

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT SENSORY-FRIENDLY PERFORMANCES

Updated November 2022

COVID-19 PROCEDURES

- Effective March 2022, masks, proof of COVID-19 vaccination, and tests are not required at Wharton Center performances, unless otherwise noted. Protocols can change at any time and ticket holders are requested to check the event page for up-to-date requirements closer to the event date.
- While we offer sensory supports that can be checked out, such as sound-cancelling headphones and fidgets, we do encourage you to bring your own if you have them.
- Activity stations will be spaced throughout the lobby areas to encourage distancing. Hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes will be available at all activity stations and in calm spaces. “Soft” items that are not easily sanitized will be limited.
- All patrons are welcome to wear masks and practice distancing to meet their own comfort needs.

WHAT IS A SENSORY-FRIENDLY PERFORMANCE?

Wharton Center is proud to offer [Sensory-Friendly Performances \(SFPs\)](#) for people with general sensory sensitivities, with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), and anyone who may want such accommodations.

➤ What makes it Sensory-Friendly?

- Sensory-Friendly Performances (SFPs) feature a welcoming environment. Adaptations for these performances may include:
 - Lower sound and light levels onstage
 - House lights stay on at a low level throughout the performance
 - Potentially startling special effects and lighting are eliminated or lessened
- Trained staff, volunteers, and ASD specialists are available to assist audience members as needed.
- Sensory supports are available (fidgets, earplugs, sound-canceling headphones); you are encouraged to bring your own.
- Calm and quiet areas are provided.
- Crafts and activities are available one hour prior to —and throughout—the performance.
- Video monitors will broadcast the performance in the lobby for those who would like a break from the theatre, but still want to watch the performance.
- ASL interpretation will be available at all SFP events. Please contact the Ticket Office if you want to be seated in this area.
- Accommodations can be made for patrons with low vision, including Audio Description; please contact the Ticket Office if preferred seating is not available online.
- Typical theatre house rules are relaxed:
 - Audience members may get up, move around, and leave whenever needed.
 - Audience members are welcome to bring therapeutic devices, including iPads and smartphones.
 - Audience members may bring their own manipulatives, comfort objects, seat cushions, headphones, electronics, and other supports.
 - Audience members may bring in their own snacks.
- A [Social Narrative](#) is available on our website, explaining what attendees can expect during the theatre experience.

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- Other 'Know Before You Go' documents, such as storyboards, character cards, and event-specific maps, will be e-mailed to ticket holders leading up to your performance and available at Wharton Center the day of your show.

- **Which performances are Sensory-Friendly in 2022–2023?**
 - *Okee Dokee Brothers – February 19, 2023, 1:30PM*
 - *Natalie McMaster & Donneell Leahy – March 26, 2023, 2PM*
 - *Cross That River – April 29, 2023, 3PM*

- **What is the cost of tickets?**
 - Tickets for Natalie McMaster & Donnell Leahy, and Cross That River, are \$16 plus applicable fees. Tickets for Okee Dokee Brothers are \$8 plus applicable fees.

- **How can I purchase tickets?**
 - Tickets can be purchased online by [following this link](#) or by calling 1.800.WHARTON (1.800.942.7866)
 - **What if we purchase tickets but cannot use some or all of them?**
 - If you, or any member of your party, are not able to attend the performance, and you notify the Ticket Office within five days following the performance, you are eligible to obtain a refund for the unused tickets.
 - **Can we purchase tickets at the theatre on the day of the performance?**
 - If the performance is not sold out, you may purchase tickets in person at the Ticket Office the same day as the performance, beginning two hours prior to the performance.

- **How long are the performances?**
 - Most Sensory-Friendly Performances run approximately one hour.

- **Will seats be assigned/reserved?**
 - Yes, there will be assigned/reserved seats for all SFPs. If you need recommendations regarding seating, please contact the Ticket Office at 1.800.WHARTON. If you are uncomfortable in your seat at the performance, please ask an usher to help move your party to a different location.

- **What can I do if sitting through the performance is difficult?**
 - Areas are available in the lobby to take a break, including a dark and quiet space, an area for calmer activities, and a larger activity/craft room.
 - Guests are welcome to go in and out of the theatre as needed.
 - Moving within the theatre is allowed, and there is some space for standing to watch.

- **What can I do to help my child/family member/client prepare for this new experience?**
 - On the Wharton Center website, you can find a [Social Narrative](#) that helps explain what your visit might look like.
 - Other 'Know Before You Go' documents, such as storyboards, character cards, and event-specific maps

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will be e-mailed to ticket holders leading up to your performance and will be available at Wharton Center the day of your performance.

