

Shmanners 6: Theatre Attendance

Published February 19, 2016
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Travis:

Teresa, are you ready for another episode?

Teresa:

Yes, but be sure to unwrap any candy or cough drops before we start.

Travis:

Bravo. It's Shmanners!

[theme music plays]

Travis:

Hello, internet, I am your husband host, Travis McElroy.

Teresa:

And I'm your wife host, Teresa McElroy.

Travis:

And you're listening to Shammers.

Teresa:

It's extraordinary etiquette ...

Travis:

...for ordinary occasions. Now, this week's episode, I'm so excited about. Teresa and I, we are theater kids from way, way back.

Teresa:

Totally.

Travis:

Um, and I'm also really looking forward to this episode, it's all about theater etiquette, movie and live theater, and I'm so excited because I both worked

a lot in theater and one summer in movie theaters, so I feel like maybe this one...

Teresa:

[laughs]

Travis:

... I might actually know a little bit.

Teresa:

Well, but you see, from all the questions we received on our Facebook group, and Twitter, and emails, and all that stuff, there really does seem to be a little bit of, um, of an us versus them mentality. The people who behave well at theater versus all those people who don't behave well.

Travis:

Yeah, there's a lot of that. And I'm sure we're going to get into all of it.

Teresa:

Let's start off with a little bit of historical tidbits.

Travis:

Tidbits!

Teresa:

Tidbits, okay?

Travis:

Give me some tidbits.

Teresa:

So, um, first of all, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that clapping or applauding seems to be kind of ingrained in us as humans.

Babies, they clap for basically anything, and it seems to be almost spontaneous. I don't know anyone who has had to really teach their baby to clap, they kind of just do it, don't they?

Travis:

Mm-hmm.

Teresa:

Um, so that's cool, right? [laughs]

Travis:

Yeah, clapping, awesome. Great stuff.

Teresa:

Clapping is great. Um, and this dates back, not babies clapping, but clapping for appreciation, um, goes all the way back to ancient Romans, where they show their appreciation with snaps.

Travis:

Oh, like beat poetry.

Teresa:

Or tapping fingers to poem, like a golf clap.

Travis:

You— I don't think you have to act it out...

Teresa:

[laughs]

Travis:

... for the microphone, I think people can figure it out.

Teresa:

Or waving the ends of their togas in the air. All of these things...

Travis:

Waving their togas in the air?

Teresa:

No, the ends, like the little endy bits.

Travis:

Oh, so not just like raising 'em up in the air like a can-can girl...

Teresa:

No, no, no, there's—

Travis:

... waving them back and forth.

Teresa:

There's lots of—

Travis:

"Look at my Roman junk."

Teresa:

There's lots of fabric to a toga, one of which is like, kind of, one side is kind of, like, wound around your arm, it's got, like, this long piece, and they would kind of wave that around.

Um, and then it has become common practice in the Chinese culture that Chinese businessmen are fond of applauding to start a meeting. kind of like, "We're here and we're excited to start," clap, clap, clap.

Travis:

That's fun, I like that. That's like when I worked at Best Buy and ever— There was always a pump-up thing at the beginning of every meeting that started at, like, 6:00 in the morning, and it does help. So history of applause, origin of applause.

Teresa:

Right?

Travis:

And then we just jump forward 2000 years to now?

Teresa:

Um, it's pretty much been the same ever since.

Travis:

What? You— Okay, I was joking, because there's like, all the Shakespearean stuff with the groundling, and the people in the front, and like, you used to stand and watch theater, and like the queen would be there, and all the people would be there, and everybody would be there watching theater, and like, everybody was all jammed in together, and like, that whole thing, right?

Teresa:

Yeah. I mean, basic rules apply. Watch the show, don't upset your neighbor. Like, that's the, kind of, the thing that has always been there. Even the groundlings at the, you know, down there right by the stage did the best they could to enjoy the show and make sure it was enjoyable for everyone else.

Travis:

And if you've ever seen Shakespeare, which if you haven't, I highly recommend it. Big fan. If you're in Cincinnati, go to the Cincinnati Shakespeare Company. But a lot of the show is actually written to be directed to people in the groundlings, people in the audience.

A lot of direct address, which you only see now used as, like, a specific, like, tool, and, like, joke, and, like, direct address. But it used to be, like, the porter speech from Mac B., it's pretty damn famous.

You know, like, that was, joking with the audience while people, like, make quick changes and set up, you know, set pieces and everything, there was somebody, like, at the front of the stage talking to people in the audience.

Teresa:

Right, that's kind of, it's almost like a narrator tool to tell the story, and that was really the focus of a lot of those direct address, um, soliloquies.

Travis:

Excellent. Well-said.

Teresa:

Thank you. Any questions about arriving to the theater?

Travis:

Oh, we have so many. Let's start with this one. Um, this one comes from Brian, "How early should you arrive before a performance or movie?"

Teresa:

Um, you really should be in your seat five minutes before the movie or performance starts. Um, that way you don't disturb other people, uh, and you're there for the whole thing.

Travis:

And let me give a little, um, little insight here, as someone who has been in a lot of theater, if your friend gets you free tickets to a show, you should be there 15 minutes before the show starts.

Because everyone in the box office knows that you're getting comped tickets, so if you show up 10 minutes late after the show is started, it reflects poorly on the person in the show, and you had free tickets and you weren't on time. That is frustrating. Be there on time if you have free tickets. I would also say...

Teresa:

Be there on time, period.

