peter Pan Goes Wrong* (2013), *The Comedy about a Bank Robbery* (2016), *Mischief Movie Night* (2017), and *Groan Ups* (2019). They collaborated with Penn & Teller for *Magic Goes Wrong* (2019). For television they have created *A Christmas Carol Goes Wrong* (2017) and a six-part series called *The Goes Wrong Show* (2019). Their newest production, *The Comedy about Spies*, is scheduled to open in London in 2025.

THE STORY OF THE PLAY THAT GOES WRONG

INTRODUCTION

You are about to see a play within a play. *The Play That Goes Wrong* by Henry Lewis, Jonathan Sayer, and Henry Shields is about the opening night performance of the Cornley Drama Society production of a play called *The Murder at Haversham Manor*. Many of the actors in *The Play That Goes Wrong* play two characters: they not only play characters in *The Murder at Haversham Manor*, they also play the actors who play those characters:

Jonathan plays **Charles Haversham**, the deceased.

Robert plays **Thomas Colleymoore**, Charles’s old school friend.

Dennis plays **Perkins**, the butler at Haversham Manor.

Max plays **Cecil Haversham**, Charles’s brother.

Max also plays **Arthur**, the gardener at Haversham Manor.

Sandra plays **Florence Colleymoore**, Charles’s fiancée and Thomas’s sister.

Chris plays **Inspector Carter**, who investigates the murder.

Chris is also the new head of the Cornley Drama Society, as well as director of the play.

Annie is the production’s stage manager (and also replaces Sandra as **Florence**).

Trevor is the company’s lighting and sound operator. *You forgot the dog!*

sound operator, is laying the last few floorboards on the set, while Annie, the stage manager, is struggling to install the set’s fireplace mantle. At curtain time, or thereabouts, Chris, the new head of the drama society, takes the stage. Very proud to be making his directorial debut with this production, he welcomes the audience to the play.

The year is 1922, and we find ourselves in Charles Haversham’s private rooms in stately Haversham Manor, a large British country house. The guests are gathered downstairs to celebrate Charles’s engagement to Florence Colleymoore. But when the lights come up, Florence’s brother Thomas, Charles’s old school friend, and Perkins, the butler at Haversham Manor, find Charles’s body dead on the chaise lounge. Except that Jonathan, the actor playing Charles, has tripped and fallen in the dark, and not quite made it to his position. And Robert and Dennis, the actors playing Thomas and Perkins, cannot get on stage. The door to the room is stuck ~~open~~ **closed**.

Thus begins an avalanche of mishaps, mistakes, setbacks, blunders, and calamities. Props are broken and lost, lines are flubbed and forgotten, actors break character, furniture and set pieces collapse. When Sandra, the leading lady, is knocked out, Annie, the stage manager, must go on in her place. Through all the chaos, the company gamely goes on, trying to tell the story of *The Murder at Haversham Manor*. Who killed Charles Haversham? And perhaps more urgently, will the company make it to the end of the play?

THE SHOW MUST GO ON!



During the performance of *The Murder at Haversham Manor*, many things go wrong both backstage and onstage, and the actors and technicians of the Cornley Drama Society must improvise to keep the show going.

THE PLAY

calmly & effortlessly

In a small English village, the Cornley Drama Society is ~~frantically~~ preparing for the opening night of their latest production, *The Murder at Haversham Manor* by Susie H. K. Brideswell. Although the company is excited to have a complete cast for this production, things are not going entirely smoothly. As the audience enters the theatre, Trevor, the company’s lighting and

AN EXTREMELY ~~IE~~ BRIEF HISTORY OF FARCE

by Richard J Roberts, Resident Dramaturg



Farce places exaggerated characters in improbable situations where they face outrageous obstacles. In the fifth century BCE, Aristophanes entertained the audiences of Ancient Greece with larger-than-life characters, ridiculous situations, and lots of bawdy humor. Aristophanes combined his uproarious comedy with serious social messages: In *Lysistrata*, the women of Athens and Sparta go on a sex strike until their husbands stop the war. Two centuries later, Roman playwright Plautus became the first great genius of farce, mastering the art of mistaken identity.

The genre got its name from the Old French “farce”, “to stuff,” when irreverent actors in fifteenth century France stuffed comic improvisations between the scenes of religious dramas. Soon, plays that focused exclusively on such gags were popular throughout Europe. Sixteenth century Italy developed its own particular brand of farce, *commedia dell’arte*, with its stock characters and situations enlivened by improvised *lazzi* (what today we call “bits” or “schtick”). The great French playwright Molière got his start in *commedia dell’arte*, later folding its

farfical elements into the more refined strictures of French comedy to create such masterpieces as *Tartuffe* and *The Miser*. Shakespeare went all the way back to Plautus’s *Menaechmi*, with its two pairs of mismatched twins, for the plot of *The Comedy of Errors*.

