

NOISES OFF

NOVEMBER 19 – DECEMBER 22
QUADRACCI POWERHOUSE

By Michael Frayn
Directed by KJ Sanchez
Buddy and Catherine Robinson, Associate Producers

TEACHER'S GUIDE

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Teacher Guide written by Hope Parow, Education Intern.

This Teacher's Guide is designed to be used in the classroom along with The Rep's Study Guide for *Noises Off*. These are some suggested activities for your classroom. The Study Guide is available online at <http://www.milwaukeeep.com/season/noises-studyguide.html>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

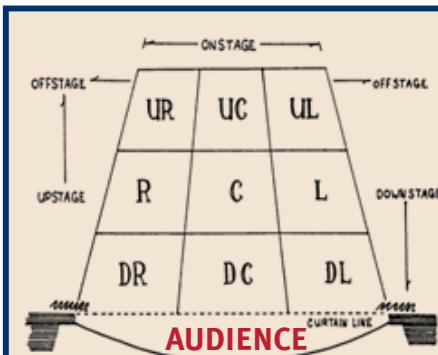
Pre-Show

- What movies and shows that you watch today could be considered farce, and why?
- *Noises Off* was written by an English playwright and contains British cultural jokes and references. How do you think this will affect the production? What are some ways the director, designers, and actors can help American audiences relate to the material?

Post-Show

- What purpose does the time gap between each act serve?
- How are the actors similar to the characters they portray in the play-within-a-play, *Nothing On*? For example, what do Dotty and Mrs. Clackett have in common?
- What vocal and physical changes did the actors make to show which character they were playing when? Were you able to keep the characters straight as they transitioned between characters? Why or why not?

Farce: theatrical comedy which is characterized by unlikely predicaments, mistaken identity, and physical and verbal humor. Physicality is often over-exaggerated while verbal farce typically involves puns or quick witted reactions.



DIRECTOR SAYS...

This game is a variation on "Simon Says" and follows the same rules. Each direction must begin with the phrase "Director says . . ." or the students who move are out. After establishing a "stage" and "audience" within the playing space, have students **REVIEW** stage directions (downstage, center stage, upstage left, etc.) by asking them to run to each area. Once they are comfortable with the game, liven the pace by adding on "bonus routines" from the list below and eliminating students who make mistakes or find themselves without a group. (Just for fun: Adapt the pre-existing "bonus routines" to reflect your group of students!)

Example: "Director says...upstage right. Hang the lights!"

Bonus Routines

- Choreographer's coming: Students strike a pose.
- Hang the lights (2) One student holds an imaginary ladder while the other hangs the lights.
- Coffee break (3): One student pretends to be a table, the other two sip coffee on either side.
- Sets (2): Students portray scenic carpenters sawing and hammering set pieces.
- Costumes (3): One student portrays an actor in a fitting while the other two take and record the measurements.
- Spotlight (4): One student portrays an actor in the spotlight while another controls the spot. The other two students also portray actors, giving focus.
- Talkback: Students sit on the floor and portray audience members asking questions after a performance.
- Audition: Students portray actors warming-up for an audition.
- Missed Cue: Students freeze like a deer in the headlights.

COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE

Students work in small groups to **RESEARCH** *Commedia dell'Arte*, **CREATE** a character mask and/or *compagnie impresse*, and **PERFORM** an original *lazzo*.

Procedure:

- Provide students with brief background information on *Commedia dell'Arte* (Italian "comedy of craft").
- Divide students into groups and ask them to **RESEARCH** the historical origins and defining characteristics of the craft. (Suggested topics: *compagnies* (troupes) and *impresse* (coat-of-arms), themes, stock characters and masks, and *lazzi*.) Each group should then **SHARE** their findings with the class.

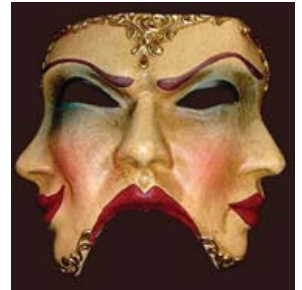
Lazzo (lazzi): a short, comic sketch in *Commedia dell'Arte* that is independent of the plotline yet helps to keep the action moving. *Lazzi* are often characterized by stock characters, pantomime and acrobatic feats, and trickery through reoccurring gags.

COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE (*continued*)

- Invite each group to use a planning worksheet to **BRAINSTORM** ideas for an original *lazzo*. This worksheet should include, in columns: *Everyday Action* (such as killing a fly with a flyswatter), *Exaggerated Mishap* (the fly always escapes), *Comedic Resolution* (after outrageous attempts, character flees from the fly).
- After having chosen their scenario, ask students to **DEVELOP** their characters in the likeness of a *Commedia dell'Arte* stock character as they **REHEARSE** their *lazzo*.
- Once their piece is “performance ready”, give students time to **CREATE** either a traditional character mask or *compagnie impresse* (troupe coat-of-arms) that represents their original piece, character, or group.
- Ask students to **PERFORM** their final piece, and critique. Potential rubric criteria may include: rehearsal time, concentration/commitment, voice, action/physicality, presentational staging, planning worksheet, character mask/*compagnie impresse*.
- To conclude, ask students to **REFLECT** on their own and their classmates’ performances: what worked and what did not? Why?



Acting students perform a *Commedia dell'Arte* lazzo



A *Commedia dell'Arte* trifaccia (three-faced) mask

Making Connections:

Ask students to **IDENTIFY** which *Commedia dell'Arte* stock character each character in *Noises Off* (and *Nothing On*) most similarly reflects. Have them **DISCUSS** the reasoning behind their choices.

COMMON CORE AND WISCONSIN MODEL ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts

RL.11-12.3 Analyze the impact of the author’s choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama.

RL.11-12.5 Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

SL.9-10.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

Wisconsin Model Academic Standards for Theater Education

A.12.1: Attend a live theatrical performance and be able to explain the personal meaning derived from the experience, and also be able to analyze, evaluate, and create meaning in a broader social and cultural context in either written or oral form.

B.12.2 Continue to create characters through physical movement, adapting movement and making physical choices to fit the requirements of the scene.

C.8.3 Discuss the cultural/historical importance of a play through group discussion or written work.

C.12.2 Select a play or theatre-related event or individual and research the topic, gathering information from more than one source.

D.12.3 Demonstrate increased understanding of strengths (what worked) and weaknesses (what didn’t work) in character work and scenes presented in class.

E.12.1 Create an original scene that includes the appropriate exposition, rising action, problem, conflict, crisis, and solution.

E.12.10 Rehearse and perform the scene for an audience.

Wisconsin Model Academic Standards for Art and Design

K.12.1: Connect their knowledge and skills in art to other areas, such as the humanities, sciences, social studies, and technology.

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