

# PRE-SHOW LOBBY ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN'S THEATRE

## THE REPERTORY THEATRE OF ST. LOUIS

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### How Project Developed

The Rep's Children's Theatre Company is an Imaginary Theatre Company (ITC). This company is a traveling group, taking theatre to schools in and around the St. Louis area. Once a year, in December, ITC offers performances for the public. There are seven performances and tickets usually sell out fast. Since it is open seating, families generally arrive early to get good seating.

The Volunteer Board saw a need to entertain those families in the lobby before the house opened. Each year we create activities, some of which relate to the play (which is usually holiday related). Some past activities have included:

- Face-painting – a few very simple holiday symbols are displayed on a chart and the children choose from those. This makes it easy for even an unskilled artist to paint.
- Craft - we have done shapes of Christmas trees to color and decorate with craft items, elf ears on a paper crown, crepe paper flowers, and paper masks.
- Boxes – different sized boxes wrapped in holiday paper are available for the kids to stack, create, etc.
- Something special – when the play was Velveteen Rabbit, a local rabbit society brought their bunnies for the kids to pet. For Elves and Shoemaker, a local shoe manufacturer provided some old shoe samples for the kids to try on.
- In addition to these hands-on activities, we always provide costumed greeters --- our volunteers dressed in past ITC costumes, greet the families and direct them to activities and the theatre.





## **Project Set-up and Cost**

The Volunteer Board appoints a Chair and Committee. They meet in early fall to plan the lobby activities for that year. Then volunteers are recruited and assigned jobs. Accordingly:

- Volunteer hours: about 100 during the performances and 10 in preparation.
- Staff hours: about 5 hours at the most.
- The only costs are for face-paints and craft supplies, much of which is donated by our Board members.

## **Benefits -- Families, Volunteers and Theatre Reaction**

This activity has been a huge success. Families look forward to making their attendance at the play a big event. It does enhance the theatre experience and the ticket sales have greatly increased since we first introduced it. Most performances are sell-outs.

This is also a great way to use volunteers who are not members of our Volunteer Board, but are interested in doing a one-time project.