Today when we hear the term farce, we usually think of bedroom farce, best exemplified by the work of Georges Feydeau (1862-1921). Feydeau wrote more than sixty plays, most of them big hits in Paris and around Europe. His most famous include *A Flea in Her Ear* and *The Girl from Maxim’s*. Feydeau was the king of the bedroom farce, plays that focused on the comic possibilities in attempted love affairs. The settings for Feydeau’s plays often feature a single room with several doors, and much of the fun comes from the characters chasing each other through those doors, often just missing each other.

Meanwhile in London and on Broadway, *Charley’s Aunt* by Brandon Thomas (1892) had them rolling in the aisles while racking up long runs. The new technology of cinema quickly embraced farce,

making stars of the Keystone Kops, Charlie Chaplin, and Indiana’s own Carole Lombard. More recently, films like *Some Like It Hot* (1959), the *Pink Panther* series, and *A Fish Called Wanda* (1988) have become classics, while television has given us *I Love Lucy* and *Parks and Rec*.

Farce returned to its French roots in 1960 with Marc Camoletti’s *Boeing Boeing*, adapted for London by Beverley Cross in 1962 and revised for Broadway by Francis Evans in 2008. The 1962 hit musical *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* by Larry Gelbart, Bert Shevelove, and Stephen Sondheim returned once again to the Roman master Plautus, stirring together a cocktail of plot lines from several of his greatest hits with a big splash of vaudevillian slapstick. In the 1980s, two very popular stage farces focused on performers: *Noises Off* (1982) by British playwright Michael Frayn is set in the theatre, while *Lend Me a Tenor* (1989) by American playwright Ken Ludwig focuses on the world of opera. Continuing in this vein, *The Play That Goes Wrong*, a 2012 farce by Henry Lewis, Jonathan Sayer, and Henry Shields of London’s Mischief Theatre company, has been going wrong in London for twelve years and in New York City for eight. For more than two millennia, farce has kept us laughing by showing us just how ridiculous the human species can be.



Top: Eric Sharp in the IRT’s 2023 production of *Clue*.
Bottom: Hollis Resnik, Ryan Artzberger and Jerry Richardson in the IRT’s 2018 production of *Noises Off*.
Photos by Zach Rosing.

MADE IN BRITAIN

Set in Great Britain, *The Play That Goes Wrong* features a number of terms that originated there.

BLAST!

A British expression of annoyance or exasperation. It is a milder version of the old expression “damn and blast,” which is less frequently used nowadays.

CORNLEY

A fictional English village.

ROALD DAHL

Roald Dahl (1916–1990) was a British author of popular children’s literature and short stories. His books have sold more than 300 million copies worldwide. His works for children include *James and the Giant Peach*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *Matilda*, and *Fantastic Mr Fox*.

DURAN DURAN

Duran Duran is an English pop rock band formed in 1978. They were innovators of the music video and a leading band in the MTV-driven Second British Invasion in the 1980s. Their greatest hits include “Hungry like the Wolf” (1982), “The Reflex” (1984), and “Ordinary World” (1993). *Where’s “Rio” (1982)? That’s their best song!*

ENGLISH NEW WAVE

In the early 1980s, virtually every new pop and rock act (particularly those with synthesizers) was tagged as “new wave.” The term encompassed various styles—including synth-pop, alternative dance, and post-punk—that featured a humorous or quirky pop approach, angular guitar riffs, jerky rhythms, the use of electronics, and a distinctive visual style in fashion.

GREAT SCOTT!

“Great Scott!” is a British interjection of surprise, amazement, or dismay, popular in the late 1800s and early 1900s but now considered dated. It originated as a minced oath, historically associated with Scottish writer Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832), author of *Ivanhoe* (1819), *Rob Roy* (1817), and *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819). The substitution of “Scott” for “God” may have derived from the German and Austrian expression “*Grüß Gott*,” meaning “God greet you” or “God bless you.”

HANG IT ALL

A British expression of annoyance or exasperation. “Hang” is used here as Cockney slang for “dang,” which is a minced oath for “damn.”

INSPECTOR

Within the British police, an inspector is senior to a sergeant but junior to a chief inspector. Uniformed inspectors often supervise duty shifts or act in specialist roles such as supervising road traffic policing. Plainclothes detective inspectors are equal in rank to their uniformed counterparts.

POUND

The pound is the basic unit of British currency, as the dollar is the basic unit of American currency. When the term was first used, one British pound had the value of one pound of sterling silver. Today, £1 is worth about \$1.26. In 1922, when *The Mystery at Haversham Manor* takes place, the stolen £9000 would have had the equivalent value of about \$810,000 today.