Travis:

Yeah, regardless. And especially, like, if you're going to eat beforehand, leave with enough time. Like don't push it. You, as far as the movie theater goes, do you, what would you advise as far as like, showing up before previews, during previews? Like...

Teresa:

Well, it really is personal preference. Because even in movie theaters, they don't generally dim the lights completely until the feature film is, is about to start.

Travis:

Mm-hmm.

Teresa:

Um, so you can still be seated comfortably within the previews or right after the previews. Um, but I like to see the previews. I think it's fun, I think it's part of the whole movie theater experience to see a little teaser and then nudge you and say, "I definitely don't want to see that movie." [laughs]

Travis:

Man, that's— Okay, you transitioned into a question we got a lot of. Is it okay to talk during the previews?

Teresa:

Yes. I believe that it is okay. Not full voice, of course, but a quick whisper really shouldn't bother anybody. Um...

Travis:

Especially, in this day and age, where you can see all of those previews online after, like, two seconds of googling. Like it's not... I would understand if this was like, back in the day before the internet where your only chance to see the previews was in the theater.

Teresa:

Sure.

Travis:

But now they're intercut with, like, Pepsi commercials. It's okay to talk during the previews.

Teresa:

Right. And same thing with having your phone out or things like that. Until the lights dim completely for the feature film, fine, you can have your phone out a little while longer. I don't know what is so important about that Facebook post [laughs] you got to see, but sure. Right until the film starts.

Travis:

And let me say this: turn your phone off. It's wonderfully— Okay, and it's going to be tempting in a movie theater, and we'll talk so much more about it in theater-theater, but in a movie theater, do it a couple times and you'll start to realize that not only do you get to enjoy the movie, but there's this weird, like, release, relaxing feeling of like, "No one can get ahold of me for two hours. This—"

Teresa:

Unless you're—

Travis:

"I'm just in this moment."

Teresa:

Unless you're a doctor on call, you really don't need to have that cell phone number... You really don't need to have that cell phone on all the time. And pagers, what? Who still has a pager?

Travis:

I remember there's a book called How to Be a Gentleman that I read when I was 12, um, that I still to this day love very much, and it talks about pagers. And basically it says the only reason you should have a pager is if you are a doctor on call, and if that is the case, give it to an usher, tell them where you will be sitting, and then if it goes off, have them bring it to you.

Teresa:

I think that while that is an idea, I don't agree with that, because, um, I know that I would have a difficult time enjoying myself if I knew that one of my electronics was not on my person. You know, like you leave your phone at home...

Travis:

Mm-hmm.

Teresa:

... when you go to work. Um, I wouldn't be able to enjoy the movie that way. But if you can enjoy it, sure, that's an option. But you're jumping all over the place, Travis McElroy. I had a...

Travis:

You're the one who brought up talking during previews. Okay, we'll get to talking...

Teresa:

[laughs] No, I did not.

Travis:

... we'll get to talking about cell phones. What's next, Teresa?

Teresa:

Okay. Well let me talk a little bit about sitting down. Emily—

Travis:

[laughs] How do I do it?

Teresa:

[laughs] There were actually some questions about how do you do it, like how do you get to your seat if you have to climb over people?

Travis:

Uh-huh.

Teresa:

Emily Post recommends walking over people facing towards the screen or the stage, because she says that if you were to trip it would be a lot easier to steady yourself on the back of a seat than to fall into somebody's lap, and I tend to agree.

Travis:

And I would say that if you're the one sitting, uh, shifting your knees, or doing anything, sitting up at the very least and pulling your legs in, you know, not up to your chest, but you know what I mean, not sprawling out in your seat if someone's tryna get through, just make it easier for everybody.

Teresa:

Right, yeah. And, um, a good way to do it is to lean your knees in the direction that that person is traveling, so that it's kind of like moving across the waves in the same direction.

Travis:

Um, let me ask you this. So Marie asked this on Facebook. "What about saving seats in a movie theater? I've done this for people a few times and I feel fine if it's early, a short time, or not a busy theater.

But once some friends were way late to a reasonably crowded movie, and I had to save seats like five minutes into the movie itself. Is there a cutoff?"

Teresa:

Yes. Once the performance or the movie starts, those seats are no longer, really should be saved. Um...

Travis:

You know, and a lot more theaters these days, movie theaters, are doing reserved seating.

Teresa:

Exactly. So that really helps with that. So if you buy your ticket online and you have a seat, you don't have to worry about it. But saving seats with coats or, or just, you know, "This seat's taken," you really should give that up once the performance starts. They need to be able to find a seat closer to the back, or on the aisle, and then you're not doing anybody any favors by that point.

Travis:

I would also, um, take that one step further and say that as soon as it starts to get crowded, and your friend's still not there, then you lose the ability to save the seat. Because I've been to like—

So, like, Upright Citizens Brigade is a great example, it's, like, a 99 seat theater here in Los Angeles, and it always sells out, and it always fills up, and it's first-come, first-serve. People stand outside and wait to get in, and

then people try to save seats for people that get there, like, two minutes before the show starts. And I find that infuriating. I stood outside and waited to get in, and you're like, saving eight seats for your friends, I'm—

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

I have issues with this. I think it's one thing in a movie theater where it's like 400 seats, and there's like eight people in the theater. Like, okay, go to town. But once it starts to fill up, if somebody asks, I feel like you have to give it to 'em.

Teresa:

Sure, sure, sure. Use your best judgment, read the room. We've talked about this.

Travis:

Exactly. And let me say this, as far as sitting goes. Putting your feet up on a seat, in front of you?

