

ALPHASHOWS – SUMMARY & TEACHER CHEAT SHEET

We understand your time is very valuable! A great deal of thought and passion has gone into making our shows for you! Because of this, the downloads available at www.alphashows.com.au/downloads/ for each show are pretty long and detailed! In case you don't have time to use it all, here is a **CHEAT SHEET**, for everything essential to know about our shows! Note - these items are all things that have cropped up as queries or concerns in the past, so we only include here to make the day the best it can be (not to order you around!). **Remember, Alpha loves you!**



IMPORTANT: THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT EXPERIENCING AN ALPHA SHOW

LOGISTICS:

- Shows work up to Year 10 or so. Invite others! The more the merrier! (Lots of extra students do need to be paid for)
- Set up 90 mins, pack down about 60 minutes. If you require in-person sign-in, please inform us in advance.
- **Whole show w/ Question time: about 70-90 mins max;** show should start on time, bring them in ready to start on time. If you start late, we will finish late. So if you don't want to go into recess/lunch/after school, ensure students are seated by start time. All teachers can help to ensure students are seated by start time. If we start at 2pm we can definitely be finished by 3:30pm, or 9:15am will finish about 10:45am or so. **Please be seated on time.**
- Feel free to take pictures and video for Instagram etc, remember to tag @AlphaShows - we make take a picture, your students won't be recognisable in any photo we post
- Heaters off otherwise it could get too hot for performers which can be a safety issue
- **CLEAR THE VENUE of EQUIPMENT and CHILDREN before we arrive!** This is a massive issue and really complicates setup. You will be charged a fee if our staff have to move any of your equipment or there are any delays with accessing a child-free/equipment-free venue
- Seat children *without an aisle*; Don't seat children too wide (stick in between our lights and where we have marked the floor). Best views this way. Safety is our priority as well as experience. See following page about where to seat sensitive children
- For safety, children should not be around lights or set, please supervise before and after show as they can get very excited
- Fog machine is safe to breathe for asthmatics! Approve by Asthma Foundation
- Show cannot be outside - wind will cause danger

BEFORE SHOW:

- What to expect – you can use the “screaming & listening” and “sensory acuity” activities in pre-show pack to help them understand how to be the best audience for this type of show. Lots of audience involvement, loud vocalisations and a lot of fun and interactivity. There is a specific activity in Pre-Show pack to help. It's up to you to form behavioral expectations.
- You could learn Fly Away – the finale song to all our shows. Details in pre-show pack. Download song from website.

SHOW SPECIFICS:

- Any inappropriate or rude behaviour or clear disruptiveness from one child/group of children, should be dealt with. Either speak to them or seat at back. But otherwise, you can pretty much let them interact politely as that's definitely part of our shows!
- **PRIVACY:** NOBODY IS PERMITTED BACKSTAGE ONCE WE SETUP! Cast change clothes backstage. This includes getting chairs or for anything else, so prepare before we arrive. Please - we get this a lot and it's quite inappropriate/unprofessional.
- Teachers fully participate - please! It makes the show SOOOO much better, for the kids and actors. You're the leaders! So please participate and yell out and have energy too. Also, you will be made part of the show by the actors, as children love this – play full out and have fun!!
- Teachers please stand when audience is asked to stand. Do not come on stage. Have fun and engage with the process.
- **PLEASE TRY NOT TO BRING WORK TO SHOW / laptops, or be disengaged.** It gives permission for children to disengage also. Tell others who need to work to sit at back or stay in classroom. Nothing worse than performing to people not paying attention, the show is for you too! It is disrespectful to performers to be working on laptops during their performance.
- Question time is awesome – continue to fully participate and encourage great questions from your students.

AFTER SHOW:

- Use the emotional anchors we've set (1,2,3 You rock, squeeze fist / hand on heart etc) to reinforce message.
- Have some sort of discussion about show / values / emotions. Each show focussed on a particular virtue or truth, which if you follow up with can have a measurable impact on social and emotional learning. If you're a kidsmatter or CASEL school (government initiative on social and emotional learning (SEL) then work with those programs to supplement the message in the show. Tell Kidsmatter or other organisations how the Alpha show impacted their programs positively. Anything you can do to integrate and reinforce main message/sub-themes, of the show. For activities, use guides from downloads on website.
- Remember our shows are a package of 10 productions to ensure an annual visit to reinforce positive role models and life lessons. It really only has an impact if they get a show every year for every student. Your students will most likely want to see more, so encourage further participation and excitement about our shows (and theatre in general), as well as getting excited about personal development goals and ideas.
- Look for further ways to integrate what we do with what you do as a teacher – contact us if you have any ideas or need any help from us.
- Spread the word about Alpha Shows! If you like us, tell others - if a school you talk to books, you will be offered a free show as our gift!

