

Relaxed Performances at PSF



"To enrich, inspire, engage, and entertain the widest possible audience" so begins the mission of the Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival. Though we work towards this goal in many different ways, we are especially excited to welcome new audiences each summer to the Festival by broadening the accessibility of our productions.

A "relaxed" performance is a specially adjusted sensory-friendly show designed to create a theatre experience for individuals with a wide range of sensory, learning, and communication differences—and, of course, their families and friends! Some patrons who may benefit from a relaxed experience, in addition to those on the autism spectrum, include individuals with neurological and communication differences such as ADHD, social anxiety, OCD, and agoraphobia, as well as families with small children.

Adjustments and accommodations made at relaxed performances typically include a reduction of startling sound or lighting effects, freedom to vocalize and leave seats during the performance as needed, and freedom to use personal electronic devices for communication or sensory reasons. Noise cancelling headphones and a variety of stress sensory toys are available to borrow, and there will also be a quiet area in the lobby for patrons who need a break during the performance. PSF will also provide pre-show preparation materials to help attendees anticipate the experience of visiting PSF and seeing live theater.

The single most important accommodation, however, is the establishment of a "shush-free zone," in which patrons are free to experience the show in whatever way is most comfortable, and all modes of expression are not only accepted, but expected and celebrated. Everyone in attendance is aware of the relaxed nature of the performance, with the aim of creating an environment that is inclusive and judgement-free. By combining this understanding with the accommodations described above, our hope is that all patrons and their families, especially those who have been reluctant to visit the theater, will feel welcomed and included.



PSF's relaxed performances were initially made possible through an Audience (R)Evolution grant from Theatre Communications Group (TCG), supported by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. PSF was honored to receive this support, and to continue working collectively with a cohort of six theatres in the Greater Philadelphia area to address accessibility and inclusivity needs in the tri-state region. The Lehigh Valley Arts Council has also been instrumental to the establishment of all of Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival's accessible performances and has provided support through their Arts & Access program.

**For relaxed performance pricing and more information
call 610-282-WILL(9455) or contact psf@pashakepseare.org**