



# PARENT GUIDE: MR. POPPER'S PENGUINS

We are excited for your upcoming visit to Lifeline Theatre and our production of *Mr. Popper's Penguins*! This guide will help you prepare your family for the theatre experience and any moments that might possibly be overwhelming.

## ABOUT THE PLAY

*Mr. Popper's Penguins* is the story of a couple during the Great Depression who inherit two penguins, Captain Cook and Greta, who then go on to have 10 penguin babies. To make ends meet, the Poppers train their family of penguins to perform in a vaudeville act, becoming overnight sensations and traveling all over the country. *Mr. Popper's Penguins* is an original adaptation of the book, incorporating musical numbers to help tell the story. There are differences between the book and the play, notably: two characters, the Popper's children, are not in the play; and the story ends with the Poppers returning their penguin family to the South Pole rather than Mr. Popper leaving his wife and children to relocate the penguins to the North Pole.

The running time of the show is 57 minutes with no intermission.

## ACTORS & PUPPETS

There are 4 actors in the play. Mr. Popper, Mrs. Popper and one male actor and one female actor who play all of the other characters. All four actors will serve as puppeteers during the play.

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There are five puppets in the play. Captain Cook and Greta are large puppets, roughly three feet tall, that the actors move using a stick projecting out of the back of the puppet and a hole in the back of the puppet's head allowing access to manipulate the head and beak. There are two sets of five penguin chicks, each on a pole with strings like a marionette. For each set of baby penguins, one can come off the pole and be manipulated individually. The final puppet is a seal, roughly three feet long, which has two holes for the actor to put his hand inside to make it move its mouth and manipulate its body/tail.

### SCENERY

The stage is small and pays homage to Mr. Popper's profession as a painter. There is a large backdrop curtain made up of painter's drop cloths, framed by numerous ladders and boards that make a series of shelves. The actors will move various ladders, benches, and props around to create new locations for the audience to imagine. For instance, a bus is made of a ladder held on its side with a cloth painted to look like the side of a bus attached to the bottom; the rungs of the ladder then suggest bus windows for the actors to look out of.

### LIGHTS & SOUNDS

As a musical, the play features a lot of songs and music. There is also a radio used to move time forward during scene transitions; the voice on the radio is often heard when the stage is dark.

The house lights will be left on during the show. The music and sound effects will be reduced in volume by approximately 20%.

### THEATRE LAYOUT

When you enter the theatre, you will walk across the stage floor and up two steps to the first row of seats. The seating area has eight total rows, all stadium-style so there is a good view of the stage from anywhere.

There is a secondary entrance into the theatre in the middle of the seating bank. A short set of stairs leads to a narrow hallway and back out to our lobby.

The main entrance to the theatre will be left open during the performance so if anyone needs to take a break it will be easy to enter/exit.

There will be a yellow line on the stage floor indicating the path to come in/out of the theatre so that the pathway is safe during the show.

# MR. POPPER'S PENGUINS

## PARENT CUE SHEET

| Action on Stage                          | Sensory Sensitivites   |
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| House Manager will give a curtain speech | Stage lights will go dark.   |
| Radio Voice Over                         | Radio glows and voice over is heard.   |
| Song - "A Thousand Miles Away"           | During the song, the actors singing overlaps with one another. The radio is heard. The lighting will change colors.  |
| Scene with Mr. & Mrs. Popper at home     | Radio glows and voice over is heard.   |
| Scene with the Poppers and Admiral Drake | Radio is heard and the Poppers exclaim. Sound effect of wind is heard.   |
| Mr. Popper meets Captain Cook            | Sound effect of a doorbell. Captain Cook is revealed in a large crate and pops out with sound and lights changing. The actor will manipulate the Captain Cook puppet.  |
| Song - "Rainbow 'Round the Corner"       | Mr. Popper and Captain Cook sing and dance, various characters meet Captain Cook and are frightened by the penguin and will exclaim. Multiple actors will take turns manipulating the Captain Cook puppet.   |
| Mrs. Popper meets Captain Cook           | Radio glows and voice over is heard. Mrs. Popper is initially frightened by Captain Cook. Captain Cook goes into the icebox.   |
| A Police Officer visits the Poppers      | Radio glows and voice over is heard. Sound effect of a doorbell is heard. Mrs. Callahan is mad that the Poppers have a penguin.  |
| Song - "Build a Home"                    | During the song, the Poppers and Captain Cook move various props into the icebox for Captain Cook's home.  |
| Captain Cook is lonely                   | The Poppers notice that Captain Cook is lonely and another penguin, Greta arrives from the Aquarium. Greta is a large puppet and is manipulated by an actor. A white sheet is pulled out and imagined as a snowy hill.   |
| Song - " Build a Home Reprise"           | All four actors sing the reprise.  |
| The Penguins will be parents             | The Radio glows and a voice over is heard. It is revealed that Greta laid 10 eggs.   |
| The baby penguins arrive                 | The baby penguins are on poles and manipulated by the actors - they pretend to play on the snowy hill. Two of the babies spar playfully.   |
| Song - "Determination"                   | The Poppers and penguins practice for their theatre act. Various ladders and boards are placed in different arrangements for the penguins to jump on, slide down, and flip off of. All four actors will manipulate the penguins at various times.  |
| The Poppers audition at the theatre      | Radio glows and voice over is heard. A bus made out of a ladder and a cloth appears, sound effect of a bus is heard. Lights will change colors as the location changes. Sound effect of a toilet flushing is heard. Mr. Greenbaum, the theatre owner, and his Manager have various exclamations. |

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| Action on Stage                                  | Sensory Sensitivities   |
|--|---|
| Song - "Poppers Performing Penguins"             | A spot light is used for the act, sound effect of audience reactions are heard. The lights change colors and footlights are used that cast large shadows on the backdrop. Greta and Captain Cook come up the theatre steps into the audience.   |
| Song - "Poppers Performing Penguins - continued" | Radio glows and voice over is heard. The Poppers and penguins sing and dance and travel to many different cities. Various sound effects are heard throughout such as a train, a car, and audience reactions.  |
| The Poppers meet Sven                            | A taxi made of a steering wheel and cloth appears on stage. Steffan, the seal appears. Steffan is a puppet that is manipulated by an actor. Steffan chases Mr. Popper rapidly around the stage and into the seating area. The lights change and the Poppers exclaim loudly. An actor will blow a policeman's whistle. |
| Jail Scene                                       | A jail is made of ladders and Mr. Popper and the penguins are locked up until Admiral Drake posts bond. General Admiral and Mr. Greenbaum argue over where the penguins should go.  |
| Song - "Finale"                                  | A boat is made out of ladders and benches. Sound effect of a boat.  |
| Bows and Reprise                                 | The stage lights will go dim, there will be possible clapping.  |