

Get ready to see

# ***In the Heights***

at Wheelock Family Theatre



A social story to help families prepare children\*  
for a visit to

## **Wheelock Family Theatre**

by Cori Couture, MEd  
Education Support Specialist

**WHEELOCK**  
**FAMILY**  
**THEATRE**

**Affordable.**

**Professional.**

**Accessible.**

**Theatre for all Families and Children.**

**\*PLEASE NOTE:**

Social stories were originally developed for children on the autism spectrum, but we have found that they are helpful for preparing any child who is very young or has never been to the theatre before. Wheelock Family Theatre offers a social story for each of our productions. We hope you find them helpful!

I am going to see a play called  
***In the Heights***  
at Wheelock Family Theatre.



When I get to the theatre, we will walk  
through the lobby. It might be crowded.

I will take deep breaths and be patient  
as we move through the crowd.



In a play, people on a stage tell  
a story — right in front of us!  
These people are called actors.



When I sit down in the theatre, I will see **the set**. A set is an imaginary place, built on the stage, to show where the story happens. *This* play takes place in a neighborhood in New York City called Washington Heights.



Photo Credit: Randy H. Goodman All Rights Reserved Randy@RandyGoodmanPhotography.com

It is about the people who live there. This play is a musical. That means a lot of the story is told through singing and dancing.



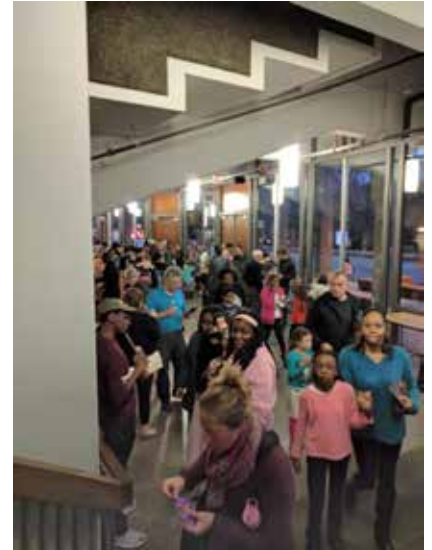
Sometimes the singing can get loud. If it is too much for me, I can always cover my ears.



I can hug or hold hands with my mom or dad — or with someone else who came with me to the theatre.



If I need a break, I can go into the lobby —



or to a quiet, cozy space nearby.



If I need something to hold on to, I can ask an usher for a squishy toy.

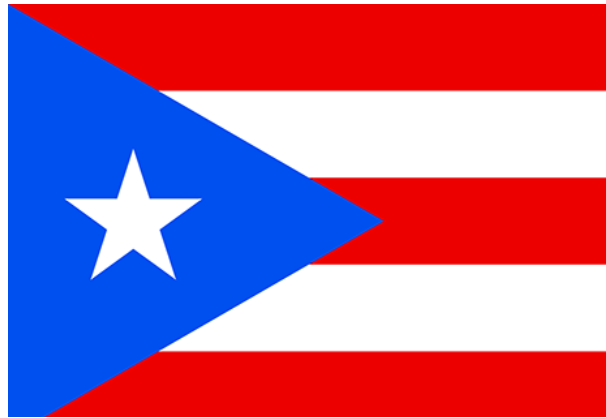


Many of the people who live in Washington Heights come from places where people speak Spanish, like:

**Cuba,**



**Puerto Rico,**



and the **Dominican Republic.**



So, in the play, people speak and sing in both English and Spanish.

There is also a little bit of swearing in the play, but I know it is just part of the story.

I will know that the play is about to start when the lights in the room get darker and the lights on the stage get brighter.

The audience will get very quiet. It is important that I try to be quiet during the show, so I can hear everything.



Here are some of the main characters in this play: Vanessa, Nina, Benny, and Usnavi.



Photo Credit: Randy H. Goodman All Rights Reserved RandyRandyGoodmanPhotography.com

Usnavi owns a small bodega (a convenience store) on the first floor of an apartment building.



Abuela Claudia lives upstairs. Abuela means grandmother in Spanish.



