

STUDY GUIDE



20 GEFFEN
PLAYHOUSE



IN THE GIL CATES THEATER AT THE GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE
APRIL 5 – MAY 15, 2016

SPECIAL THANKS TO

Randall Arney, Amy Levinson, Brian Dunning, Kevin O'Brien, Rachel Wiegardt-Egel,
Scott Kriloff, Carolyn Marie Wright, Ellen Catania and Jessica Brusilow Rollins.

STUDY GUIDE WRITTEN AND COMPILED BY

Jennifer Zakkai

This publication is to be used for educational purposes only.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION 1

ABOUT THIS PRODUCTION

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR'S COMMENT	4
PLAY SYNOPSIS.....	5
ARTISTIC BIOGRAPHIES	5

SECTION 2

THEMES & TOPICS

FIRST LOVES.....	6
ROMANTIC & COMMITTED LOVE.....	7
THEATER GENRES & STYLES.....	8
DEFYING CONVENTIONS.....	9
FROM THE PAGE TO THE STAGE.....	10
THE WORK – AND RISKS – OF CREATING ONSTAGE REALITIES.....	11

SECTION 3

PERSONNEL PROFILE

AN INTERVIEW WITH RACHEL WIEGARDT-EGEL, LITERARY ASSOCIATE	12
---	----

SECTION 4

AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE.....	13
POST-SHOW DISCUSSION QUESTIONS.....	14

SECTION 5

RESOURCES.....	15
----------------	----

SECTION 1

ABOUT THIS PRODUCTION



ARTISTIC DIRECTOR'S COMMENT

RANDALL ARNEY



SARAH RUHL HAS ONE OF THE MOST DISTINCT VOICES IN contemporary American theater. Wry, funny, understated, often blurring the lines between the real and the surreal, she has aptly described her plays as “three-dimensional poems.” I have long looked forward to introducing Geffen audiences to her work. I am delighted to welcome Sarah for the first time with *Stage Kiss* and to have longtime Geffen collaborator Bart DeLorenzo helping the production. Bart last directed for us in 2014 with Steven Drukman’s *Death of the Author*.

Frothy and contemplative by turns, *Stage Kiss* follows two long-estranged former lovers who are cast in a revival of a 1930s melodrama to play – what else? – long-estranged former lovers starting a heady affair. Through an uncomfortable reunion turned reignited flame, the play delves into questions of artifice versus reality and asks what it means to enact intimacy onstage. Is life imitating art here, or is it the other way around? And is a kiss ever really “just” a kiss?

Bart has brought together a team of designers who masterfully transport us backstage, onstage, offstage, and back again, and an incredibly talented cast of actors who have gamely tackled not one but two plays-within-the-play. At once a delicious, wickedly clever send-up of theatrical tropes and a love letter to the strange, ephemeral art form to which theater artists dedicate their lives, *Stage Kiss* seeks both to charm and to hold the mirror up to our fascination with playing pretend.

SYNOPSIS

In the first half of *Stage Kiss*, two long-separated lovers, who are professional actors, find themselves cast in a play together – as former lovers. In real life, SHE is married to a banker, Harrison, and they have a daughter, Angela; HE has a girlfriend, Laurie, who is a schoolteacher. Rehearsing and performing the play, in the company of their director and fellow actors, inflames the actors' real-life situation: when SHE's character Ada, a 1930s socialite who is dying, calls her first love Johnny, played by HE, to her side, the feelings that the characters and the actors once had for each other reignite. In the second half of *Stage Kiss*, the two actors perform in another play-within-a-play, which is harsher in tone and forces them to confront the challenges of sustaining a romantic relationship.

SETTING The Theater

RUNNING TIME Approximately 2 hours and 15 minutes, including one 15 minute intermission.

PERFORMANCE NOTE There is coarse language, smoking of herbal cigarettes and the sound effect of two gunshots.