WHITE SPIRIT

White spirit is the British term for mineral spirits. Similar to turpentine, it is a highly flammable petroleum-derived clear liquid used as a paint thinner.

A PLAY WITHIN A PLAY— TWO WAYS TO PLAY IT

A play within a play refers to a storytelling convention in which the play you are watching contains the depiction of another play. (Think of the film *Inception*’s “dream within a dream” concept but with plays!) The play within a play concept dates back to 1587 with Thomas Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy*, which is often cited as an inspiration for the play within Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. Hamlet’s play within a play (*The Murder of Gonzago*, or *The Mousetrap*) shows only a short section of the story, but *The Play That Goes Wrong* treats the play within a play as a major component of the entire plot.

Here are more examples of the play within a play concept:

PLAYS ABOUT PUTTING ON A PLAY

The Play That Goes Wrong

Noises Off

42nd Street

Kiss Me, Kate

Crazy for You

The Producers

[title of show]

PLAYS WITH A SMALLER (UNRELATED) PLAY INSIDE

Hamlet

Love’s Labor’s Lost

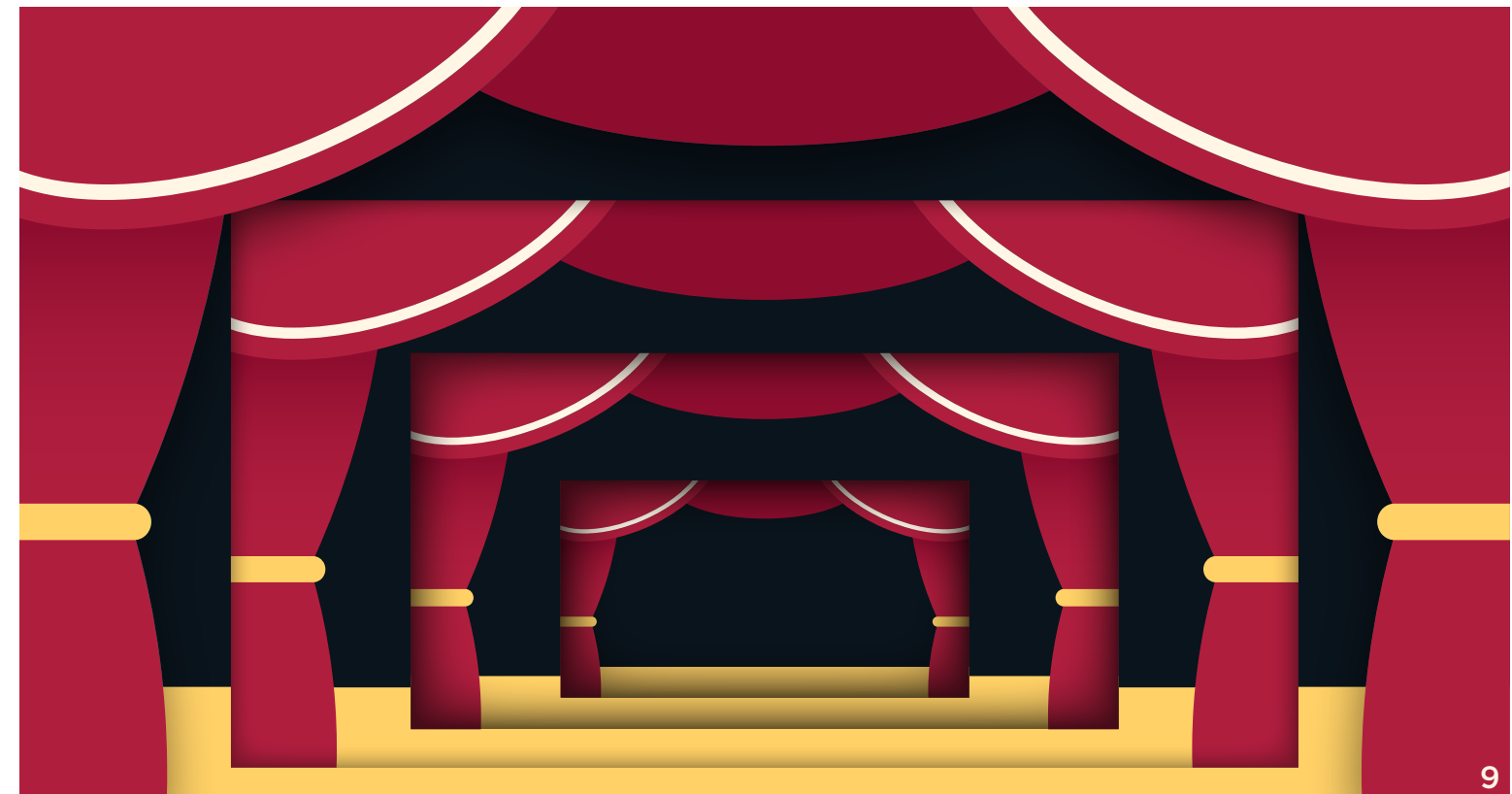
A Midsummer Night’s Dream

The Phantom of the Opera

The King and I

The Seagull

The Real Thing



THEATRE TERMS

The Play That Goes Wrong focuses on the world of the theatre.

