

Standard Concert Etiquette for Attending a Live Performance



Rules of Thumb When Attending a Formal Live Concert Performance

Picture this unhappy scenario: You have purchased your tickets in advance to get the best available seats, dressed in your best for this special occasion, and have been happily reading the concert program from your seat 15 minutes before the performance begins. Then, ten minutes into the program, a family of four climbs over you; a cell phone rings in the distance; an audience member begins an incessant coughing fit; and the person in front of you whispers to her companion while unwrapping a piece of candy.

While all of these distractions happening together is unlikely, any one of these occurrences can distract one's enjoyment of a live performance. Here are some helpful tips to make the most of your concert going experience, with hopes that the above scenario never becomes part of your experience.

1. Dress and Grooming. While tradition dictates that the musicians dress in tuxes and gowns, audiences dressed that way are pretty much a thing of the past. Many people still view a concert as a special occasion to dress up. However, please keep in mind that what you wear is far less important than your coming to the concert. On your first visit, expect to see some in their "Sunday best" and others more informal. So please, dress in clothes that make YOU feel comfortable, and you will fit right in!

2. Good "Scents." Because you are in a closed space with a lot of other people, for many who do not tolerate perfumed scents very well for a variety of reasons, concerts are a good time to leave your sweet smelling scents at home. Clean clothes and good grooming are all that is needed to make a great impression on your surrounding concert mates.

3. Show Up On Time. Please try to arrive one-half hour before the performance starts. This allows enough time to find parking, use the restroom, and find your seat. If you arrive late due to circumstances beyond your control, wait until applause to find your seat. Climbing over anyone while music is playing is rude behavior, unless there is a real emergency.

4. Coughing and Candy Wrappers. If you have to cough, try to muffle it with your hand or handkerchief. If you can, wait until the end of a movement or during a loud section of the music to muffle that cough. Bring cough drops, but don't unwrap them during a performance - it can be just as distracting as the cough itself. If coughing persists, discreetly excuse yourself for a few moments for it to subside.

5. Talking/Whispering. Even the quietest whisper can be heard in a resonant concert hall. Try to refrain from commenting on the music until the end of the piece. It will give you more to talk about at intermission!

6. Cell Phones, Beepers, Digital Watches. We all know how distracting they are and most likely we have been victims of these devices going off at the worst times. Please don't let it happen to you! A good way to remember to turn them off: when you turn off your car's engine, turn off your device. When you restart your vehicle, turn the device back on.

7. Cameras/Recording Devices. Cameras and other recording devices, including camera cell phones, are prohibited in most concert halls, and ours is no different. The Bangor Symphony Orchestra strictly prohibits the use of all cameras and recording devices without prior written authorization.

8. Young Children...to bring or not to bring? Children are welcomed as polite concert patrons, but some can only handle so much sitting/quiet time. If your child unexpectedly becomes distracting to others, the courteous thing to do is take them out of the concert hall to alleviate their restlessness, and not to let it continue with repeated attempts to quiet them while others are trying to enjoy the performance. Snapping fingers, playing with pens, turning book pages, tapping feet and/or fingers - all of these are distractions. If you do bring a small child, let a box office staff person know at the time you buy your tickets, and they can help find seats to best accommodate your needs. Everyone, including an infant, must have a ticket, even if a lap is used for sitting instead.

9. Clapping and Showing Appreciation. If you are unsure of whether or not clapping is appropriate, follow the lead of the experienced audience members around you. If you are still unsure when to applaud, watch the conductor. When he has dropped his hands down to his sides, the applause may begin. Clapping in between movements of multi movements works can become a distraction for the performers on stage.

10. Curtain Calls and Encores. If audience enthusiasm remains sustained, after much applause, the performers may return to the stage and resume performance positions, signaling to the audience that they will be performing an encore or bonus performance. Encores generally do not last for very long, and are a great showcase for appreciations. Standing ovations are a wonderful way to express your love of a performance if you have really been swept away. You may hear shouts of "Bravo!" or "Brava!" or "Brave!" This simply means "Well done!" When in doubt, do not do anything that makes people notice YOU instead of the Performers!

Found at <http://www.bangorsymphony.org/page/865-604/concert-etiquette>

11. Save to printed program so you refer to in your concert review assignment for the class.