ARTISTIC BIOGRAPHIES

SARAH RUHL (Playwright)

Sarah Ruhl's plays include *For Peter Pan on her 70th Birthday*; *The Oldest Boy*; *In the Next Room, or the vibrator play*; *The Clean House*; *Passion Play*; *Dead Man's Cell Phone*; *Melancholy Play*; *Eurydice*; *Orlando*; *Late: a cowboy song*; *Dear Elizabeth* and *Stage Kiss*. She has been a two-time Pulitzer Prize finalist and a Tony Award nominee. Her plays have been produced on Broadway at the Lyceum, by Lincoln Center Theater, Off-Broadway at Playwrights Horizons, Second Stage Theatre and at Lincoln Center's Mitzi E. Newhouse Theater. Her plays have been produced regionally all over the country, often with premieres at Yale Repertory Theatre, Berkeley Rep, the Goodman Theatre and the Piven Theatre Workshop in Chicago. In 2014 she was the second most produced playwright in the country. Her plays have also been produced internationally and have been translated into over twelve languages. Originally from Chicago, Ms. Ruhl received her M.F.A. from Brown University where she studied with Paula Vogel. She has received the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, the Whiting Award, the Lily Award, a PEN award for mid-career playwrights and the MacArthur "genius" award. You can read more about her work on www.SarahRuhlplaywright.com. Her book of essays *100 Essays I Don't Have Time to Write* was published by Faber and Faber last fall. She teaches at the Yale School of Drama, and she lives in Brooklyn with her family.

BART DeLORENZO (Director)

Founding Artistic Director of the Evidence Room Theater in Los Angeles. At the Geffen, he directed the premieres of *Death of the Author*, *Coney Island Christmas*, *Shipwrecked! An Entertainment – The Amazing Adventures of Louis de Rougemont (as Told by Himself)*, and *Joan Rivers: A Work in Progress by a Life in Progress*. His recent productions with Evidence Room include Sarah Ruhl's *Passion Play*, *The False Servant*, *Annapurna*, *Ivanov*, *Margo Veil* and *The Receptionist*, produced with the Odyssey Theater. Other recent directing includes *Annapurna* with The New Group (Off-Broadway); *tokyo fish story*, *Fast Company*, *Doctor Cerberus*, and Sarah Ruhl's *Dead Man's Cell Phone* at South Coast Repertory; *Women in Jeopardy* at the Ensemble Theater of Santa Barbara; *Need to Know* at Rogue Machine; *Cymbeline* at A Noise Within; and *The Night Watcher* at Washington's Studio Theatre. He is on the faculty at CalArts. For his work, he has received LA Drama Critics Circle Awards including the Milton Katselas Award for career achievement, *LA Weekly* awards, Back Stage Garlands and TCG's Alan Schneider Director Award.

THEMES & TOPICS

FIRST LOVES

SOURCES

tinyurl.com/PT1stLove

tinyurl.com/Kalish1stLove

In *Stage Kiss*, playwright Sarah Ruhl sets the story in motion by reuniting two people who were each other's first loves. As their relationship evolves, she explores both the pleasures and the difficulties of renewing this special connection.

Any first-time experience is memorable because of what is known as the “primacy effect:” we tend to remember first impressions of people, places and activities more strongly than subsequent encounters with them. Since all of our senses tend to be engaged at once, and new experiences unleash “feel-good” chemicals in our brains, first-time experiences are deeply grooved into our memories. If repeated over time, they lose their punch and our recall of them can be much less powerful and specific.

The first experience of romantic love can have a lasting impact. If it occurs in our teenage or young adult years it may feel especially intense because the sensations are so new and engrossing. Bonding with a romantic partner may be the first step towards achieving independence from our families and taking ownership of our lives. Existence feels filled with endless exciting possibilities. Because the relationship tends to consume so much attention and energy, when it falters – usually due to changes in feelings or life circumstances – the sense of loss can be equally deep, if not devastating.

