

The Show Must Go Online!

A Virtual Children's Musical

Presented by Tuscaloosa Children's Theatre

Teacher's Packet

March 2021



THE SHOW MUST GO ONLINE is presented through special arrangement with Beat by Beat Press

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Overview:

Since March 2020, live theatre has been on a national “intermission” – a term used to describe a break in a performance. Broadway has been “dark,” which means there have been no shows. Some theatre groups, including Tuscaloosa Children's Theatre, have turned to virtual performances, both recorded and live streamed.

This virtual musical was written exclusively for Zoom as a response to the coronavirus pandemic to allow young performers the chance to continue performing from a safe distance. It tells the hilarious story of a group of drama students desperate to keep their annual musical alive and their frazzled drama teacher who is helpless with technology but committed to helping her students realize their dream.

In creating the show, the writers considered what kids and drama teachers have been experiencing during the pandemic and worked those themes into each scene – including the antics and technical mayhem that comes with performing a musical online. The result is a comedic and fun story designed to lift spirits when we need it most.

TCT hopes you and your students enjoy our performance and find this guided discussion and activity packet helpful. We encourage you to share the link to this packet and the performance with other educators and friends.

Free access: tuscaloosachildrenstheatre.net

Approximate run time: 35 minutes

Appropriate for grades 4 & up

Discussion and Activity #1:

What does this phrase “The show must go on!” mean and where did it originate?

Perhaps you have heard this idiom or cliché before. In the case of this online production, the phrase “the show must go on” is used literally. The students and their teacher were determined to perform the show *Brushes with Greatness: The Dental Hygiene Musical* no matter what, even if they could only perform online. However, as an idiom, “the show must go on” is used figuratively to mean that an event or activity must continue on as planned, no matter the complications.

Interestingly, there is no real explanation of this particular cliché’s origin. A few theories state that it comes from circus days, when something was not going correctly. For example, if an animal got loose or someone got injured, supposedly the ringmaster and the band would keep the entertainment going so that the crowd wouldn’t worry and panic. Thus, the expression was born.

Others credit the phrase to Shakespeare who used the phrase “Play out the play” in *Henry IV*, Part 1, 2.4. Nevertheless, this phrase has survived through the years and is still a highly valued phrase today. The proceedings must continue, no matter what catastrophe has occurred.

Teacher:

- When and where have you heard the phrase “The show must go on”?
To stimulate students’ thinking suggest the following:
An outside birthday party where it pours down rain
A soccer game where your goalie gets injured and can’t play
A planned trip is cancelled due to a pandemic
- Do you think it makes more sense that this phrase originated in the circus or with Shakespeare? Why?

Activity:

- Create a cartoon drawing using the template provided showing a situation in which everything seems to be going wrong and yet they continue with the activity as planned. (Encourage students’ thoughts and creativity, not necessarily their drawing skills)

Discussion and Activity #2:

Online Performance versus Live In-Person Performance

Tuscaloosa Children’s Theatre typically produces two to three live shows each season in addition to summer camp. Any child may participate in open casting for each show. TCT’s season runs from fall to spring with a show in the fall and one in spring and sometimes a show in December, such as *Elf Jr.* or *A Christmas Carol*.

TCT was set to perform *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* in April 2020 with a cast of 80 local and regional children ages 5-18 when the COVID-19 pandemic hit the area and delayed the production. The show has since been canceled and TCT decided the safest way to continue engaging and educating children both in the cast and audiences was to go virtual.

In December, TCT tried its first virtual show by recording some of its performers singing holiday solos and duets and shared them on YouTube. The virtual show was called *Home for the Holidays*. Unlike TCT’s typical productions, which include six school performances and four public performances for a total audience of about 8,000 people, the audience for this virtual offering was entirely online much like this current show.

Teacher:

- List examples of live, in-person, Tuscaloosa Children's Theatre performances, or other theatre performances you have attended in the past. TCT's recent live performances include *Annie, Jr.*, *Shrek the Musical*, and *Mary Poppins*.
- Is this the first theatre performance you have seen online?
- What are some things that are the same in both types of shows? For example, both have singing, both have actors
- In what ways are the shows different? For example, live shows have audience responses of laughter or applause, in online shows the actors don't know how the audience is responding. In live shows there are group performances, in online shows there are no group performances.

Activity:

- Complete the Venn Diagram template as a class or individually to compare and contrast the similarities and differences of an online show with a live in-person show. Where the circles overlap, write down what both types of shows have.

Discussion and Activity #3:**A Year of Surprises and Some Disappointments**

Teacher Note: This discussion is a good opportunity to help your students reflect on their feelings about this past year and process how life has changed as a result. This generation of students holds a unique place in history and, like others before them, has a chance to come away stronger and more resilient by learning from what they have experienced. Use your professional wisdom and consider including your school counselor as you facilitate.