Please see the following page for two very important checks for show content, that are important to review before show day!

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IMPORTANT: HUMOUR & TABOOS - Is the culture at your school extra conservative?

We sometimes integrate jokes and humour that are a little taboo to make the children feel at ease and have jokes they understand and find funny – align with them at their own level, essentially. This maximises engagement and rapport, and ensures we have their attention for later in the show when we present the main message in terms of values education. Please discuss with us before the show if we might offend with this content so we can adapt to your culture. Occasionally actors must go off-script for adlibs as all audiences are unique, so by knowing beforehand if you're a conservative school, we can ensure adlibs are also kept within suitable boundaries. Pre-scripted humour includes very tame innuendo (eg. "you're hot"), teacher inclusion/interaction (children love this), teasing/ highlighting the villainy of the bad guy (what every kid dreams they had the courage to do, so they find it funny), the villain exhibiting bullying type behavior and name calling of 'good' characters (eg. 'stupid' or 'idiot'), and some naughty kid level jokes similar to Andy Griffith's "Bad Book" (fart/vomit/burp, that kinda thing) that has been seen as a great way to get kids to read – *we use similar strategies.*

IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT YOU TELL US BEFORE THE SHOW as we will not appreciate negative feedback if you don't tell us about your culture! Also – no need to worry too much – everything in the standard / scripted version of the show is G-Rated, it's perfectly appropriate and fine for all schools in Australia, and is aligned with all facets of our diverse Australian culture and this generation of children, with inclusivity and diversity and the embracement of all cultures part of the shows already. For instance, we never swear in the shows or encourage negative stereotypes or anything like that, and we aim to represent every facet of Australian culture. Everything in the show is done with specific thought and intention for a specific and beneficial outcome, so you can trust us and know that nothing in the show will offend within that context of Australian culture. However – please just tell us if you are an exception/conservative school and we will mark you as such on our database and alter the show accordingly every year. If you have previously made this request, you are already marked as a 'conservative' performance on our database, along with the notes you filled in previously, so you do not have to fill out the form every year for every show, unless something has changed or you just want to make sure we have all current information about your culture and school community. Thank you!

Make your request for a conservative show by filling out this form:

<https://www.alphashows.com.au/conservative-performance-request/>

IMPORTANT: CONFLICT

Conflict is part of life, and it's part of good storytelling! Whether it's an internal or external opponent, overcoming hardships in life, something Alpha teaches students how to deal with effectively, is going to involve CONFLICT. All clashing of truth & error, love & fear, will result in conflict. It's not the absence of conflict that is important, but how we handle it. So because of this, we portray different types of conflict on stage - theatre being a safe place to explore conflict and how we respond to it. We can't avoid it in life, so we shouldn't avoid it on stage. When it comes to external opponents (eg. the villain) the hero of the story will often face the choice to use violence or a weapon of some sort. We usually have some sort of sword fight, along with the lesson that must be learned. We also sometimes change the meaning of the weapon to be something empowering or important in our real life. Sometimes it's appropriate to the time period or the original fairytale/book/myth, so we want to honour the story appropriately as well as tell an engaging story that's true to the spirit of the original.

Depending on your culture, some audiences will be VERY entertained/engaged and perhaps even over-excited by these scenes in our show. This is ok - this is why these scenes are in the show, to create a memorable experience, the excitement of a 'real sword fight using real swords', just like any good form of entertainment. However, it's important to note that **we do NOT encourage or endorse any sort of audience interaction that condones violence, including the common school yard chant of 'FIGHT FIGHT FIGHT' or any other sort of yelling or screaming encouraging the use of violence.** We highly encourage you to discuss this tendency with your students BEFORE the show and, especially if you agree with us that encouraging violence is inappropriate, show them that these sorts of chants are not to be done during the show. We try as hard as we can to channel the desire to chant into something more positive (such as chanting the name of the hero) but we sometimes do not succeed.

