

LITTLE TOOLS: SHARPENING THE PERFORMANCE

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- Everyone practice turning pages quietly and unobtrusively, getting the page ready before you need to speak. The audience can be very distracted by a lot of page turning.
 - Everyone practice looking at the speaker—whether your scene is on or not. Audience members will scan your faces. If you are looking out the window, they will look out the window. Simply watch whatever scene is going on.
 - Everyone practice speaking out loud, pronouncing all your consonants. Just for fun, all together, everyone speaking at once, say the first sentence of your character out loud, slowly, as if you were trying to be understood by someone who is slightly deaf, and may not understand English all that well.
- Think how this careful speaking feels, and generally slow down your speaking and enunciate clearly. Put endings on all your words. It doesn't take much, but it will make an enormous difference in how well the audience understands you.
 - Laugh at funny things the other characters say. If you are inclined to say, "Oh," or "My," or "Wow" at someone's story—especially in the choral sections, don't hesitate to vocalize your reaction. *Stay in the moment.* That is what theatre people say. Be a part of what is going on inside the play. The exception to this is the dialogues. They are little worlds of their own and we can't enter them, just watch them happen—and, maybe, smile.
- *Rehearse your entrance and exit.* Choose someone to lead the group on and a plan to get to your seats quickly. Similarly, have someone lead the group in a bow, and someone lead the group off. Practice this. Smooth beginnings and endings make a huge difference.
 - *Set up the stage so the dialogues are seated together, and the choral group is seated together.* If you need to use mikes this may mean some moving around. Think this through and keep the movement down to as little as possible.