Teresa:

No.

Travis:

No. I worked at a movie theater, ugh.

Teresa:

[laughs]

Travis:

Like, would you do that in your home?

Teresa:

This is—

Travis:

You monster.

Teresa:

This is where this sorta thing gets a little heated, like I was talking about.

Travis:

You monster.

Teresa:

Um—

Travis:

People take their shoes off, put their dirty, smelly, stupid feet up on the seat. I'm sorry, you were saying?

Teresa:

Are you done?

Travis:

Uh-huh, yes.

Teresa:

I have, on occasion, sat in that very special row in the movie theater that has no seats in front of them, but has a, um, a bar, or a railing. I have put my feet on the lowest railing of that space. I think that that's acceptable.

Travis:

I think so too. And let me tell you this. Uh, I think that if you have a railing in front of seats, everybody knows feet are going to go there. But more...

Teresa:

Not the highest railing.

Travis:

Not the highest railing.

Teresa:

Not, like, the hand railing, the lowest one.

Travis:

But more and more these days, is seats have, like, the ability to kind of lean back a little bit in 'em, or even fully reclining, as some of my favorite movie theaters have. If you put your your feet up on those seats, you're very likely, over time, to wear them out and break them, and that's just less seats for people to sit in. Like...

Teresa:

Or touch somebody's head with your feet.

Travis:

Yes. You can go two hours without kicking your shoes off and putting your feet up. If you want to do that, watch a movie at home.

Teresa:

Yes. [sighs]

Travis:

Yes, okay, I will relax, I will drop it. It was a real issue for me.

Teresa:

Last thing about sitting I want to talk about is if it is one of those reserved seat theaters, um, and you find someone is in your seat, I believe it's acceptable to say, one time to them, with your tickets out, "Excuse me, I believe you're in my seat."

Travis:

And the proper response to that is, "Oh my God, I'm so sorry," and then you move.

Teresa:

Right. Um, I would never recommend making a scene about it, that's never fun, especially if you have made a mistake. Ugh.

Travis:

And in this day and age there are people who scam tickets and sell fake tickets. It does happen, unfortunately. If so, find an usher...

Teresa:

Exactly.

Travis:

... and that's their job. Their job is to sort through that kind of thing for you.

Teresa:

And this goes back to being, uh, available to sit down five minutes before, so you can work this kind of stuff out.

Travis:

And be ready, if you are late, to be seated wherever they can fit you. That was the problem we always ran into with the Cincinnati Shakespeare Company, a relatively full house, and people would show up and they were like, supposed to be dead center in the middle of the house, and they were 10 minutes late.

We're not going to interrupt everyone else's performance, we're going to sit you in the seat in the back of the theater, because it's open and it's right there. And I think if you're late, you have to be ready for that.

Teresa:

And then after intermission, you can resume your normal seat.

Travis:

Correct. Let me ask you this, this one's from Morgan. "When are— When you are at an empty movie theater and someone comes in and sits right next to you, is it appropriate to get up and change seats?"

Teresa:

If you feel they are too close to you, yes, why not change seats? Um, they don't have to sit right next to you, and you don't have to sit in that chair any longer than you want to.

Travis:

I feel like this is a great example of that kind of perceived, like, "Ooh, they're going to think that I'm rude, 'cause I've got to move." They came

and sat right next to you. Like, you can do whatever you want. And in the long run, if it's like... I would say this. If it was someone who came in and you knew them, and they're, like, "Oh my God, Susan," and sat down to talk to you and you got up and moved, yes, that is rude.

Teresa:

[laughs]

Travis:

But if it's just, like, rando dude comes and sits next to you, what are you... Are you worried about hurting his feelings? Like, he doesn't know who you are, you don't know who he is, why'd he sit so close to you? He hurt your feelings. Like, your enjoyment is just as important as this other person's.

Teresa:

And as long as you don't ruin their experience, why not? Just move. Makes you uncomfortable, why not?

Travis:

Let me ask you this. This is not necessarily about getting there so much as, I guess it would be like pre-show, um, Anne asked, "If I'm seeing a friend at a show, should I bring flowers? Is there a good alternative gift to bring them?"

Teresa:

If you would like to bring flowers, please, bring flowers. Show some appreciation. As far as like, alternative gifts, cards, um, if you...

Travis:

Cookie bouquet.

Teresa:

If you are going to bring sweets, I would recommend that it either be a single sweet, like a single cupcake, or that it be large enough for, say, 10 to 12 people. So like a dozen cookies would be all right.

Um, but especially with shared dressing rooms, something that I've encountered being a performer is if someone brings me like three cupcakes,

I'm not going to be able to enjoy those cupcakes until I get home later, because I feel bad about not sharing my bounty with the rest of the ladies in the dressing room. So if you're going to bring sweets, just one or a bunch.

Travis:

Do you want to know, uh, my very practical awkward person, uh, secret?

Teresa:

Sure.

Travis:

So Teresa knows this about me, um, that I am a person who will often go out of his way, like, to make a gesture. I like that. And so like, I'll always have this idea of like, bringing flowers, or sending, you know, comedy-tragedy mask-shaped cookies, and...

So what I do is whenever I have that impulse or want to do that, I stop, and I picture the actual event of handing the thing to the person, or it being delivered to them, and I play it out in my head, and I'm like, "Wait, would this be weird? Will I, like, do I know this person well enough that I'm going to hand this thing to them and they'll be happy about it, or will they wonder why I went to the trouble of getting this thing for them?"