If you find that your audience is getting too rowdy or chanting/encouraging or revelling in the violence, it's important to try to either deal with this before and/or after the show - or you may even need to intervene during the show. *Alpha's shows DO NOT endorse violence*, we merely present real-life type scenarios on stage (in a fantasy setting) and then try to show the correct/loving way of dealing with conflict. For instance, we usually have the hero 'back down' or choose not to fight/finish off the villain etc, or learn a lesson through the conflict that is relevant to the story and the character development/message. **AS WITH TABOO HUMOUR, WE WILL NOT APPRECIATE NEGATIVE FEEDBACK THAT ALPHA 'ENCOURAGES FIGHTING/VIOLENCE' or that we ENCOURAGED CHANTING 'FIGHT FIGHT FIGHT'. WE DO NOT. IF YOU REQUIRE CERTAIN BEHAVIOURS FROM YOUR STUDENTS, PLEASE HELP THEM TO UNDERSTAND THOSE EXPECTATIONS BEFORE THE SHOW AND HAVE A DISCUSSION ABOUT THE IMPORTANT ROLE CONFLICT PLAYS IN STORYTELLING, AND THAT IT IS NOT REAL!** Also help them understand prior to the show that what we present on stage is DEFINITELY not an invitation to mimic or re-enact the conflict out in the playground or to glorify violence or conflict. If you watch the whole show, especially the 'closed eye'/'emotional process' (EP) message portion, you will see how we transform negativity, violence and conflict, through storytelling and personal development techniques, into a powerful lesson that can be used in real-life conflicts. You should use these teachings that we present in post-show discussion so they learn positive conflict resolution techniques. Let us know before the show so we specifically address these issues in our Question Time.

If your culture is especially sensitive to conflict (eg. there has been a real-life violent incident in your school/community) or you are concerned that your students will not have the capacity to analyse and evaluate the conflict resolution steps and methods we present on stage and will instead just get carried away and over-excited by what they just see as 'violence' and nothing more, discuss with us before hand and we will look at how we can minimise physical conflict on stage and mitigate this issue for you. Note that many of the stage combat on stage is integral to the plot, so we usually cannot cut it out as changing stage combat on a per show basis is actually very dangerous, but we can minimise the response to it and being aware is certainly helpful. As above, we want to make the show JUST RIGHT for your school and group of children! Thank you for your support of great storytelling and the theatre experience!

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IMPORTANT: SOUND LEVELS, SHOW TRIGGERS & SENSITIVE / NEURODIVERGENT CHILDREN

We have noticed an increase in the range of sensitivities of students at the schools we visit. We think this is great - as it's a great representation of our society and as our culture has become more accepting of the wide spectrum of how children and adults learn, process the world around them, and how everyone's unique perspective is valued and able to contribute in the way that makes sense for them, it has meant there is a place for everyone to be included and welcome.

What we have noticed along with this, is that there is a greater range of reactions to our live events. We have always tended towards being louder, bigger, more intense, for very good reasons, because what we have still continued to find true, no matter what, is that by creating a 'rock concert atmosphere' and having lots of exciting things happening on stage, we tend to engage the audience at a higher level and create a more memorable event - which then assists in eliciting powerful emotions that are the only way to create true, life-long learnings and good memories of theatre. We only learn when we are in a peak emotional state. This is true for children as it is for adults.

As a result, we encourage you to encourage your students to participate, involve themselves, get emotional, get enrolled in the story and the dilemmas presented on stage, boo the villain, sing along, ask questions, respond loudly, and everything else we do, as we have always believed theatre, as a medium, is the best 'safe space' to explore emotions, especially scary or intense emotions, that would otherwise be dangerous or overwhelming to first experience in real-life situations. An Alpha Show can be a powerful way to prepare a child to face difficult experiences, and leads to greater levels of resilience. And it's so much more impactful than a story on a 'screen'. High energy live theatre is the only way to create this. And intense, loud and fast-paced theatre is the best form of theatre for this purpose. We've all seen boring theatre, including boring theatre-in-education, and we want to avoid presenting anything like that to children. Not only will they disconnect and be bored (especially in comparison to the constant dopamine hits they get using their 'screens'), they will also leave the experience thinking 'all theatre' is stupid and probably have no interest in ever going to a theatre show again. We don't want that - theatre is an important part of Australian culture and we want to support this precious and time-honored medium by making the experience awesome for them. If a child's only peak experiences in life where they get to yell and get excited are either going to see Taylor Swift or a footy match (other very loud events), then that's sad. We want to provide at least one more loud and fun place where they can scream and yell and get excited by what's happening, and a theatrical version of a story is a great way to make that happen in a really positive way that can also lead to new learnings and understandings about ourselves, our emotions, our consciousness - far more beneficial than a sports game.