Strong memories and unresolved feelings can lead to former couples wondering what might have been. These days, with the ease of contact through social media, some end up trying to take up where they left off. Those who abandon existing relationships to re-engage with their first loves may not only be propelled by a longing for what was lost but also for their younger selves, who were filled with the vitality and passion that may have ebbed as they matured, or their current long-term relationships became less passionate. According to psychologist Nancy Kalish, as soon as romantic feelings wane and the more mundane aspects of daily life intrude, or the feelings for the present-day mate resurface, these renewed involvements can fail. If, however, prior relationships have ended and the couple engages in a mature love, those who reunite can be quite happy together.

Writing Exercise: Recall a powerful “first experience,” such as an exciting place to which you traveled, a type of food you loved instantly, or a person you met and felt very close to right away. Use *sensory details* (what you saw, heard, smelled, tasted and/or felt through your sense of touch) to describe the experience and how it made you feel.

ROMANTIC & COMMITTED LOVE

WHAT'S IN A KISS?

A kiss on the lips with a romantic partner helps us grow closer, by releasing the hormone oxytocin, which supports bonding. Scientists believe mouth-to-mouth kissing evolved long ago either from the non-sexual act of mothers passing chewed up food to their young, or as a way to check out the health of a potential mate through our sense of smell. Half of the world's cultures do not engage in erotic kissing, mainly, because it is considered unhygienic or non-sexual. Children in Western cultures learn in fairy tales that kisses can be powerful catalysts, such as when a kiss from a prince brings a sleeping princess back to life. In the play, a kiss in rehearsal reawakens the past for HE and SHE, when, as Ruhl's stage directions state, *"This time a memory of their old life together enters the kiss."*

PHOTO CREDIT

Public Domain / Pixabay

SOURCES

tinyurl.com/HFisherTED

tinyurl.com/CNNKiss

tinyurl.com/PTOxytocin

tinyurl.com/CultKiss



Stage Kiss is a humorous and compassionate exploration of the phases of love that can make and break relationships. As HE and SHE find their way with each other and their real-life partners, Ruhl evokes both the excitement of rekindling a romance and the richness of mature love.

Since romantic love has inspired eloquent poetry, passionate songs and heart-stopping stories for centuries, it is both fascinating and humbling to learn that chemicals in the reptilian part of our brains are responsible for this exalted state. According to biological anthropologist Helen Fisher, what we experience as rapturous love for another is, in fact, an all-consuming drive to find a mate. Existing in 170 different human societies, this drive likely evolved to ensure that human infants – helpless because their brains are not fully developed – had pairs of adults to protect and raise them. The urge to bond with a significant other is spurred on by the chemical dopamine, which, as it floods the reward centers of our brain, makes us feel elated in the presence of our chosen love. We also lose a defined sense of self, tend to project ideal qualities onto our partner and become less connected to the parts of our brain that guide us to make rational decisions. When apart, whether simply separated for a while or broken up for good, dopamine recedes, which makes us crave the person's presence even more. Given the chemicals and brain locations involved, the addictive qualities of romantic love are considered similar to those of cocaine.

As many couples discover, intense romantic love cannot be sustained. The obstacle? Familiarity. Repeated experiences generate less and less dopamine. Our boundaries snap back into place, and we start noticing our partner's less-than-ideal qualities. To thrive, couples must shift into "committed love," a state in which each partner is not carried away with boundless feeling, but consciously chooses to be with the other. Otherwise, they tend to break up and go looking for the next euphoric romance. While long-term couples can still fill with romantic love at the sight or even thought of each other, committed love is not consuming, but is more quietly rewarding and enduring.