PEOPLE

The **PRODUCER** oversees the whole of the production process while supporting the creative team. They are in charge of the production budget and finance.

The **PLAYWRIGHT** writes the play. (The term playwright is derived from the same idea as the term wheelwright, using wright to mean one who crafts or makes something.)

The **DIRECTOR** is responsible for the overall vision of the production. They collaborate with the cast and creative team, through design and staging, to bring that vision to life.

The **DESIGNERS** are responsible for the way a production looks. Designers specialize in areas like sets, costumes, lighting, sound, paints, wigs, and projections. *You forgot props!*

The **STAGE MANAGER** is responsible during the rehearsal process for scheduling rehearsal time, developing a prompt script with all blocking moves and technical cues, and maintaining communication between all the various departments involved in the production. Once the show is in performance, they are responsible for the smooth running of the show, including calling sound, lighting, and projection cues, and ensuring that the actors maintain the staging as established during rehearsals.

The **LIGHTING AND SOUND OPERATORS** operate the computers that control lighting and sound effects during the performance. (Usually these are two separate jobs; at the Cornley Dramatic Society, Trevor does both jobs simultaneously.)

The **BACKSTAGE CREW** help keep the show running smoothly, by moving set pieces, arranging props, helping with costume changes, and more!

THE STAGE

The **AUDITORIUM** is the space which contains both the stage and audience seating.

DOWNSTAGE (DS) is the area on stage closest to the audience.

UPSTAGE (US) is the area on stage furthest away from the audience.

STAGE LEFT (SL) is the area on stage to the actors' left (to the audience's right).

STAGE RIGHT (SR) is the area on stage to the actors' right (to the audience's left).

CENTER (CS) is the area on stage in the center.

The **WINGS** are the areas to either side of the stage, from whence the actors make their entrances and exits.

TECH BOX In the OneAmerica Stage at the IRT, the stage manager and the lighting operator work behind a glass window in the mezzanine, while the sound engineer works in a small open booth in the mezzanine.

FADERS are the levers on a sound board that control the amount of signal that passes from one channel to another. *leave their dirty socks :-)*

DRESSING ROOMS are where the actors prepare to go onstage, where they get dressed in their costumes and apply makeup.

The **GREEN ROOM** is a waiting room or lounge where the cast can relax offstage before and during performances. The origin of this historic term is uncertain, but there are numerous theories: that the color was considered relaxing, that it was restful for actors' eyes when out of bright stage lights, that it was a place for early unstable makeup products to "cure" and lose their green tinge, that it was a reference to nervous actors' faces, and many more. Today they are rarely painted green.

or

OTHER THEATRE L XINGO

BEGINNERS is the British equivalent of the American term "places," meaning that actors should be in place to go on stage for the first scene of a play.

BLOCKING refers to all of the moves that an actor makes onstage, including entrances, exits, moving about on stage, sitting down, and standing up.

CALLS are announcements made by the stage manager or assistant stage manager, over the PA system to the actors or audience, informing them when the performance is about to begin.

The term **CURTAIN** is used as a cue in the theatre to refer to the raising or lowering during performance of the drape that divides the audience from the stage.

The term **ELECTRICS** is often used by the production team to refer to lighting instruments, rigging, cues, or almost anything to do with the lighting of a show.

HOUSE and **HOUSE FRONT** refer to the audience area of the theatre.

A **MATINEE** is a performance that takes place during the day rather than in the evening.

PROPS, or properties, are items used by actors during a performance, such as telephones, bottles, books, stretchers, letters, pencils, keys, etc.

The **RIGGING** in a theatre is the system of pipes that hang over the stage to hold scenery and lighting equipment, as well as the ropes or cables and pulleys that raise and lower the pipe.

