

Grey Paper No 1 - August 2001 - Children in the Theatre

Guidelines for best practice

These notes apply, in the main, to those shows to which the general public are invited, whether paying for admission or not. It is advisable for every LTG Theatre to be aware of the law and, of course, to abide by it.

Performers

The Children's (Performances) Regulations 1968 made under the Children and Young Persons Act 1963 make provision for those persons under compulsory school age (16 yrs) who take part in a performance (called "children" for the purposes of this legislation).

Performance

A performance is viewed as taking part in a presentation in connection with which a charge is made (even if no charge is made for admission).

Licences

*The law applies to all children of 0-16 years of age. A child must be licensed if he/she performs for more than four days in any six month period. All children need to be licensed if absence from school is required. It is within the discretion of local authorities (normally the Education Welfare Service of the Education Authority) to waive the need for a licence in respect of amateur or charitable performances. When a license is required the licensing authority will lay down conditions for the welfare of the licensed children. **It is the responsibility of individual theatres to ascertain from their Local Authority whether licensing is required.** However in those authorities where licensing is not required the LTG recommends that the following best practice guidelines are followed.*

Registration of staff who work with Children

We recommend that all individuals who are responsible for the teaching or supervision of children in our theatres should receive clearance through the Criminal Record Board disclosure procedure. The LTG will be registered as an umbrella organisation for this purpose and application forms for disclosure of any convictions associated with offences against children may be obtained and submitted through the National Secretary. For full details of this see our fact sheet on the disclosure procedure.

Guidelines

a) *Number of Performing Days*

A child 13 years of age or over may take part in performances, licensed and unlicensed, on not more than 80 days in any period of 12 months.

A child under 13 years of age may take part in performances on not more than 40 days in any period of 12 months.

Where a child, who has exhausted his/her quota of performing days, could take part in further performances without harm, then he/she may perform on four extra single days in a period of six months.

b) *Matrons*

During the authorised period of performance, a child must be in the charge of a Matron at all times when the child is not in the charge of his/her parent, director or youth group leader.

Satisfactory arrangements must be made for the child to be accompanied home after the performance. Theatre members (male or female) cleared through the CRB disclosure process or any other adults approved by the organiser of the event may act as a Matron but it is suggested there be at least one Matron for every six children.

c) *Maximum Number of Performing Days in a Week*

A child may not take part in a performance or a rehearsal on more than six days in any seven day period.

d) *Maximum Number and Length of Performances and Rehearsals Daily*

1. A child may not take part in a performance if the duration of the entire production, including intervals, exceeds 3½ hours, or if the child's part, or the aggregate of the child's appearance, exceeds 2½ hours.
2. A child may not take part in more than one performance or rehearsal on any day when normally required to attend school, unless the child has been granted leave of absence from school either for the whole day or for the session which takes place after the midday meal.
3. A child may not take part on any day in more than one performance or rehearsal unless the child performs the same part in the performance/ rehearsal except where taking the place of another performer in the same performance and the performance/rehearsal is of the same nature.
4. Where a child takes part in two performances and/or rehearsals on the same day, there must be an interval of not less than 1½ hours between the last appearance in the first performance or rehearsal and the first appearance in the second performance or rehearsal. This interval may be reduced by not less than 45 minutes on two days in any week, but when this is done the total time that the child is at the place of performance, including intervals, must not exceed six hours.

e) *Earliest and Latest Hours at Performance*

No child may remain at the place of performance later than 30 minutes after the end of his/her part, or 10 pm if under 13 years of age, or 10.30 pm if 13 years of age or over, whichever is the earlier. If however the performance (but not a rehearsal) could not be given without the child remaining until later she/he may be present until 11 pm on not more than 8 evenings in any period of 4 consecutive weeks and not more than 3 evenings in any one week. A child may not be present at a place of performance or rehearsal before 10 am on any day. If he has taken part in a performance or rehearsal on the previous day he may not again be present at such a place until at least 14 hours have elapsed since the end of his appearance in that performance or rehearsal.

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