THEATER GENRES & STYLES

GENRE (noun)

A category of artistic, musical, or literary composition characterized by a particular style, form, or content (merriam-webster.com)

STYLE (noun)

A particular way in which something is done, created, or performed (merriam-webster.com)

SOURCES

tinyurl.com/Drama-Genres
tinyurl.com/ScrbdThHist
tinyurl.com/DramaWiki

TRADITIONAL THEATER

Western theater has its roots in classical Greek theater, which established the play genres of *tragedy* and *comedy*. In a tragedy, internal flaws lead to a person's downfall; audience members experience *catharsis* – the arousal and discharge of emotions, especially pity and fear – and feel renewed. A comedy provides respite from everyday concerns as it provokes laughter in an audience, usually by poking fun at human shortcomings. As Western drama has evolved over the years, different *styles* (also referred to by some as genres) have been created, which reflect the artistic advances as well as specific interests and values of the times. These styles determined the content and design of plays when they emerged, as they do when used in the present. Some of these styles include:

16th CENTURY

- *Commedia Dell'Arte*, which explores relationships among different societal classes through masked character types who improvise scenarios
- *Elizabethan tragedies*, often involving revenge and violence, and *comedies* that sometimes included *farce* (such as those written by William Shakespeare)

19th CENTURY

- Romantic *melodramas* that pit stock characters against overwhelming outside forces

20th CENTURY

- *Naturalism* and *Realism*, which began in Europe as reactions against *melodrama* and brought real-life issues and complex characters to the stage
- *American Drama*, which explores issues and themes central to American life in naturalistic settings.

NON-TRADITIONAL THEATER

Though more realistic stories were portrayed onstage from the early 20th century on, non-traditional forms of theater also flourished in their own right and influenced traditional theater. They include:

- *Surrealism*, which explores the melding of realities into a dream state, usually unbound by a linear sequence of events
- *Theatre of the Absurd*, which evokes the meaninglessness of existence through illogical narratives and “broken language”
- *Avant-garde/Experimentalism*, which often does not rely on crafted texts, but uses intense ensemble work with images, movement, sound and shards of text or improvised dialogue to generate theater pieces.

Stage Kiss is a comedy that has within it a melodrama and a naturalistic drama. Traces of surrealism are also evident in how the lead characters flow in out of different realities.

DISCUSSION POINT

What is your favorite genre and/or style of theater? Why?

DEFYING CONVENTIONS

PHOTO CREDIT

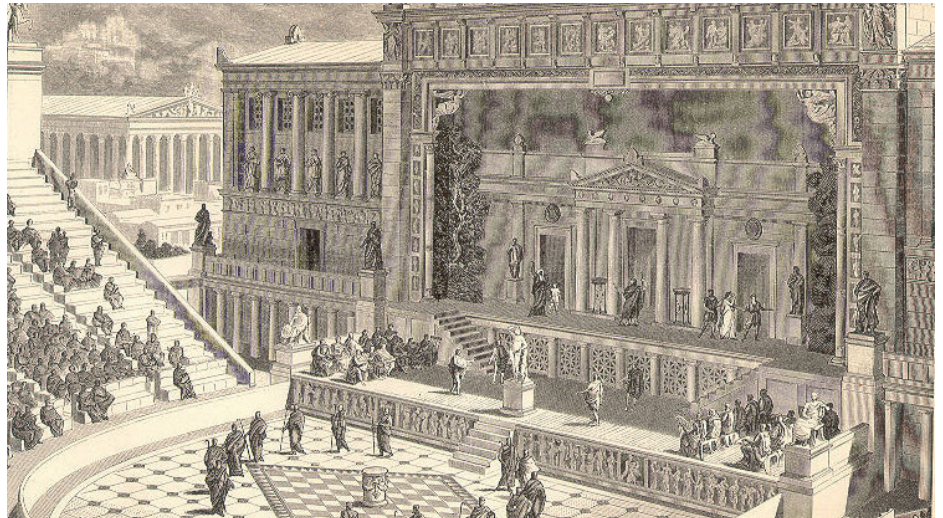
Public Domain / Pixabay

SOURCES

tinyurl.com/NewYkrRuhlSurr

tinyurl.com/NewYkrRuhlSK

tinyurl.com/MelodramaWiki



John Lahr, a former theater critic for *The New Yorker*, has celebrated Sarah Ruhl's originality as a playwright by describing her "...nonlinear form of realism" as being "...full of astonishments, surprises, and mysteries." He also noted she, "...prefers the revelations of the surreal moment to the narrated psychological one." Ruhl has said she likes to explore "the irrationality of emotion." All of these elements are present in *Stage Kiss*, as Ruhl works both with and against theatrical conventions to illuminate the pitfalls of romantic love.