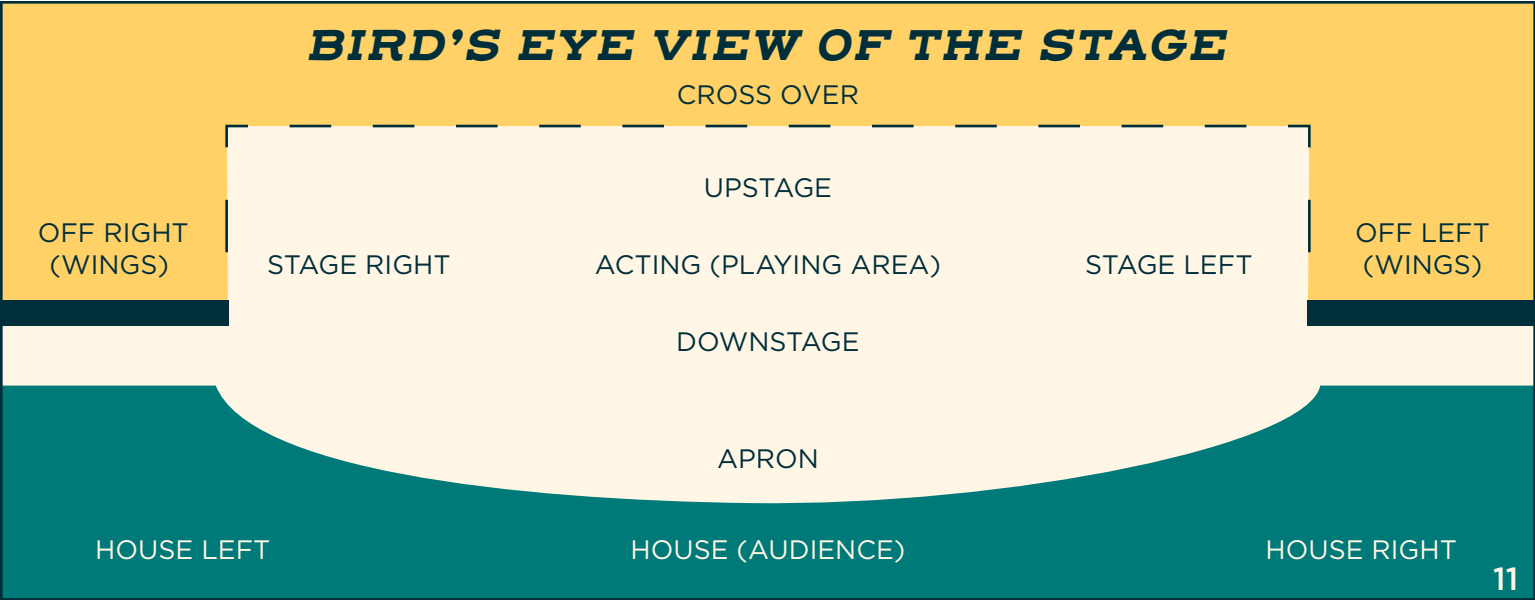
The **DRESS REHEARSAL** or "dress" is the final run-through of a production before it is first performed for the public. Usually it is run without stopping, under performance conditions, with full costumes, make-up, and lighting.

STAGE DIRECTIONS are the notes in the script that indicate unspoken action or effects, as opposed to spoken dialogue.

STALLS is the British term for seats on the floor level, what Americans call orchestra seats.

The Term **TABS** is used by the British to indicate most masking drapes, as well as the main curtain.

The **TECHNICAL REHEARSAL** or "tech" is the rehearsal in which the elements of scenery, costumes, lighting, sound, and sometimes projections are added into the rehearsal process before public performances begin. Typically, they are long rehearsals with frequent stopping and starting.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Before Seeing the Play

1. What kind of comedy makes you laugh and brings you joy? Why? What kinds of comedy do you personally not find funny? Why not?
2. Think of someone who is the “class clown” of your class. Why are they funny? Is their humor physical, or do they say humorous things?
3. What purpose does comedy serve?
4. Are there any forms of comedy that are universal?

After Seeing the Play

1. The creators of this play have also created *Peter Pan Goes Wrong* and *A Christmas Carol Goes Wrong*. What story have you read or studied in class that would adapt well to this concept? What could go wrong?
2. How does this play relate to the famous phrase “the show must go on”?
3. Which character would you most like to play? Why?
4. Most of the characters in *The Play That Goes Wrong* are actors, but a couple (Annie and Trevor) are involved with the play in an off-stage capacity, and Chris is the director of the play as well as an actor. Consider these three characters and their work on the production. What kinds of responsibilities do they have? How does their work contribute to the production? How do their characters function differently than do the characters who are actors?
5. How do the characters’ reactions to the mistakes and accidents in the play change as more and more chaos happens?
6. Did you notice any safety precautions the actors took? What did you see? How did actors stay safe even though they were pushed to their physical limits?
7. Why are mystery and crime such popular genres today? How effectively do they combine with comedy in this play? Why or why not?

ACTIVITIES

~~ACTIVITIES~~

Physically demanding theatre requires lots of warming up for the actors. Scan the QR code and choose a few from this list before your next rehearsal:

Comedy is subjective, which means everyone finds different things funny. Do you love comics? Videos of people falling down? Puns and wordplay? Create a visual to demonstrate what makes you laugh. Make a chart, a video, or a drawing.

