THEATREWORKS USA

Pete the Cat

mon SEP 26 10 am
WELCOME TO THE HOP
A performance needs an audience, so be prepared to play your part!

THEATER ETIQUETTE
When entering the Hopkins Center, show consideration for all those sharing the building by remaining quiet and respectful in common areas.

Be aware and use quiet voices. Remember that live theater differs greatly from watching television or movies or attending a sporting event. Live performers can hear and see you and are easily distracted by any talking or moving around in the audience. Even the smallest sounds can be heard throughout the theater, so it’s best to be quiet so that everyone can enjoy the performance.

Applause is the best way to show your enthusiasm and appreciation!

Important things to remember: Backpacks, food, drink, and gum are not allowed in the theater. Please turn off all cell phones and note that recording the performance or taking any photos is strictly prohibited. Hats off! It is respectful to remove hats during your time in the theater.

INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS
Be prepared and arrive early. You should arrive at the theater 30 to 45 minutes before the show. Allow for travel time, parking, and trips to the restroom. You should be in your seat at least 15 minutes before the performance begins.

Have a head count. On the day of the performance be sure to have an accurate head count of students, chaperones, and teachers.

Staying for lunch? Please call 603.646.2010 no later than one week in advance of the show to make a reservation for lunch. The day of the show, bring lunches in marked boxes and give them to a Hop staff member. Lunches will be ready for you after the show in Alumni Hall.

Photo Policy. The Hopkins Center may take photographs during the performance for use on our website or on promotional materials. If you or your students do not wish to be photographed, please see a Hop staff member.

The Show Must Go On! We do not cancel events due to inclement weather. Performances will only be canceled if the artist is unable to reach the theater. Schools will be notified by phone if the performance has been cancelled. We do not issue refunds for weather-related cancellations; please feel free to fill empty seats with other school or community members.

This study guide was created for you by the Outreach & Arts Education team. To download copies of this study guide, see additional resources for this event, or view past study guides, please visit: www.hop.dartmouth.edu/outreach.

ENJOY THE SHOW!
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The Hopkins Center Outreach & Arts Education department embodies the Hop’s mission to “ignite and sustain a passion for the arts.” It provides Dartmouth, the community and beyond rare personal contact with artists and a broad context for the performing arts. Unveiling the creative process of extraordinarily diverse artists, Outreach programs touch more than 14,000 lives each year.

DID YOU KNOW?
• The Hopkins Center opened in 1962.
• The Hopkins Center was designed by Wallace Harrison, architect of Lincoln Center and the United Nations Building in New York City.
• The first three rows of The Moore Theater are on an elevator that goes eleven feet below ground to create an orchestra pit and can also be raised to the height of the stage to make it larger.
• In The Moore Theater, the area over the stage, called the “fly loft,” is 63 feet tall.
ABOUT THE SHOW

In this performance based on the books by James and Kimberly Dean, Pete the Cat is caught rocking out with his animal friends after bedtime and is sent to live with the Biddle family to learn his manners. For this groovy blue cat, life is an adventure no matter where you wind up. The minute Pete walks in the door, he gets the whole family rocking. The whole family, that is, except for Jimmy Biddle, the most organized second grader on planet earth. As the end of second grade approaches, the last thing Jimmy needs is some crazy cat in his life, changing his family and turning everything upside down. But when Jimmy draws a blank in art class during the last week of school, it turns out Pete is the perfect friend to help him conquer second grade art and learn a little about inspiration along the way. This musical adventure goes all the way to Paris and back in a VW bus.

ABOUT THE COMPANY

The mission of Theatreworks USA is to create, produce and provide access to professional theater for young and family audiences nationwide, including disadvantaged youth and under-served communities. Founded in 1961, it has presented to more than 90 million children and their families in 49 states and Canada. Headquartered in New York City, Theatreworks USA not only provides young audiences with their first taste of the performing arts, but also gives young actors, writers, directors and designers an early opportunity to work in professional theater. Under the direction of Barbara Pasternack (Artistic Director) and Ken Arthur (Producing Director), Theatreworks USA is also one of the most honored theaters of its kind, having received both a Drama Desk and a Lucille Lortel Award.

ABOUT THE BOOKS

Before Pete the Cat was a musical, it was a series of books. The person who writes a book is called the author and the person who draws the pictures is called the illustrator. Pete gets his cool blue look from illustrator James Dean. The songs and stories of Pete were first written by Eric Litwin, an award-winning children’s musician, but are now written by James’s wife, Kim Dean. Kim and James work in side-by-side studios, sharing their home with five cats and Emma the pug.
ABOUT THE MUSICAL

Will Aronson is a composer, someone who writes music for songs. Sarah Hammond is a writer who writes plays and lyrics. Lyrics are the words of a song. Together, Will and Sarah wrote the songs for Pete the Cat. Sarah also took the books by Kim and James Dean and adapted them into a script. When not writing musicals for kids about blue cats, Will and Sarah write musicals for grown-ups. Now that they have finished Pete the Cat, Sarah and Will are working on two new musicals, Wind-Up Girl and Jenny Talks to Aliens.

CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND: ABOUT PARIS

In the show, Pete and Jimmy take a trip to Paris, France. Paris is the capital city of France, which is a country in Europe. People who live in France are called French and they speak the French language. If you live in Paris, you are known as Parisian (pair-ee-shun). Paris is known for its yummy food, many art museums and joie de vivre (zwah duh vee-vrah), French for “joy of living.” Over two million people live in the city of Paris and over 70 million people visit each year. Paris has many important buildings and landmarks. Here are just a few:

- The Eiffel (eye-ful) Tower and Seine (sen) River; the tower was built by Gustave Eiffel for the 1889 World’s Fair.
- The Arc de Triomphe (ark duh tree-umph) is a memorial to the French who fought in wartime for France.
- Notre Dame (no-trah dahm) Cathedral, is a Catholic church built in 1345 CE; Notre Dame means “our lady.”

The Louvre (loo-vrah) Museum is the most visited art museum in the world.
ON TOUR

This production of Pete the Cat is on tour. That means it goes from place to place, stopping to perform and then moving on to the next town. Theatreworks USA helps organize and plan performances so the show can go from place to place quickly. There are five actors in the production of Pete the Cat and one stage manager. The actors will be seen on stage playing all the different characters in the show. The stage manager will be backstage making sure the recorded music plays and the stage lights work. When Pete the Cat arrives at the Hopkins Center, everything the actors and stage manager need is packed up in their truck or van (or maybe a VW bus!): the set, props and costumes. The actors and stage manager have to unpack everything. They unpack their costumes and set them up in the dressing room. They unpack the set and place it on the stage. They unpack their props and place them either onstage or backstage. After they have finished all of their performances, they repack everything and drive to the next town. Most tours last for three or four months and each place they perform must be carefully scheduled so the actors and stage manager can drive from town to town in as little time as possible. A tour is special because it allows a production to be seen by all the people who cannot travel all the way to New York City to see the show.

WHAT IS A VW BUS?

In Pete the Cat, Jimmy and Pete take the VW, or Very Wonderful, bus to Paris and other places. The VW bus is based on a real vehicle that was popular in the 1960s in the United States. On the real VW bus, which was originally made in the country of Germany, “VW” stands for Volkswagen which means “people’s car” in the German language. Unlike most of the cars we drive, the engine for the Volkswagen bus is in the back, not the front.
LEARNING ACTIVITIES:

WHO ARE YOU? (GRADES 1 AND 2)
The actors in *Pete the Cat* play more than one character. At the beginning of the show, they play animal characters and then they play members of the Biddle family. The actors have to switch back and forth between being an animal and being a family member. To do this, they need to look and sound different so we can tell each one apart. Split into groups to try out some acting. Each group should have two characters, one animal and one family member. Examples include:

- Frog and teenage boy
- Owl and young girl
- Squirrel and older man/Dad
- Alligator and older woman/Mom

Begin by exploring how each animal moves and sounds. Then explore how each family member moves and sounds. What is one sound each of these animals or people would make or say? What is one way they would sit or walk (try having the animals all move on two feet)? Explore being the animal and then switching to the family member. Have each group share their characters. Is the audience able to tell which animal and family member they are? What can you observe in the sounds and movements your classmates use? How did you make your choices? Which one do you prefer, animal or family member? Why?

Extension: create a simple mask out of a paper plate for each of your characters. Do your sound and movement with the mask. How does having a mask change the way you sound and move?

BECAUSE I’M HAPPY (GRADES 2 AND 3)
Pete the Cat is inspired to sing about everyday things: shoes, buttons, meeting new people. In *Pete the Cat*, Jimmy gets inspiration to paint by using Pete’s magic sunglasses. What inspires you? What simple things make you happy? Write a short paragraph about something that makes you happy or inspires you to do your best. Using the paragraph, write a song or create a painting that reflects your source of happiness or inspiration and how it makes you feel. If desired, write the song using a well-known tune, rewriting the words to fit. Share the song or painting with class. What makes you happy or inspired? Do you find the other things people sing or paint inspiring? Why or why not?

FELINE FAN FIC (GRADE 3)
Write your own story inspired by the *Pete the Cat* books! Read two or three of the books and discuss what happens in them. What kinds of things happen to Pete and his friends? How does Pete act in the stories? Brainstorm ideas for things Pete can do in your story. Where does he go? What does he do? What trouble does he get into? Write down all of your ideas, then take some time to decide which one you want to write about. Using correct grammar and paragraph structure, write three paragraphs—a beginning, middle and end—to make your story.

Extension: Create a new character inspired by Pete and write a new story!
PRE PERFORMANCE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Read some of the *Pete the Cat* books. The reading can be silent reading, read aloud or reading to a friend or pet. Talk about what happens in the book. How would you describe Pete?
- What words would you use to describe your or a friend’s pet(s)? What kinds of things do you see your pet doing?
- One character in the play has a list of rules he likes to follow. What sort of rules do you have in your classroom? Discuss why rules are important. What happens when someone breaks the rules? Do you have rules at home?

POST PERFORMANCE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- How was the play different from the *Pete the Cat* books you have read? How was it the same? Discuss the actor who played Pete. How do you think he/she prepared for her role? How would you portray a cat on stage?
- If your cat or pet could speak, what would you ask it? What do you think it would want to talk about? How would your family change with a talking animal in the house?
- Why did Jimmy copy the painting? What happens if you copy someone’s work at school? Why do you think it was hard for Jimmy to come up with a painting of his own?
- Jimmy had a lot of rules for being a roommate. Pete didn’t follow the rules. What do you think is better: to have rules or not? Discuss how rules are important in some cases and maybe not important in others.