In this comedy, Ruhl uses two plays of different styles and questionable quality to reflect the condition of SHE and HE's relationship and reveal the humor of their predicaments. The first production in which the two actors find themselves is a 1930s melodrama. In these days of powerfully complex, idea-driven dramas, "melodrama" is used pejoratively to describe a work that "...is typically sensational and designed to appeal strongly to the emotions... Characters are often simply drawn, and may appear stereotyped." *The Last Kiss*, written by a trio of playwrights, fits the bill. It has a ludicrous story and stilted, empty-headed dialogue. The second production is a gritty drama, involving a prostitute who wants to be an ophthalmologist, a gunrunner for the IRA who is in love with her, and her pimp. As with the first play, the two artists must contend with absurd premises as well as the state of their relationship.

Ruhl's use of fluid realities is evident in how the actors' feelings can suddenly erupt in scenes between their characters, and in how the characters break into song. The emotional vulnerability and daring that bubbles up is a conscious artistic choice. Ruhl has claimed to be more interested in following the ancient Greek dramatist Ovid's approach to play structure, in which moments transform from one to another, rather than subscribe to Aristotle's more conventional dramatic arc, in which a protagonist overcomes obstacles and is profoundly changed in the process. Since she is willing to fearlessly discover where moments will lead, the audience gets to revel in imaginative surprises and, in the case of *Stage Kiss*, well-earned, if not reassuring, joy.

FROM THE PAGE TO THE STAGE



THEATER TERMS

BLOCKING (noun)

The positions and movements of the actors onstage, which are usually determined by the director

“SPIKE THE FURNITURE”

(verb) Mark the stage with tape to show where furniture and props should be placed during the performance (capa.com)

STAGE MANAGER (noun)

The person who runs the show from opening curtain to closing curtain and is in charge of everything on the stage and in the back of the stage (capa.com)

UNDERSTUDY (noun)

An actor who studies the lines and blocking of a role, and is able to take over for the original cast member as needed (capa.com)

QUICK CHANGE (noun)

Occurs when the actor has a short amount of time to change from one costume to another off-stage, either from one scene to the next or within the same scene (cytglobal.com)

PHOTO CREDIT

Public Domain / Pixabay

AUDITIONING

As *Stage Kiss* opens, SHE is trying out for the lead female role in the 1930s melodrama. It has been 10 years since she has performed. Not only is she nervous while reading the scene, but by the end of the audition she is convinced she did a terrible job.

In this moment, Ruhl captures how nerve-racking it is for actors to “go up for” a role, and how easy it is for them to feel vulnerable afterwards. Since the director often does not know what qualities he or she is looking for, the actor must guess how to convey the character – all while being judged by the person who has the power to give him or her the job, and reading with someone who is usually an assistant, not an actor. Unlike other artists who create objects outside of themselves, the actors’ medium is their whole physical and emotional being. When they are not chosen for a role in a play, it is easy for them to feel they are being rejected for who they are – or are not.

REHEARSING

Once actors secure their roles, they begin the process of creating their performances in a rehearsal space, in which the set, furniture, props and costumes are usually indicated, not fully realized. They build relationships with the director and other actors while establishing the interactions among the characters in the play. It is this dynamic that Ruhl both explores and exploits in *Stage Kiss*. Depending on the personalities and chemistry of the director and fellow actors, the work environment can be filled with trust and genuine affection, or fraught with competition and subterfuge.