This play involves lots of special skills beyond being an actor. Take a class in an area that interests you: improvisation, stage combat, or clowning! Reach out to local theatres and ask about classes and camps.

Staged violence and intense physical theatre take in-depth training in order to be performed safely. But you can still choreograph a physical scene with props and action—just use SLOW MOTION! You don’t have to have physical contact to make a scene effective. Challenge yourself by rehearsing a slapstick scene without touching anything!

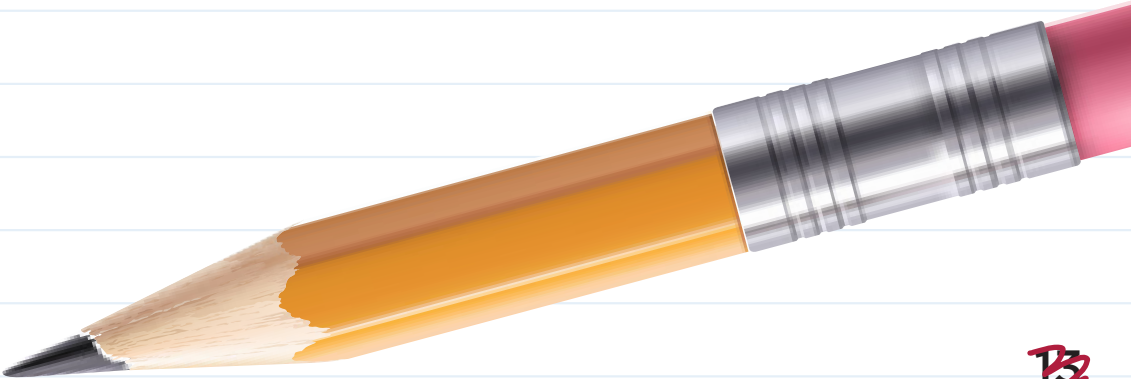
The set in this play falls apart minute by minute. Scan the QR code to watch a video about breakaway props, then try to make your own! (Safely, of course.)

Physical Theatre: 50
Critical Exercises For
The Drama Classroom
The Drama Teacher



WRITING ~~RIGHTING~~ PROMPTS

1. Consider these slapstick stage directions from the play: *Max stamps on the floor, causing a floorboard to flip up and hit him in the face. Max looks fine for a moment but then collapses out of sight behind the chaise lounge. Max starts to get back to his feet. We hear a metallic snapping sound. Max slowly pulls his sword up from behind the chaise, revealing that it's broken (now just a handle and a short stump of blade).* Try your hand at writing detailed stage directions that tell a physical story, without any dialogue.
2. The play is full of silly physical bits with everyday objects. Make a list of objects around your classroom or your home and how they could be used as comedic props.
3. *The Play That Goes Wrong* is considered a “spoof” of murder mysteries that have remained popular throughout time. Think Sherlock Holmes giving way to *Clue* and *Knives Out*, for example. Spoofs make good-natured fun of and exaggerate conventional concepts. If you were to write a spoof of classroom life, what conventions would remain? What would be exaggerated? Write a scene for a play!
4. In *The Play That Goes Wrong*, everything goes wrong, with hilarious results. Write a short narrative about a time when you were involved in a project or event where everything went wrong. What happened? How did the project or event turn out? Did the things that went wrong seem funny at the time? Were you able to laugh about it later? Why or why not?
5. Read the article about farce on pages 8 and 9. *The Play That Goes Wrong* is an example of farce. What other plays or movies have you seen that are farces? What elements do these stories have in common? What elements create opportunities for humor? Write a short farcical scene of your own. Try to include as many as you can of the elements of farce that you have noted.
6. Write a review of the play. A well-rounded review includes your opinion of the theatrical aspects— scenery, lights, costumes, sound, direction, acting—as well as your impressions of the script and the impact of the story and/or themes and the overall production. What moments made an impression? How do the elements of scenery, costumes, lighting, and sound work with the actors’ performances of the text to tell the story? What ideas or themes did the play make you think about? How did it make you feel? Did you notice the reactions of the audience as a whole? Would you recommend this play to others? Why or why not? To share your reviews with others, send to: education@irtlive.com



IMPROV AND THEATRE GAMES

When things go wrong during *The Murder at Haversham Manor*, the actors find themselves having to improvise. However, improvisation (or “improv”) isn’t only for emergencies—it can be fun too! Here are a few improv and theatre games to flex your creative muscles and make your classmates (and yourself) laugh!

PROPS

For this game, you’ll need to assemble a collection of random objects. These might include a wooden spoon, a ruler, a scarf; or better yet, use objects whose actual purpose you don’t know. Divide into teams of two, each team claiming one object. Then have the teams take turns coming up with alternative uses for their object. For instance, the wooden spoon may become a microphone, an oar, a conductor’s baton, a light saber ... the possibilities are endless. Teams should switch from one to another as quickly as possible without hesitating; if a team hesitates or can’t come up with a new idea on their turn, the members of that team are out.

