



American Expression E2302 Curtain call

IOTS Publishing Team
International Online Teachers Society
Since 2011

The term "curtain call" refers to the moment at the end of a theatrical performance when actors return to the stage to take a bow in front of the audience. This tradition is a vital part of live theatre, marking the completion of the performance and providing an opportunity for the audience to express their appreciation through applause. It also allows the cast and crew to acknowledge the audience's presence and their role in the theatrical experience.

Curtain calls typically occur after the final act or scene of a performance. As the curtain rises, the actors, often led by the lead performers, step forward in a line or group to face the audience. The sequence of bows usually follows a hierarchy, with main actors bowing first, followed by supporting actors, and then the ensemble cast. In some productions, directors, musicians, and other key contributors may also join the curtain call to receive their due recognition.

For the audience, the curtain call is a moment to express their enjoyment and admiration for the performance. Applause, cheers, and sometimes standing ovations communicate the audience's level of appreciation. This interaction between the audience and performers helps create a sense of closure and mutual respect, reinforcing the communal nature of live theatre.

For actors, a curtain call is a moment of validation and gratitude. The acknowledgment from the audience can be deeply rewarding, offering a sense of accomplishment and recognition for the hard work and dedication put into the performance. It also allows the cast to briefly break character and connect with the audience as themselves, rather than as the roles they have been portraying.

The tradition of the curtain call dates back to the early days of theatre and has evolved over centuries. While its basic premise remains unchanged, the style and execution can vary greatly depending on cultural norms, the nature of the performance, and the director's vision. Some productions incorporate creative elements into the curtain call, such as choreographed bows, additional music, or brief encore performances, adding an extra layer of entertainment for the audience.

In modern theatre, the curtain call also serves as a signal that the performance is definitively over, allowing the audience to transition from the immersive world of the play back to reality. It marks the end of the narrative journey, providing a clear demarcation between the fictional world on stage and the real world offstage.

In conclusion, the curtain call is a significant and cherished aspect of theatrical performances. It is a moment of mutual acknowledgment and appreciation between the performers and the audience, symbolizing the end of the artistic journey shared during the performance. This tradition underscores the collaborative and communal essence of live theatre, celebrating the connection and interplay between those on stage and those watching from the seats.

Questions for Discussion

1. How does the tradition of the curtain call enhance the overall experience of a live theatrical performance for both the audience and the actors?
2. In what ways can the style and execution of a curtain call vary depending on the production, and what impact might these variations have on the audience's perception?
3. Why is the curtain call considered an important moment of closure in a theatrical performance, and how does it help transition the audience back to reality?
4. Can you think of a memorable curtain call you have witnessed, and what made it particularly impactful or unique?
5. How do creative elements, such as choreographed bows or encore performances, during a curtain call add to the theatrical experience, and what are some examples you have seen or would like to see?