TECH

Short for *technical rehearsal*, tech occurs at the end of the rehearsal process when the set, lighting, costumes, and sound have been designed and need to be integrated onstage with the actors – a process overseen by the director, technical director and production stage manager. Actors spend a lot of time standing around onstage while lights are focused, sound levels are set, and scenery changes are run through. During these moments, actors can often connect in more relaxed ways, since there is no pressure to perform.

PERFORMING

After many weeks of rehearsal and making the flow of the production seamless, the show is ready to be shared with an audience. Once the show begins, there is no stopping until it is over. Actors rely on all they have practiced, yet must also go from moment to moment, remaining highly responsive to the other actors and to the energy of the audience. They are hidden within the characters they are portraying yet completely exposed as human beings. They enter; speak; move; communicate powerfully while completely still; connect with, ignore, reject, or embrace fellow characters; exult, fall, die, exit, and bow – giving thanks to the audience as it shares its gratitude with the cast by applauding. Then the performance is not just over, it is gone.

THE WORK – AND RISKS – OF CREATING ONSTAGE REALITIES

SHOWMANCE

(noun, informal) A romance between two stars that only lasts for the run of the show (collinsdictionary.com)

SOURCES

tinyurl.com/PsychTActing

Characters are and are not like real people. While the ones who move us most have the attributes and flaws we encounter in the people around us, they have been carefully crafted by a playwright to have distinct features and to drive a story that conveys his or her ideas about the human experience as it unfolds.

Just as characters are given compelling traits, so too are they portrayed in very specific ways by actors. The playwright chooses the words characters speak (which cannot be changed without his or her permission) and may also indicate characters' actions that are central to the plot. But exactly how the characters talk, behave and interact is up to the performers and their director. These choices are made as the actors prepare on their own, and in rehearsal, where the director and actors work as a group to get the play on its feet.

Actors use a variety of methods to make their characters believable and engaging. They read the script closely to glean clues about their characters' intentions in each scene of the play, and use their imaginations to envision how their characters look, sound and move. In rehearsal, they continue to build their performance by reacting to the other characters. Since live performers cannot see how they are coming across, it is the director's job to watch and help them choose the most effective ways to enact their characters in any given moment.

In order to be authentic about what their characters undergo, many actors channel personal feelings, attitudes and memories into their portrayals. While infusing personal truth can add power to an actor's work, sometimes his or her personal reality and the illusion of reality being created onstage become intertwined. Dark subject matter can trigger troubling feelings within. In such cases, actors must discipline themselves not to bring what their characters are experiencing home with them. In *Stage Kiss*, Ruhl humorously explores how long-held romantic feelings and disappointments that the actors experienced while real-life lovers sometimes bleed through while they are performing.

Actors who are strangers prior to rehearsal may become infatuated with each other, as intimacy blossoms from pretending to feel passion, eight times a week for many weeks or months. Once again, the intention of a theater artist to make onstage encounters as truthful as possible may have unexpected consequences, when faking love leads to believing it is the real thing. As SHE's husband points out in *Stage Kiss*, "She always falls in love with whoever she's in a play with."

DISCUSSION POINT

Given all the challenges, what are the tangible and intangible rewards of choosing to pursue acting as a profession? How do actors contribute to our culture?

SECTION 3

PERSONNEL PROFILE

AN INTERVIEW WITH RACHEL WIEGARDT-EGEL

What is your official title, and how long have you worked at the Geffen Playhouse?

I'm the Literary Associate at the Geffen, and I've been here since September of 2015.

What are your primary responsibilities?

Every year, we get hundreds of scripts submitted by literary agents on behalf of playwrights or by artists we know. My job is to track all of the plays that come through the Geffen, and manage our team of readers to make sure all of the submissions get fair consideration and a response as soon as possible. Other than that, I get to read a lot of scripts, write and edit copy for the theater's publications, lead audience talkbacks, and help out with season planning and production dramaturgy.

How does the Geffen assemble a season of plays?