➤ **What is the seating area like?**

- The Cobb Great Hall—our largest theatre—holds approximately 2,250 people.
 - All SFP tickets will be on the ground floor—or, as we call it, the orchestra level.
 - There is accessible seating that will avoid steps altogether.
 - There are very wide, broad, low steps in the orchestra level.
 - Cobb Great Hall has continental seating, meaning there are no interior aisles in the orchestra level.
 - There will be low, ambient lighting throughout the performance, so patrons can see should they move around or exit the theater.
- The Pasant Theatre is a smaller theatre that seats 600 people.
 - You can see the stage clearly from any seat location. The seats rise like in a stadium in 11 rows.
 - You enter from the top and walk down some stairs, or there are accessible seats at the top of the seating area that avoid stairs altogether.
 - There are multiple aisles to allow guests to easily enter/exit the theatre.
 - There will be low, ambient lighting throughout the performance, so patrons can see should they move around or exit the theater.

➤ **At least one of my party uses a wheelchair. Can you accommodate us?**

- Yes: for most performances, a limited number of accessible seats are available. Please inform the Ticket Office of any mobility issues or other seating requirements when purchasing your tickets.

➤ **At least one of my party is deaf and would like ASL interpretation. Can you accommodate us?**

- Wharton Center is proud to offer ASL interpretation at all SFP shows. Please contact the Ticket Office to make sure you're seated in the best viewing area.

➤ **At least one of my party has low vision. Can you accommodate us?**

- Yes: for most performances, you can be seated close to the stage. In addition, Wharton Center is proud to offer Audio Description upon request/at all SFP shows.

➤ **Are ushers and ticket staff trained to assist individuals with sensory sensitivities?**

- Yes: our staff and volunteers have been trained and have experience in welcoming and assisting persons with ASD and other sensory sensitivities and different abilities. In addition, we will have ASD specialists on hand for audience support.

➤ **What kind of activities will be available?**

- For our Act One Family Series, we will provide age-appropriate crafts and games led by our volunteers.

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SFP volunteers are trained community members and students from MSU's programming for people with disabilities.

- Other shows will have various activities for patrons of all ages to participate in.

➤ **When will the theatre open/how early can I arrive?**

- Wharton Center's lobby and activity areas will be open one hour prior to the performance.
- The theatre/seating area will also open one hour prior to the performance.

➤ **How do I get to Wharton Center? Where do I park?**

- Please [visit our website for directions and parking information.](#)

➤ **Will food and drink be available?**

- We welcome patrons to bring their own food and drink to Sensory-Friendly Performances.

➤ **Is photography, audio recording, or videography allowed in the theatre?**

- No photography or videography is permitted inside the theatre.
- It is OK to take pictures in the lobbies or the activity room.
- Patrons are welcome to have their electronic devices open and in use if needed during the performance.
- At some performances, there may be professionals taking photographs and video of the audience in various spaces, as well as the performance itself. These images will be used for historical documentation of the event, on our website, in presentations, and on social media for promoting the program. There will be printed signs alerting the audience if professional photo/video is being taken at a performance.

➤ **Will it be dark inside the theatre?**

- During the performance, the lights in the theatre will remain on at a low level. The sound level will also be reduced.

➤ **What if the sound is too loud?**

- Patrons are invited to use sound-canceling headphones and earplugs in case the reduced sound levels are still too high for comfort.

➤ **Who can answer my questions at the theatre?**

- Ushers wearing black pants and shirts with colored ties will be available to answer questions, as will trained volunteers wearing t-shirts that say "HELPER" on them.

➤ **May we bring our own snacks, fidget toys, headphones, or other items that help my family member stay calm?**

- We encourage you to bring any items that might make the experience more comfortable and enjoyable. A limited number and variety of sensory supports (weighted blankets, sound-canceling headphones, fidgets, etc.) will be available at the theatre.

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➤ **What if I have additional questions?**

- If you have ticket questions, please call the Ticket Office at 1.800.WHARTON (or 1.800.942.7866).
- If you have questions about donating to help support Wharton Center Sensory-Friendly Performances, please call Kristen Calabrese at 517.884.3140.
- If you have other questions regarding these performances, please call Kelly Stuible-Clark at 517.884.3166.
- Sign up for our email list at www.whartoncenter.com/sfp to stay informed.
- If you would like to volunteer to help with our Sensory-Friendly Performances, please [follow this link](#).