A big part of what's needed to create this experience, just like at a rock concert, is a good sound system that can enable the audience to safely hear what's happening - another reason children may disconnect is if they can't hear what's being said on stage. With most of our audiences, they are just very loud, for all the reasons above, and the fact we encourage that type of participation right off the bat. We could probably do something different, having announcements at the start of the show that they must 'listen' and 'sit quietly', but that's not what an Alpha Show is about. Instead, we feel that for maximum engagement of the maximum number of students, that means a loud show, and a loud, participative audience. We want to encourage maximum involvement & participation, so we use every resource we can to enable that.

What about safety? What we do before every show is to perform a db meter test of our sound system, to ensure the peak volume is at a safe level for up to 80 minutes sustained time (that's about 95db which we are usually quieter than). We set it at a lower level and only increase in response to the noise levels of the audience themselves. We also have a state-of-the-art mixing desk that has inbuilt compressors, a high-end subwoofer to funnel the bass to so that the main speakers have clarity for vocals without distortion, and 4 other powerful speakers + top of the line high wattage amps to spread the amplification out to the audience. We change these levels based on venue type, audience size etc.

Also note that many teachers will most likely be seated on the sides, including right up the front, and if the younger students are right at the front, then the teachers of those students (most wary of their young, sensitive students) will end up sitting only about 1-2 meters away from our main speakers. It MAY then seem too loud for those teachers or even students, as we have to try to make the sound shoot out for the entire audience, not just the front row.

In addition, everyone is different. Some students will find that the sound level of even our music or voices to be overwhelming, even if they aren't in the front row. Rather than turning our volume down to what these sensitive students might find more pleasing or appropriate for them personally, we instead suggest placing these (minority of) sensitive students at the rear of the venue, and if it's still too loud, have ear muffs / ear plugs available for them to wear during the performance.

The truth is, and the issue with the solution being focussed on just the suggestion that we 'turn down the volume', is that the **majority of the audience will be making a lot of noise, regardless, and it will be much louder than our sound system ever could be.** I've tested this personally, and an audience simply responding normally can be well over 100db. *So even if we lower the volume, the loudness of the rest of the audience will still overwhelm your sensitive students.* We also don't want to give false reassurances that the sensitive students will be ok if we just lower the volume of our sound system - from decades of touring experience this is very much not the case. It's primarily the yelling and noise from the audience that causes the overwhelm. In addition, the danger to the performers voices if we lower our sound system is not something we're willing to risk for health and safety reasons. Lowering the volume forces performers to speak louder and then be forced to strain their voices, which for our long touring seasons isn't sustainable.

The only alternative that has somewhat worked in the past (and as is explained in the full Touring Pack documentation) is if you directly and proactively pre-frame your audience and explain to them the type of behavior you expect from them, which may include being aware of the wide spectrum of sensitivities present at your school. That way they will not be making noise except when asked and then it's possible to be a little lower on our end. Almost all of our audiences are *not* like this, even if attempts have been made before the event to try to make them like this - they're usually quite loud with very few exceptions. Plus, we don't really recommend this approach if it's only to cater to a minority of sensitive students, as it can lessen the enjoyment and impact the event can have for everyone else, for all the reasons above. If this expression of emotion will be overwhelming for sensitive students, again, have them seated at the rear or at least the sides sitting next to their supervisors.

We have a lot of experience doing this for decades and have balanced all of these considerations with our policies and standard practices every day at every show. We would very much appreciate your assistance to care for your sensitive students by supplying ear protection if necessary, and to be ready to move or make accommodations for them so that the show can continue to be enjoyable for everyone else!