We start planning each season more than a year in advance of when the first show actually goes into rehearsal. When a script is in serious consideration for a production, it means that Artistic Director Randall Arney, Literary Director Amy Levinson, and I have read it and think it could work well here. We talk a lot about each play's strengths and weaknesses and think about it in relation to past seasons and anything that's already in the mix for the next season. We want to make sure that a season has balance in terms of each production's story, style, and size, and that there's a satisfying variety for the audience.

What is dramaturgy? What drew you into this field, and to the Geffen?

Dramaturgy can facilitate the process of putting on a play by pulling together resources – like historical information about the play's time period, or background details on whatever issues it is exploring – that will help artists create and inhabit the world of the play. When a play is brand new, dramaturgy becomes more about helping the playwright make sure the story they want to tell is coming through clearly and strongly. Believe it or not, when I was fourteen, I got “dramaturg” on a career aptitude test! Since I had no idea what it meant and couldn't find a clear definition of it online, I set that notion aside until I attended a talkback after a play and an actor mentioned the dramaturg's role in the production. When I found out that being a dramaturg combines theater, literature and history, I realized it was my ideal job. Then I went to college at UCLA, took a lot of theater literature classes, pursued other career ideas because



theater didn't seem “practical” enough, decided to take the leap into a year-long dramaturgy internship at a regional theater in the Bay Area and was completely sold. After that, I spent a little over a year on the East Coast working at two different theaters and reading and seeing as much theater as possible, before I was lucky enough to get my current job at the Geffen.

What do you find most challenging about your work?

Sometimes there's a play that I believe is very special, but we can't produce it because the rest of the artistic staff doesn't respond to it in the same way, or it's too expensive or another theater snatches it up before we can commit to it. That's always a little heartbreaking, and we say “no” to plays a lot more than we get to say “yes.” But whenever that happens, I keep the play in mind for a future season or try to track down more of the writer's work in case another of their plays would be a better fit for us.

What do you find most satisfying?

I know that by telling a wide range of stories, you can open peoples' hearts and minds to experiences beyond their own. Making theater—the act of getting a lot of people in a room together and asking them to think about what it means to be human—has never been more important than right now, this moment in which we all spend so much time alone staring at our screens. I also love the collaboration of working at a theater, how every single department does its part to support the work on the stage. And I find the ever-changing nature of theater to be energizing and exciting—every few months, we're working on something completely new and learning about a different piece of the world. ■

SECTION 4

AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE

Going to the theater is a unique experience, and we all need to be mindful of “audience etiquette,” or how to behave at the theater.

The audience plays an essential role in the performance of a play. Without an audience, the actors are only rehearsing. Audience members’ concentrated silence and responses, such as laughing and applauding, provide energy to the actors as they bring the performance to life.

Since the actors can hear and see the audience, it is important not to engage in behaviors that might disturb or distract them – and fellow audience members. These actions include:

- Talking
- Texting
- Allowing cell phones to ring
- Taking photographs or video
- Getting up to leave before intermission or the end of the show (unless it is a true emergency)
- Eating or drinking
- Unwrapping candy or cough drops
- Touching or leaning on the stage.

Audience Awareness Activity: Before going to the Geffen Playhouse for the first time, compare and contrast the experience of seeing a live play with:

- going to the movies
- attending a live sporting event
- watching television.

DISCUSSION POINT

If you were onstage performing a play, how would you want the audience to behave?

POST-SHOW DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Depending on the time available and your group members' interests, guide them to respond to questions selected from those suggested below. Encourage everyone to participate, while having respect for differing opinions. Individuals can share their thoughts with a partner or in a small group. Ask for several volunteers to share their groups' answers with the larger group.