ONE WORD STORY

Sit in a circle and create a story together. The first person says the first word, the second person adds a second word, and so on. The only rule: don’t hesitate—say the first thing that comes into your head.

QUESTIONS ONLY

For this game, you’ll divide into two teams. Then, pick a simple setting for your scene (examples: shopping at the mall, visiting the zoo, going to a birthday party). Two people from the same team should begin their scene. You can make the scene go however you want it to, with only one rule: you can only speak in questions. If someone makes a mistake by saying something that isn’t a question, that person is out, and someone else from their team must take their place and continue the scene.

IMPROV AND THEATRE GAMES

DO IT THIS WAY

For this game, one person volunteers to be the guesser. Have the guesser leave the room. When they are gone, the rest of the group must come up with an adverb that might describe an action (slowly, grumpily, sleepily, etc.) Once you’ve picked your adverb, call the guesser back into the room. The guesser can then ask anyone in the room to perform an action in the style of the adverb they must guess (example: “eat this way”—the actor must pretend to eat slowly or grumpily, or sleepily). The guesser gets three chances to make other players act, then time is up and they must guess the adverb.

WHO IS THE LEADER

For this game, everyone stands in a circle. One person volunteers to be the guesser. The guesser then leaves the room. When they are gone, choose one person in the circle to be the leader. The leader initiates a movement such as swaying from side to side or snapping fingers, which everyone else copies. The leader should change the movement frequently, and everyone else must be alert and follow along. Once the leader has been chosen and the first movement has been started, call the guesser back into the room. The guesser will stand in the middle of the circle and try to figure out who is the leader.

ZIP ZAP ZOP

For this game, everyone stands in a circle. One person starts the game by pointing to someone else in the circle and saying, “Zip!” The person who is pointed to must then point to someone else while saying, “Zap!” The person that the second person points to must point to another person while saying, “Zop!” You should point to people at random (don’t just go around the circle), but the words must always go in the same order: zip, zap, zop. The words should also be spoken in rhythm – no hesitations or pauses. If a player hesitates or says the wrong word, they are out. Challenge version: Add a movement for each word (for example, jumping in place when you say “zip” or putting your hand on your head when you say “zap”). When pointed to, players must then give both the correct word and the correct motion (while staying in rhythm!) in order to stay in the game.

RESOURCES

Articles



Farce Is Everywhere on Stage — but Why?
Mark Lawson, *The Guardian*



John Cleese: How to Write the Perfect Farce
John Cleese, *The Guardian*



The Play That Goes Wrong Writers Talk about Where It All Went Right as They Transfer to Broadway
Alex Dymoke, *The Standard*



Make a Breakaway Prop Statue for Film or Theatre
Damian Zuch, *Instructables*



Stage Combat Basics: An Actor's Guide to Fight Choreography
Dany Marglies, *Backstage*



Dun Dun Duun! Where Did Pop Culture's Most Dramatic Sound Come From?
Amelia Tait, *Press Reader*

Videos



Mischief Theatre Company Break Our Table During Interview
This Morning



The Interview That Goes Wrong with JJ Abrams
The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon



How to Fall and Not Hurt Yourself
Idaho Shakespeare Festival



Physical Theatre at Ecole Jacques Lecoq
Sophie Hunter

Nonfiction Books

The Moving Body: Teaching Creative Theatre by Jacques Lecoq
Why is That So Funny?: A Practical Exploration of Physical Comedy by John Wright
Discovering the Clown, or the Funny Book of Good Acting by Christopher Bayes
Commedia Dell'Arte: an Actor's Handbook by John Rudlin
Different Times: A History of British Comedy by David Stubbs
The Prop Building Guidebook for Theatre, Film, and TV by Eric Hart

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Books & Plays

The Mousetrap by Agatha Christie
Murder on the Orient Express by Agatha Christie
The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
Noises Off by Michael Frayn
Blithe Spirit by Noel Coward
One Man, Two Guvnors by Richard Bean
The Importance of Being Ernest by Oscar Wilde
Monty Python's Spamalot by Eric Idle
The Musical Comedy Murders of 1940 by John Bishop
She Stoops to Conquer by Oliver Goldsmith
Tartuffe by Moliere



Murder Mystery Movies

Murder on the Orient Express (1974) PG & (2017) PG-13
Death on the Nile (1978) PG & (2022) PG-13
Clue (1985) PG
Once Upon a Crime (1992) PG
Radioland Murders (1994) PG
Sherlock Holmes (2009) PG
Knives Out (2019) PG-13
Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery (2022) PG-13