And I actually play out the scenario in my head, and if, in the scenario in my head, it is awkward, I do not do it. You know what I mean? Like I would bring flowers for you.

Teresa:

Okay.

Travis:

But I would not bring flowers who I just became friends with two days before and they invited me to a show. You know what I mean?

Teresa:

I think that this might be a, uh, generational thing, maybe it's just no longer in vogue. Um, but back in the day people really used to bring a lot of favors

for their favorite actor or actress onstage. Um, but nowadays it's a little more personal, I'd say.

Travis:

If you have a community theater and you're looking for a fun thing to do, what we did at my community theater growing up is we had a thing called Stargrams, where basically you paid a dollar and you got this little piece of paper that you could write a message on that was like, "Hey, Travis, I think you're doing great."

And at intermission, you'd hand that to them, and then they'd like, roll it up and seal it with a ribbon, and then they'd bring it back to you backstage and like hand 'em all out at intermission.

So it's a great way to like, send back to a nephew, or a niece, or a cousin, or a friend, or somebody, and just be like, "I'm here and you're doing a great job," and it helped raise money for the theater. It was just, that's just a cute story. I'm, that has nothing...

Teresa:

Oh, okay.

Travis:

... to do with manners, I'm just saying.

Teresa:

Alright, okay.

Travis:

That's a thing you could do.

Teresa:

All right.

Travis:

All right, so we've arrived.

Teresa:

Okay.

Travis:

We've sat down.

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

We're in our proper seats.

Teresa:

Yes.

Travis:

We do not have our feet up on the seat in front of us, especially not at a live theater, uh, God forbid.

Teresa:

Of course.

Travis:

Now the show has begun, what do we do?

Teresa:

Shut up. No talking. No—

Travis:

Okay, but what if—

Teresa:

No.

Travis:

No, but what if, what if it's super important, and I just thought of something really funny during the movie?

Teresa:

Save it.

Travis:

Okay, but what if I know a secret spoiler, or I have a theory about what's going to happen in the movie?

Teresa:

No.

Travis:

So, like, just shut up?

Teresa:

Shut up.

Travis:

Well, what if I need to use my cellular device?

Teresa:

You don't.

Travis:

But Teresa—

Teresa:

Nope.

Travis:

Farmville.

Teresa:

Turn it off.

Travis:

Okay.

Teresa:

There were so many questions...

Travis:

So many questions.

Teresa:

... and so many comments about how to shush people. Can I do this? Should I even turn off my phone? Yes, you should turn off your electronic devices, you should not speak, you should not sing along. Um, all of those things. You should be quiet.

The experience that you are paying for, whether it is in a live theater or at a movie theater, is to enjoy the story up there, in front of you. It doesn't really have as much to do with you and the person next to you. Unless they ask for audience participation at a live event, or perhaps it is a children's theatrical experience. It's not about you.

Travis:

If you go to a kid's movie or to a kid's play and the kids sing along, that's totally fine. This is my theory. Okay, so you commented at the top of the show that a lot of the questions that we got was, was this, like, us versus them mentality, right?

Teresa:

Correct, yeah.

Travis:

And I think I figured out why. After doing theater for 25 years and working in a movie theater. I think what it has to do is people under— So when you go to see a play, let's do a play, because especially if you're going to a Broadway show, tickets can be in the hundreds of dollars range, right?

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

So you go to see a show, and everyone's sitting there thinking, "This is my time to enjoy this." And so when other people behave badly, they feel like it's ruining their enjoyment of that event.

Teresa:

Exactly.

Travis:

Because they're worried about their own enjoyment of the event and not worried about the other people. So I feel like it's the cyclical nature of, you're ruining my ability to enjoy this.

It's like, okay, but are you ruining someone else's ability to enjoy it, but you're not thinking about it because you're... Theater is a very communal experience. Theater is you're all there, you're all... As someone who's stood on stage in a comedy and a drama and a musical, all of that, you can feel the energy when everyone's on the same page, right?

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

You can hear the laughs ripple through the theater, you can hear the gasps. So if everybody's not on the same page and everybody's just worried about their own enjoyment, everybody's a little bit rude to each other. That's my theory.

Teresa:

That is a good theory. I do believe that we should expand our, um, our empathetic natures to other people. Um...

Travis:

That said, what is the proper way to shush someone?

Teresa:

[laughs] I would say one or two shushes, and after that, you may speak to say something in the effect of, "Excuse me, but I can't hear the music or the

dialogue." That really would help to kind of jog them out of their own brain, and think about, "Oh, this other person is having a hard time hearing, so I'm going to be quiet." After that, you should go get backup, get the usher.

Travis:

Get the usher. Especially if the person's like drunk, or being rowdy, or like, you can't stand 'em. Ooh, no. Because you don't want it to escalate, and you don't want it to, like, totally disrupt the performance, so if it starts to feel a little heated, remove yourself from the situation and go get an usher.

Teresa:

Right. And none of this applies to someone who is differently abled.

Travis:

Correct.

Teresa:

And people with, uh, different syndromes or maybe they're on the autism spectrum, they should be allowed to enjoy a show the way that they need to enjoy it, and hopefully, if you were to get an usher, they would be able to explain to you, "We have spoken with this person, with their aide, and here's the situation. We hope that you understand."

Travis:

Contextualize it, be cool.

Teresa:

Exactly, exactly.

Travis:

Okay, well let me ask you this. This one comes from, uh, Eliza on Twitter. "I really want to know what to do when someone has fallen asleep and is snoring during the feature."