- Overall, how did you feel while watching the play? Engaged? Distanced? Entertained? Bored? Confused? Inspired? What made you feel this way?
- What did you enjoy most about the play? What did you have trouble connecting to?
- Have you ever encountered a first love again? How did it make you feel? If not, what do you imagine it would be like to see this person again?
- What did you learn about the craft of acting from experiencing the play? What did you learn about the design and production of a play?
- What was the funniest moment in the play?
- How did the plots and dialogue of the two plays within *Stage Kiss* convey their (intended) poor quality?
- After seeing the play, do you agree with those who consider Sarah Ruhl to be one of the most original playwrights working today? If so, why? If not, why not?
- What did you appreciate most about the performances by the actors?
- How did the set, props, lighting and visuals contribute to your experience of the play?
- Would you recommend *Stage Kiss* to other theatergoers? Why, or why not?

SECTION 5

RESOURCES

WATCH biological anthropologist Helen Fisher give a TED talk on romantic love at tinyurl.com/HFisherTED.

LEARN about cultural attitudes towards kissing at tinyurl.com/CultKiss.

LEARN how to develop the collaborative skills needed to create successful theater productions in *Working Together in Theater* by Robert Cohen, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. (Available at Amazon.com)

LEARN about the challenges actors face in channeling feelings in their roles in “How Actors Create Emotions: A Problematic Psychology” by Judith Ohikuare, in *Atlantic Monthly*, March 2014 at tinyurl.com/AtlanticAct.

LEARN about playwright Sarah Ruhl and her work by reading a profile of her in *The New Yorker*, “Surreal Life: The Plays of Sarah Ruhl” by John Lahr at tinyurl.com/NewYkrRuhlSurr.

READ other plays by Sarah Ruhl – *Eurydice*, *The Clean House*, *Dead Man’s Cell Phone*, *Passion Play*. (Available at the Los Angeles Public Library)

VISIT the Getty Villa in Malibu to immerse yourself in ancient Greek and Roman architecture and sculpture. Experience dramatic and musical performances, based on works from ancient times, in the museum’s outdoor amphitheater. A schedule of events at the Villa is available at www.getty.edu/360.

LEARN some basics about playwriting at www.playwriting101.com.

THE GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMS ARE MADE POSSIBLE BY THE GENEROUS SUPPORT OF:

The Alec Baldwin Foundation
Alice Ghostley Foundation
AMC
Amgen Foundation
Anonymous
Ariel Investments
Audi of America
AVID
The Baxter International Foundation
Brotman Foundation of California
Capital Group Companies Foundation
City National Bank
Comcast | NBC Universal
Douglas Elliman Real Estate
DreamWorks Animation
Dwight Stuart Youth Fund
Edgerton Foundation
Eisenberg-Keefer Foundation
Elaine Wynn Family Foundation
The Eli & Edythe Broad Foundation
Gang, Tyre, Ramer & Brown, Inc.
The David Geffen Foundation
George Lucas Family Foundation
The Rosalinde & Arthur Gilbert Foundation
Goldman Sachs
Greater Los Angeles New Car Dealers Association
The Adi & Jerry Greenberg Foundation
Guggenheim Partners
HBO
HSBC Private Bank USA
Joseph Drown Foundation
Keyes Automotive Group
Kissick Family Foundation
L&N Andreas Foundation
The Lauder Foundation
Lear Family Foundation
Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors
Los Angeles City Department of Cultural Affairs
Los Angeles County Arts Commission
Lowell Milken Family Foundation
Marilyn & Jeffrey Katzenberg Fund
for Arts Education at the Geffen Playhouse
Maurice Amado Foundation
Moss Foundation
MOCA Foundation
Kenneth T. and Eileen L. Norris Foundation
Northern Trust
Paradigm Talent Agency
Ralph M. Parsons Foundation
Thomas Safran & Associates
Shay Family Foundation
Simms/Mann Family Foundation
Simon-Strauss Foundation
Singer Family Foundation
Smith Family Foundation
Sondheim Foundation
Stone Family Foundation
The Walt Disney Company
Transamerica Foundation
Twentieth Century Fox
UCLA
Union Bank Foundation
US Bank
Warner Bros. Entertainment
Wells Fargo Foundation
Westfield Group
William Morris Endeavor

And many more!



As of print date: March 29, 2016