Farces, Spoofs, & Slapstick Films

Bringing Up Baby (1938) NR
It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World (1963) G
The Pink Panther (1963) PG & (2006) PG
The Producers (1967) PG & (2005) PG
Young Frankenstein (1974) PG
Monty Python and the Holy Grail (1975) PG
Murder By Death (1976) PG
Airplane! (1980) PG
The Money Pit (1986) PG
Three Amigos (1986) PG
Dirty Rotten Scoundrels (1988) PG
the *Naked Gun* franchise (1988-1994) PG-13
Weekend at Bernie's (1989) PG-13
Home Alone (1990) PG
Noises Off! (1992) PG-13



GLOSSARY

bankbook | a paper book used to record bank transactions on a deposit account with a low transaction volume, such as a personal savings account. A bank teller would write the date, the amount of the transaction, and the updated balance, and enter his or her initials by hand, and the account holder would keep the bankbook.

cartouche | an oval or oblong shape enclosing a group of Egyptian hieroglyphs, typically representing the name and title of a monarch.

Cat | *Cats* is a 1981 musical based on the 1939 poetry collection *Old Possum’s Book of Practical Cats* by T. S. Eliot (1888-1965), with music by Andrew Lloyd Webber (born 1948). It is the fifth-longest-running Broadway show and the eighth-longest-running West End show.

Anton Chekhov (1860-1904) | a Russian playwright and short-story writer. Along with Henrik Ibsen and August Strindberg, Chekhov is considered one of the seminal figures in the birth of early modernism in the theatre. His most famous plays include *The Seagull* (1895), *Uncle Vanya* (1897), *Three Sisters* (1900), and *The Cherry Orchard* (1903).

corrosive | capable of destroying other substances by causing a chemical reaction.

cyanide | a highly poisonous chemical that can be a colorless gas, a liquid, or a crystal. It is used in many industries, including manufacturing, mining, and pest control. Cyanide is also found in some foods, tobacco smoke, and vehicle exhaust.

distraught | Deeply upset and agitated.

Dover | a major ferry port in Kent, about 75 miles southeast of London. It faces France across the Strait of Dover, the narrowest part of the English Channel, 21 miles from Cap Gris Nez in France.

En garde! | French: on guard; the term is used in the sport of fencing as a warning to adopt a defensive stance in readiness for an attack or bout.

façade | The term generally refers to the front wall or exterior of a building. When used metaphorically in reference to a person, the term describes an outward appearance that is maintained to conceal a less pleasant or creditable reality.

“Girls on Film” | the third single by Duran Duran. It became the band’s first top 10 hit on the UK Singles Chart, peaking at number 5 in 1981.

Hobnob | a classic British digestive biscuit (cookie) made with rolled oats and covered in chocolate. These aren’t in the play, the editors just think they are very tasty.

James and the Peach | Roald Dahl’s *James and the Giant Peach* focuses on a young English orphan boy who enters a gigantic, magical peach and has a wild and surreal cross-world adventure. Because of the story’s occasional macabre and potentially frightening content, it has become a regular target of censors.

King Charles Spaniel | a small dog breed. (A spaniel is a type of hunting dog especially bred to flush game out of denser brush.) In 1903, The Kennel Club combined four separate toy spaniel breeds under this single title. The other varieties merged into this breed were the Blenheim, Ruby and Prince Charles Spaniels, each of which contributed one of the four coat colors now seen in the breed.

GLOSSARY

ledger | A book of financial accounts.

The Lion and the Wardrobe | *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* is a portal fantasy novel for children by C. S. Lewis (1898-1963), published in 1950. It is the first published and best known of seven novels in *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950–1956).

morose | Sullen and ill-tempered.

“Rio” | the seventh single by Duran Duran, released in 1982. It became a Top 10 hit in the UK Singles Chart, peaking at number 9. Today it is the third most streamed Duran Duran song.

Two Sisters | Chekhov’s *Three Sisters* (1900) focuses on three sisters—Olga, Masha, and Irina—whose dreary provincial lives are enlivened by the arrival of the Imperial Army. The sisters yearn for the excitement of Moscow, but their dreams of a new life are crushed when their brother marries a woman they consider ill-bred and mortgages the family home, and the soldiers leave town.

voice pipe | or speaking tube is a device based on two cones connected by an air pipe through which speech can be transmitted over an extended distance. While its most common use was in intra-ship communications, the principle was also used in affluent homes and offices of the 19th century, as well as expensive automobiles, military aircraft, and even locomotives. For most purposes, the device was eventually outmoded by the telephone.

HAVE YOU SEEN THIS DOG?

- His name is Winston
- Please let me (Trevor) know if you do
- He is the only good thing in Act 2. It is in your best interest to assist my search
- DO NOT approach him or surprise him, he is a biter and will steal your wallet