Teresa:

When someone is sleeping and it is audible, I think that they rely on their seatmate, the person next to them, to kind of nudge them a bit, and make sure that they're not being noisy. But this seems like a good opportunity to

talk about our very dear friend, Lin-Manuel Miranda, who we spoke to before recording this episode, and he said that he used to get mad about people sleeping while he was performing, or while he was seeing a performance.

And he was reminded by a fellow actor to be like, "Listen, this person paid their money for that seat, and you don't know them. You don't know their life. Maybe this is the only chance that they get to really relax, and they must have needed it. Just do your thing. You're there, they're there, and as long as they aren't disturbing the other members of the audience, let 'em sleep."

Travis:

If you are this person and you have fallen asleep, um, and you just cannot seem to stay awake and people have to keep poking you, go out into the lobby and fall asleep. Like, I... Especially don't come back after intermission. [groans] You don't know what's going on anyways!

Teresa:

[laughs]

Travis:

Why did you come back?

Teresa:

True, true. But they did pay for it. I don't know, it's a very touchy topic, and my feeling is, as long as they aren't making noise, let 'em sleep.

Travis:

Okay, I have more questions about disturbing the people around you, but first I want to go to a word from another Max Fun show.

[theme music plays]

Travis:

Hello, Brent.

Brent:

Travis.

Travis:

Welcome to Trends Like These.

Brent:

What's Trends Like These, you ask? Well, it's a podcast where we take the news trending on the internet and we cover it in podcast form.

Travis:

We go beyond the headlines, beyond the memes to bring you the real story, so that when your friends bring it up, you can look real smart.

Brent:

We take things that need to be debunked, and we debunk them, and then we take things that need to be rebunked, and we rebunk them.

Travis:

We bring you all the details and we give you a spin on it, our opinions, our thoughts. And we also try to dig up some positive things to talk about, so it's not all bummers.

Brent:

Just a couple of real life friends talking internet trends.

Travis:

So join us every Thursday on maximumfun.org and wherever podcasts are found.

[ad break ends]

Travis:

Okay, so we talked about cell phones, turn 'em off.

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

We talked about singing along, don't do it.

Teresa:

Nope.

Travis:

We talked about talking during the show.

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

Don't do it. Let me ask you this. How about crying?

Teresa:

Crying is a legitimate human [laughs] reaction...

Travis:

Yes.

Teresa:

... to the things that you're seeing. Um, it should not be loud. If you can very quietly experience and cry, do it. But if you cannot control yourself and it is loud, you should excuse yourself for a few minutes while you get yourself back together.

Travis:

Mm-hmm. And it happens, man. We saw Hamilton. It just like, oh, God.

Teresa:

Tears, tears running down my face.

Travis:

Like messed up, "Oh my God, I'm drunk," tears, even though we weren't, you know, that crying where you're like, "I can't control myself."

Teresa:

The ugly cry, they call it.

Travis:

Ugly cry. But luckily, everyone was doing it... [laughs]

Teresa:

Right, and—

Travis:

... so it's pretty okay.

Teresa:

And we were all pretty silently sobbing. So as long as you can keep it quiet, um, you can cry, you can laugh. And laughing really shouldn't be quiet, because it's a very outward expression. Um, and as long as you are laughing along with the rest of the audience, go ahead and laugh full volume. Don't stifle yourself.

Travis:

I've been in many comedies and I've never once thought, "I wish that person wasn't laughing so hard."

Teresa:

Right. You probably shouldn't laugh all by yourself.

Travis:

Yeah. I mean, don't overdo it.

Teresa:

Right, yeah, yeah.

Travis:

That's the other thing, are you showing— Are you laughing legitimately?

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

Or are you trying to prove how funny you think the show is?

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

Nobody needs to do that. Just enjoy it.

Teresa:

Yeah.

Travis:

What about coughing?

Teresa:

Coughing, um, again, if you have one or two coughs or sneezes and you can stifle it and continue to enjoy the show, stay. But if you're having like a coughing fit or a sneezing fit, that's very distracting to everyone else, so excuse yourself.

Travis:

Somebody suggested bringing a small bottle of Chloraseptic with you. I think that's a great idea, because then you don't get the crinkly paper.

Teresa:

Hm.

Travis:

Yeah, right? Like, I liked that idea, I think that's solid. Uh...

Teresa:

I haven't encountered that, but I don't imagine that it would be very intrusive.

Travis:

Yeah. And, oh, I also remember one time I was seeing an opera, and I tried so hard to hold in a cough that I ended up launching myself into a coughing... Like I basically choked myself on a cough. And it was, like, I wish I'd just coughed.

Teresa:

Yeah.

Travis:

And like, gotten one big cough out of the way instead of just a chain of little ones as I fled the theater.

Teresa:

Uh, for live theater, I'd say if you can wait until a blackout, try to, but if you can't, I mean, just one or two coughs. No one's going to... That's an involuntary action most of the time, no one's going to get upset about that.

Travis:

Um, well this one's from Rachel, as long as we're talking about things not to do. Um, "How much should tall people slouch to be considerate of folks sitting behind them?" Or for the big-headed among us, as I am and many people are.

Teresa:

Theaters are traditionally constructed so that the seats are not one right behind another. They are slightly off from each other. So you really shouldn't slouch at all, you should sit up, back in your chair, um, and not lean over or lean on your armrest or anything like that, um, because you sitting straight makes it so the person behind you can see.