Usnavi's younger cousin Sonny works for him at the bodega.



Nina is a good friend of Usnavi's. She is just coming home after a year at college in California.



She has a crush on Usnavi's best friend Benny.



Nina's parents Kevin and Camilla run Rosario's Car Service (a taxi service).

Benny works at the car service. He has a crush on Nina, but her father doesn't want Nina to date him.





Vanessa works at Daniela's hair salon with Daniela and Carla.



Vanessa and Usnavi like each other.



At one point, the young people in the neighborhood go to a dance club.

They are having fun, until some people start fighting. It will look like they are punching and hitting each other, but I won't be worried.



I will remember that these people are actors.

They are only *pretending* to fight, and no one will get hurt.

In the middle of the fight, the power will go out. This is part of the play.

The stage and theatre will be almost completely dark. Many people onstage will shout and act like they are scared.



But *I* don't need to be scared.

At the end of the first act (first half) of the play, there will be fireworks. This is also part of the play.

There might be flashes of light and the sound of explosions.



If I am nervous or scared or if things get too loud, I can always cover my ears,



I can hug or hold hands with my mom or dad — or with someone else who came with me to the theatre.



If I need a break, I can go into the lobby —



or to a quiet, cozy space nearby.



If I need something to hold on to, I can ask an usher for a squishy toy.



At the end of a scene, some people will clap. Clapping tells the actors that I liked their performance.



If I want to clap, I can.  
If I don't want to clap, I don't have to.

In the middle of the play, we will have a break called **intermission**.

Lots of people will get up from their seats, and go back to the lobby.

During this time the lobby can get crowded and loud.



I can go to the lobby if I want to, but I don't **have** to. I can stay in my seat.

If things are too noisy, I can cover my ears.



I can hug or hold hands with my mom or dad —



or with someone else who came with me to the theatre.

Or I can go to a quiet, cozy space in a different room.



I can ask for a snack.

I can eat my snack in the lobby or outdoors. But there is no eating or drinking inside the theatre.



I can ask to use the bathroom if I need to.



If I am thirsty, I can ask to use the water fountain.



After intermission, everyone will come back to the theatre and sit down in their seats again.



When the lights in the room get darker and the lights on the stage get brighter, I will know that the play is about to start again.

It is important that I try to stay quiet, so I can hear everything.



The actors will come back on stage to finish telling the story.



We find out that some people broke into the beauty salon and Usnavi's bodega during the blackout.

They stole and smashed things.



Later, everyone in the neighborhood finds out that Abuela Claudia has died. They are all very sad and upset.

I will try not to be too sad and upset myself. I know that Abuela Claudia is played by an actor, and she didn't really die.



If I am nervous or sad, I can always cover my ears,



I can hug or hold hands with my mom or dad —



or with someone else who came with me to the theatre.

At the very end of the play, all of the actors will come out on stage and bow. This is called a **curtain call**.



People will clap a lot, so the actors will know how much they liked the play.



Sometimes people will stand up and clap.  
Sometimes they will cheer.



If I want to clap or stand up or cheer, I can.  
But I do not **have** to do any of these things.

When the play is over, we will go  
back to the lobby. It might be loud and  
crowded.



If the sound is too loud, I  
can always cover my ears.





I will take deep breaths  
and be patient as we move  
through the lobby —



and go outside.



I can hold hands with mom or  
dad —

or with someone else who  
came with me to the theatre.



After this I will leave  
Wheelock Family  
Theatre.



Going to the theatre is very exciting!

I hope I will have a great  
time when I go to see  
***In the Heights.***



**WHEEL**LOCK  
**F**AMILY  
**THEATRE**

**Affordable.**

**Professional.**

**Accessible.**

**Theatre for all Families and Children.**

For more information about access and inclusion at Wheelock Family Theatre, please contact Jeri Hammond, Director of Education, Outreach, and Community Engagement, at [JHammond@wheelock.edu](mailto:JHammond@wheelock.edu) or (617) 879-1175.

We hope you found this social story helpful!