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A Concert Full of Actors

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Dr. Kind

Modern Theater

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A Concert Full of Actors

Eager whispers travel through the crowd. The anticipation is building. The clock strikes 7:30 and then the lights go off, and the performers come out on stage. The crowd goes wild as the band launches into their first song. Music lovers frequent concerts in their free time. Concerts are not enjoyed by everyone. Some people claim they cannot stand the loud rock music blaring from the speakers. Instead they would rather go see a play, because they are considered classier. Rock concerts are perceived as loud and noisy, while plays appear to be elegant and perfect for a quiet night of entertainment. On the surface it appears as if concerts and plays are very different. This is not true. In both cases a lot of effort has to go into planning and executing the performance. Both concerts and plays are planned out, enjoyed by different types of audiences, and enhanced by the performer's effort.

Just like how the plot of a play is planned out, the concert set-list is planned out. To explain, at the Bastille concert, the band performed a total of 17 songs. The group chose to spread out their well-known songs. They were mindful of choosing to play a relatively well known song first, and their most popular song, "Pompeii", last. In this way, people who were not necessarily avid fans stayed entertained. Whenever well known songs came on, the energy of the audience would increase drastically. In well written and performed plays, ideally the audience's attention should be captivated throughout. While this is not always the case, it is still critical that the audience's attention is drawn in from in the start, at the middle, so the audience members are

not bored, and at the end, so the audience is left with a memorable ending that they will not forget. In plays, the audience's energy peaks when they are seeing scenes with interesting developments. So, popular, well executed songs and well preformed scenes both captivate the audience's attention and evoke positive reactions from the audience. Therefore, in good plays and concerts the script or set-list needs to be well planned to ensure the audience appreciates the performance.

Unlike plays, concerts are sometimes more enjoyable when the viewer knows the "plot." For instance, at the Bastille concert the girl standing next to me clearly only knew about three Bastille songs. As a result, she spent most of the concert standing awkwardly, while all the people around her sang along to most, if not all, of the songs that were performed. Plays differ from concerts as plays have one continuous plot line, so even if the audience does not know much about the play, they will learn about it as the play goes on. However, concerts are like a compilation of mini-one acts. Each song is completely different from the one performed before it. If the audience member does not know a song that is being performed and everyone else seems to know the song, then they will feel the same way as someone who goes to see a play, but does not understand the plot. In this way, someone going to see a play for the first time will probably enjoy the play a lot more than someone who goes see a concert for a band they have never heard of. Therefore, knowing more songs by an artist will help enhance one's concert going experience, while not knowing the plot of a play will make the twist and turns of the plot seem more exciting and novel.

Both concerts and plays seek to connect to or engage the audience through interactive activities. In concerts, the bands connect to the audience by keeping them engaged. For instance, in the Bastille concert, for well-known songs, the band would ask the audience to sing the back-

up vocals or part of the chorus. In this way, the audience members were engaged as they felt important—they felt that it was their job to sing the lyrics back to the band, as loudly and proudly as possible. Additionally, during one of the songs, the band requested everyone to crouch or duck down when they heard a specific word in the pre-chorus of a song, and then to jump up when they heard a phrase in the. As a result, the audience members were engaged as they had to pay attention to the lyrics in order to make sure they were not ducking too early or too late. In regards to plays, they connect to the audience through monologues or soliloquies. To explain, especially in soliloquies, it appears as if the actor is speaking directly to the audience. Additionally, soliloquies allow for the character to convey their thoughts and motives directly to the audience. So, they make the viewer feel like they are part of an inside joke or a secret that many of the characters are not even aware of. The audience then develops a connection the character, and the play, because they feel important because they know the character's secrets. Therefore, concert and plays engage and connect to the audience by making the audience members feel like they have an active role in the production.

Concerts are very similar to plays because both musicians and actors need to be careful of blocking during their performance in order to ensure that the audience members are able to see what is happening. For example, at the Bastille concert the lead singer, Dan, did not just stay in one spot for the entire performance. Instead, he would either stand on an elevated platform at the center of the stage or walk back and forth at the front of the stage, so all of the audience members, who were standing, were able to see him. Due to the mosh-pit type setting it was impossible to see Dan at all times, however, because he walked across the stage, eager fans were able to see him often. If this consideration was not put into the performance, then a good portion of the audience may not have been able to see him at all over the heads of people standing in

front of them, which would not have made for an exciting experience. Generally, audience members at a play are seated, so they are able to see the entire stage. However, it is still the actor's responsibility to make sure that they are not facing away from the audience when they are delivering lines or performing certain actions. Therefore, in both concert and plays, musicians and actors must be conscious of how they are blocking themselves in order to make sure that the viewers are fully able to appreciate the performance they are watching.

Furthermore, actors and musicians have to be careful of how their voice sounds in order to add to the overall effect of the production. The Bastille concert in Chicago was the first concert on the tour. Consequently, Dan's voice was impeccable. The fact that his voice was in good condition, made the concert experience much more enjoyable. Often times when the musician's voice is not up to par, people talk down on the performance. This in turn, may discourage others from seeing the same performer live. While it is not important that the actor can sing well, as long as they are not in a musical, his or her delivery and projection has a strong effect on how the audience perceives their character. No one wants to go see a play where all the actors are speaking in monotone. So, if the actors do not do their best to alter their voice projection, then the production will suffer, and people will be less likely to go see that ensemble in the future. In this way, it is very important that musicians and actors take care of themselves and their voices, so the quality of their performance does not suffer.

Concerts and plays require a good deal of planning to become a success. In both cases it is important that the plot or set-list is well thought out, and the audience is engaged.

Additionally, performers in concert and plays have to put a lot of thought into how they are going to interact with their stage and deliver their lines to avoid being negatively criticized by audience members. Concerts and plays are not for everyone. Sometimes, people may not find a

concert or play to be very enjoyable if they do not know the songs performed or understand the plot of the play. Regardless of what people say, concerts and plays are both classy sources of entertainment that are enjoyed by many.