And if you find that you are sitting directly behind someone who is

obstructing your view, um, maybe ask your seatmates to switch with you. Or, if that doesn't work, go get an usher. See if they can seat you someplace else.

Travis:

Ushers are very powerful. They are your friends in theater. Treat them well and they will treat you well. And be nice to the people at the box office, too. They do a lot of hard work and people yell at them a lot.

Teresa:

You guys, just be nice to everybody.

Travis:

Just be nice to everybody...

Teresa:

[laughs]

Travis:

... and don't get super drunk. Just, like, in general, don't get super drunk.

Teresa:

This leads into intermissions, where often there are libations at, at theaters. Um, but intermissions are usually 10 to 20 minutes, not very long. So if you do get, uh, the opportunity to have a drink, um, and they don't let you take it back into the theater, try to just sip on it. Um, if you get multiple drinks in that 10, 20 minutes, you are going to be sloshed and...

Travis:

Yeah.

Teresa:

... belligerent. That is not fun for anybody.

Travis:

And try to contextualize it. If you're, like, at a live show of Rocky Horror Picture Show, go to town.

Teresa:

[laughs]

Travis:

Whatever, that's totally cool. But like if you're seeing Les Mis, or, like, Phantom of the Opera, don't get super sloshed. It's not a good look.

Teresa:

Probably not. And you paid a lot of money for those tickets. If you're drunk you won't remember them.

Travis:

I want to talk to you about something that we have had conversations about before. Standing ovations.

Teresa:

Right. They have become quite common in theater these days, especially live theater. Um, while I definitely think if you enjoy a show you should be emphatic about it, I'm not sure that every performance deserves a standing ovation.

Travis:

If you do it for everyone, it means nothing. And we had a couple questions where it was like, "If everybody else is standing, is it rude not to do a standing ovation?" And I think the fact of the matter is, if you're only doing it because everyone else is doing it, I'd rather you just not do it.

Teresa:

Right. So if you feel it, stand up, and if you don't, just stay in your seat and clap like normal.

Travis:

It's a— It's— I think it's really changed over our generation.

Teresa:

Yeah.

Travis:

'Cause I remember like being a kid, and, like, even as a kid— As a kid, musical theater, can you imagine just not getting a knee-jerk standing ovation? So when we did, it was, like, legit, it was like, "They stood!"

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

I mean, it was a thing.

Teresa:

Right. It just doesn't feel as special when it happens all the time, though.

Travis:

True. Especially when you know you didn't deserve it.

Teresa:

Yeah. And clapping at movie theaters I think is fine. If you really enjoyed the show, go ahead, clap and cheer. But wait until the movie is over.

Travis:

And what about sitting around ... Well, that's after, but as far as we're talking about clapping in a movie theater, watching the credits, sticking around for the credits?

Teresa:

Well, generally at theaters, when the lights come up, it's okay for you to leave. So if you want to stick around for the credits, I would say if you're on the aisle, stand up and move out of the way so people can leave out of that row, and then you can go back and sit down.

Travis:

Let me ask you this. So this is more movie-related, but as musicals are starting to swing back to being popular again, it also works with musicals. And Kirstie wanted to know, "Can you go over spoilers?"

Teresa:

Emily Post has a really nice rule, she calls it the three block rule. You are not allowed to talk about anything good, anything bad leaving the theater until you're three blocks away. That way you don't spoil it for anybody else.

Travis:

And I would also, um, say outside of the movie theater, outside of the theater-theater, um, not just a proximity thing. If you are about to launch into a conversation about, say, a popular movie to a person that you don't know if they've seen it or not, you should ask.

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

Like, it's, the— Say like, "Have you seen Deadpool yet? No— Do you want me to spoil it for you? I'd live to— Okay, I'll wait." Because once again, it's taking your enjoyment over theirs...

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

... and that's not good.

Teresa:

Right. Right, right, right, right, right.

Travis:

Right. Oh, actually, your, the three block thing reminds me of an old McElroy family rule that I think everyone should put in place, especially for live theater.

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

Which is, you never know whose grandmother is sitting behind you. You never know whose nephew is in line for concessions.

So if you have something bad to say, it's for the car ride home, or it's for drinks at the bar afterwards. You don't want to stand in the lobby and go on and on about how much you hated somebody's performance or hated the show, because listen, it's your opinion, and that's great.

But like, you never know who's there or what, what is going on that night, or what horrible thing might've happened in someone's life. Save it for the car ride home.

Teresa:

Right, even critical observations such as, "Oh, I didn't really like the set very much," or, "I don't think that this time period works for this piece." Any of those things, while valid opinions of the performance you just saw, should be saved for, if you're going to write a review, go ahead and write one later. But it should be saved for at home, in the car, away from the show.

Travis:

Speaking of not enjoying the show, this question comes from Kim on Facebook. "What circumstances would it be okay to ask for a refund? Is there ever a scenario where that's acceptable?"

Teresa:

Um, asking for a refund, I think is acceptable if you felt compelled to leave halfway through.

Travis:

Okay.

Teresa:

Because I feel as if if you have seen the entire performance or film, you still got your money's worth, because you did view it. But if you are required to leave during intermission, or you find it is inappropriate for your sensibilities during intermission, then I think you can ask for a refund.

Travis:

Also as far as the movie thing goes, I think the only time I've ever asked for a refund is because there were technical difficulties, um, where it stopped halfway through, or there were problems with the sound or the focus or something and I was like, "I can't deal with this anymore."

I remember working at the movie theater, though, and I had parents come out... For example, I don't know if you remember this one, but this one has always stuck in my mind. A movie called Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron.

