

Concert Etiquette

People whispering. Mobile phones ringing. Talking. Turning around in seats. Leaving before the entire performance is finished. Does this sound like a typical audience at a concert? We are not alone. In recent years, a large number of complaints from music educators concerns the topic of audience behavior and how best to address the issue of concert etiquette. The topic addressed here will mainly be the behavior of public audiences, as opposed to student audiences. The behavior of public audiences is a difficult issue to address. School administrators and teachers can exercise direct control over the student body. However, when dealing with the general public there may be the same high expectations for their concert behavior, but far less control over their actions. Here are some ideas which attempt to address this problem and offer some solutions to provide awareness to audiences. If we can make an impact the real winners will be our students who will enjoy their performance experience much more with an attentive, well-behaved audience.

Attending a concert of classical music is a very different experience from attending a concert of jazz or popular music (rock, rap, country, etc.) Although some audience members may be initially intimidated by the more formal general atmosphere of a classical concert, the rules of etiquette for such a concert are actually straightforward and simple once you get used to them.

Arrival

Concert performances at Medford High School begin at 7:30 pm; doors are open 1 hour prior to concert time. The general protocol is to arrive at a concert hall at least ten to fifteen minutes ahead of the scheduled concert, to find your seat (perhaps with the assistance of an usher), take a program, and be seated. Conversation with companions or those seated nearby is appropriate and welcome, but as soon as the lights dim, discussion should cease.

Don't worry, latecoming happens even to the most seasoned of the concert-goers! You will not be admitted into the auditorium until there is a suitable break - this takes place after the first work or first movement of a concerto or symphony has ended. Do not attempt to find your allocated seat as this will disturb others and hold up the concert.

It is absolutely imperative that you stay seated (in your own seat), except in cases of dire need or emergency. Such cases would include matters of an urgent health nature (impending sickness necessitating a trip to the restroom, continued coughing, or anything that might disturb others) or obvious emergency (danger to audience members, such as fire, natural disaster, building collapse, etc.) Management of most concert halls require that you turn off your pager and cell phone before the concert begins. A considerate audience member would also check to be sure that his or her watch alarm is also turned off.

Despite your enthusiasm for the performance, standing up and dancing to the music is not acceptable.

During the Performance

Once a concert is under way, we request that you don't talk, whisper, sing, hum, or move personal belongings. This will ensure that you, other audience guests, and the performers enjoy the full benefits of a performance. Audience guests should also refrain from entering and exiting the hall while a performance is in progress.

Please note, when applause does begin at the end of a composition, you may hear other members of the audience shouting "Bravo!" or "Encore!" This is completely acceptable when it occurs after the completion of a performance, and simply means "Well done!" Audience members may also stand (as in a "standing ovation") when a performance is particularly noteworthy. A further extension of appreciation by the audience or individuals is exhibited when flowers are presented to the soloist(s) during this time of applause.

Electronic Devices

Please make sure that all cellular phones, beepers, watches, electronic organizers, and other noise-alarm devices are switched to silent mode.

During a performance, you should not eat or drink. If you are suffering from a cough, the discreet unwrapping and sucking of a cough drop is appropriate, but any other eating should be saved for intermission(s).

Etiquette Update

Here's a refresher course. Please read on, and remember, part of one's pact as an audience member is to take seriously the pleasure of others, a responsibility fulfilled by quietly attentive (or silently inattentive) and self contained behavior. After all, you can be as demonstrative as you want during bows and curtain calls.

Golden Rules from Stagebill, Inc.

1. Go easy with atomizer; many people are highly allergic to perfume, after shave and cologne.
2. If you bring a child, make sure etiquette is part of the experience. Children love learning new things.
3. Unwrap all candies and cough drops before the curtain goes up or the concert begins.
4. Make sure beepers, cellphones and watch alarms and other electronic devices are OFF. And don't jangle the bangles.
5. The overture is part of the performance. Please cease talking at this point.
6. Note to lovebirds: When you lean your heads together, you block the view of the person behind you. Leaning forward also blocks the view.
7. THOU SHALT NOT TALK, or hum, or sing along, or beat time with a body part.
8. Force yourself to wait for a pause or intermission before rifling through a purse, backpack, or shopping bag.
9. Yes, the parking lot gets busy and public transportation is tricky, but leaving while the show is in progress is discourteous. By leaving early, you may miss something special.
10. The old standby: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

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Do these rules apply to you? YES! And they apply in all performance situations.