Teacher:

- Just like the performers in this show, you and I have had to do things differently over the past year. Sometimes we have been able to say like the performers "the show must go on" and were able to continue with our plans and sometimes we have had to cancel the show and do something different.
- You all will hold a special place in history and someday your children or grandchildren may ask you, "What was life like during the pandemic?" or "Did you have to wear a mask to school?" or "Did you have to stop going places or stop playing sports?" To help you remember this unique time in history, write down your answers to the following questions.

Activity:

- Choose two or three questions from each category below.

Surprises and Funny things

What kind of things are you doing online now that you did not do before March of last year?

What new computer skills have you learned in the past year?

What is the funniest thing that has happened to you when you were online?

What is the funniest thing your teacher has done online this past year?

What is most unusual camera angle you have seen while online?

What is something you liked about living through the past year that was surprising to you?

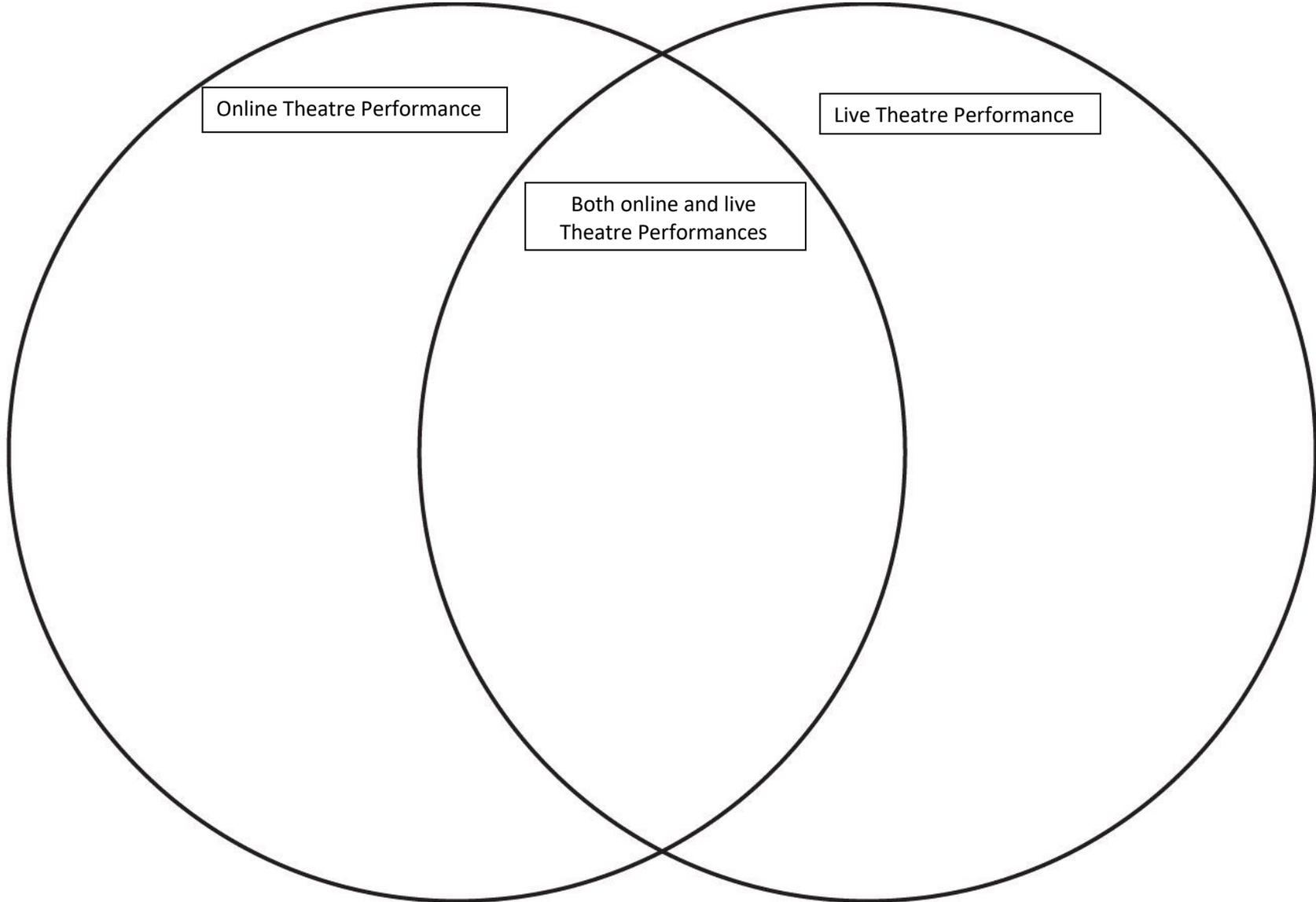
Challenges and disappointments

What is something you missed over the past year?

What is something that you have had to do online that you never thought you would do and you never want to do again?

If you could change something about how you responded to events of this past year, what would you change?

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Online Theatre Performance

Live Theatre Performance

Both online and live
Theatre Performances