Teresa:

[laughs]

Travis:

No? It was...

Teresa:

No, I didn't catch that flick.

Travis:

It was an animated film. I don't think it was a huge box office success, but it wasn't a flop, it was just an animated film. And in the film, the main horse, Spirit ...

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

I believe if I remember correctly, his mother dies, Bambi-esque. And the mother came out and yelled at me, I was working the concession stand, and yelled at me that we would subject children to a movie in which the horse mom died.

And let me be clear here, folks, this was a free summer showing at like 10:00 AM of this movie. But my problem here is like, if you are taking kids to a movie, you should do a little research before you show up, especially if you know you're sensitive about that kind of thing.

Teresa:

And to take that kind of thing out on a person working at the venue is completely inappropriate. They had nothing to do with...

Travis:

I didn't make Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron.

Teresa:

Exactly.

Travis:

This one's from Katie, and this one is also very near and dear to my heart from working in the movie theater. "Should you take your rubbish with you?"

Teresa:

Yes.

Travis:

Yes.

Teresa:

You made the mess, you should clean it up a little bit. Uh, okay, all right, if there's a spill, um, no, you don't have to pick up every piece of popcorn, but you should tell the usher.

"I'm so sorry, I spilled my popcorn, aisle three." And then they can take care of it, because the person who sits there after you does not want to sit in your filth.

Travis:

It's true. Also, if you're going to a live theater show, you should be picking up your garbage anyways to make sure you didn't leave anything. The lost and found at the Cincinnati Shakespeare Company would oftentimes become ridiculous, and like, the gloves, and umbrellas, and necklaces, and books, and cell phones that people would leave. It's like, okay, take two seconds, look around your seat, pick stuff up.

Teresa:

Sounds good to me. Another thing that Lin brought up to us before, when he spoke to us before, is something that has been happening more and more lately to him, is people taking pictures and videos of the cast during bows. I understand that this is a very high profile show that he has, this Hamilton thing, um, and I also understand that people feel very deeply connected to it.

So they want to really enjoy their experience to the fullest. But he said that it actually makes him very sad. He wants to connect with the audience during bows, it's really their only time they're actually allowed to look into the eyes of the people who are enjoying theater. And when all you see are phones up in the air, it's really disheartening.

Travis:

And especially, like, if the lights are up, and, like, it's supposed to be this very ... Uh, let me tell this story. I've been telling a lot of theater stories, but this is a very positive one that I'll tell. My brothers and my dad and I went and saw, um, Glengarry Glenn Ross on Broadway.

It was an all-star cast, but Roman was played by Liev Schreiber. And we were sitting in the front row during, uh, a matinee, and, you know, we stood up, it was an amazing show, and we're clapping, and Liev Schreiber comes out, and he bows.

My dad says, "Thank you," and Liev Schreiber points at him, goes, "No, thank you." And we lost our damn minds. And to this day, it still, like, touches me as a very real connection moment in my life.

Teresa:

Exactly. And that's what the actors are looking for during bows. They want to see you, they appreciate you coming as much as you appreciate going.

So being met with an audience full of glowing faces [laughs] with phones in front of them really just isn't fun. It isn't fun for anyone. So if you do need a picture, wait at the stage door.

Travis:

So, let me... Okay, two things I want to talk about that you've reminded me of. One, so I'm guessing I could probably intuit your answer to this, but so leaving during the curtain call, during the bows? What's your opinion on this?

Teresa:

Um, at live theater, you should wait to leave until everyone has left the stage. It— Even if you loved the show, even if it's your favorite show, if you leave while the actors can see you leaving, it doesn't make them feel good. It makes them feel like you didn't enjoy the show.

So that's the, um, we talked about intention versus perception. Even though you intend to enjoy the show and you did enjoy it, they perceived that you did not. So you should really stay until all the actors have left the stage.

Travis:

And if your fear is like, "Oh, the traffic," and you're used to, like, sporting events. One, you're on Broadway, you probably didn't drive there. And if it's not New York or LA, you probably don't need to worry about the traffic.

You're going to be fine. But it's your chance to say to the people like, "Hey, you did a great job." And like, that's why, let me tell you, little insight, it's why people do theater. It ain't for the money, folks.

Teresa:

[laughs]

Travis:

But so then, stage door etiquette.

Teresa:

Okay, yeah.

Travis:

Like, in general, one, is it weird to wait by the stage door? Two, how much should you be able to ask for at the stage door? Three, how do you know when the interaction's done?

Teresa:

Okay. So no, it is not weird to wait at the stage door. Uh, if an actor does not wish to participate in the stage door greetings, there are other ways out of the theater.

They can leave a different way. Or they can exit quickly and say, "Sorry guys, got to go." That's when you should leave them, if they are, if they need to go, they need to go. They got places to go and people to see. Or maybe they want to go home and go to bed. [laughs]

Travis:

Mm-hmm.

Teresa:

Uh—

Travis:

It's very exhausting.

Teresa:

It's very exhausting. Then respect that wish. Um, two, what can you ask for? If you want an autograph, you should have it ready. You should have your autograph book or your program or whatever, and a pen or pencil, Sharpie. Be prepared if that's what you want. You can't have one if you don't have those things. [laughs]

Travis:

Mm-hmm.

Teresa:

Um, and then if you want a, if you want a picture, either be content with doing the selfie, or have someone ready to take the picture. We can't all get

pictures, um, and that goes into, three, keep it brief. One interaction is usually enough. Get an autograph or get a picture. Shake his hand or thank you. All that kind of stuff, it really should be one interaction.

Travis:

That is excellent.

Teresa:

Thank you.

Travis:

Oh, before I forget, and I feel like this is kind of all encompassing, theater dress. How do you dress for a theater? Because I remember working, um, the, working, you know, house management at the University of Oklahoma, a college theater, and when we'd do, you know, our big musical, people showing up in like tuxes, and capes, and top hats, and canes and stuff, and being like, "I don't think that's necessary."

But then I also remember going to Broadway shows with my parents and trying to wear jeans, and them being like, "No, at least khakis. You have to at least try." And now I just don't know anymore. What's appropriate to wear to a theater?

Teresa:

Um, I asked that question of Lin, and he said that it really seems to be more of a generational gap. So like, when your parents said, "No, you can't wear jeans to the theater," most, uh, theater-goers of a certain age do dress fairly well to see a show.

Whereas under a certain age, it's a lot more casual. I would say you can always over-dress. Looking better is better than not looking good. So don't wear pajamas. [laughs]

Travis:

Yeah, I think in general, that's a pretty set... Don't wear sweatpants. I don't want to—

Teresa:

Yeah.

Travis:

I don't need to draw a strong line here, like, wear jeans and a tee shirt, I don't care.

Teresa:

Right. Well, um, if you wouldn't wear it to an outing with your friends at another public place, such as a bar or a restaurant, you shouldn't wear it to the theater.

Travis:

But I feel a lot of that dressing in like the suits and fancy dresses and everything was back when theater was a lot more about being seen rather than seeing the show. You know, it was a lot more of a societal, like, "We're going out to, to an evening at the theater, my dear." And now it's like, you go because you want to see the show.

Teresa:

Well, sure, but I mean, you're not in your living room. There's a difference between being at home and seeing a show on your TV screen, and actually going to see live theater.

Now, I think that in this instance, movie theaters are a little different. I would not encourage wearing a fancy dress or, uh, a tuxedo to anything other than a film premiere.

Travis:

Mm-hmm.

Teresa:

Um, but that said, again, you wouldn't leave your house and go anywhere else in your pajama bottoms and flip-flops. So, you know, dress nice enough to be out in the world and you'll be fine.

Travis:

Okay, great. Well, we're going to wrap up. Thank you so much for listening. I'm going to, I can't hold it in enough folks, I just want to say, thank you, we broke 1000 followers on Twitter, I'm so excited about it.

Teresa:

Hurray!

Travis:

Thank you so much for following us @ShmannersCast, it made me so, so happy. I also want to say I'm very excited, we just added to the network the show that Brent and I do.

Brent, who wrote the amazing Shmanners music and is working on, may already by this point, have a Shmanners ringtone up on the iTunes Store, I'll find out and tweet about it when the show is up. But he and I have a show called Trends Like These, which we just moved to maximumfun.org, um, just put up our first maximumfun.org official episode yesterday, I'm so excited about it.

Teresa:

And our Facebook group has surpassed 350 members.

Travis:

Ooh.

Teresa:

Still growing, we want to see those numbers go up, so please send us a, uh, a member request, and we'd be glad to allow you into that group.

Travis:

Also, we haven't mentioned it, but I want to say that coming up is the Max Fun Drive. And basically how it works is if you, first of all, if you don't listen to any other maximumfun.org shows, you are a crazy person and you should go do that, go check them all out, they are all incredible.

But the way maximumfun.org works is it's a donor-supported network, which means that we don't focus on advertisers and sponsors. We have

them from time to time, but most of our support comes from listeners like you. So every year we have a Fun Drive where we ask people to commit to monthly donations, and they start as low as \$5, and basically you get to pick which shows you should support and which shows you listen to.

And through your support, we've been able to grow the network and continue to grow the network. So coming up in the end of March you'll start hearing us, first of all, leading up to it, and then we'll have two weeks of Fun Drive, where we'll have special bonus content for donors, we'll have rewards if you become a donor, if you upgrade your donation.

But mostly we'll be putting out, like, our best content of the year. It's going to be incredible, it's a great time to listen to all the other Maximum Fun shows. But yeah, so look forward to that, that's going to be coming up pretty soon.

Teresa:

I would like to give a thank you note to Splitsider, which mentioned us in one of their, uh, their articles. Thank you so much, that was fantastic to read, and I'm so glad that you enjoy it.

Travis:

Our next two episodes are actually going to be a two-parter, uh, all about travel. Part one is going to be all about planes and boats, so if you have any questions about that you can email us, or tweet at us, or whatever you want to do, post on the Facebook group.

And then the second part is going to be all about cars and trains. Uh, I, we also want to say thank you to, like I said, Brent, who did the amazing Shmammers music, and Kayla Wasil, who did the logo design for us.

And thank you to you, thank you for listening, thank you for telling a friend, thank you for going on iTunes and rating and reviewing. It really means a lot to us. We've had a lot of really sterling reviews and we really appreciate it. Thank you so much.

Teresa:

Uh, thanks to Lin-Manuel, who took some time out of his day to, uh, to discuss theater etiquette with us.

Travis:

Go on Twitter, tell Lin-Manuel Miranda, "Great job, thank you for having us out, and congratulations on your Grammy win."

Teresa:

I'm always sending one up to my girl, thank you Emily Post.

Travis:

Join us again next week.

Teresa:

No RSVP required.

Travis:

Thanks for listening to Shmanners.

Teresa:

Manners, Shmanners, get it?

[theme music plays]

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