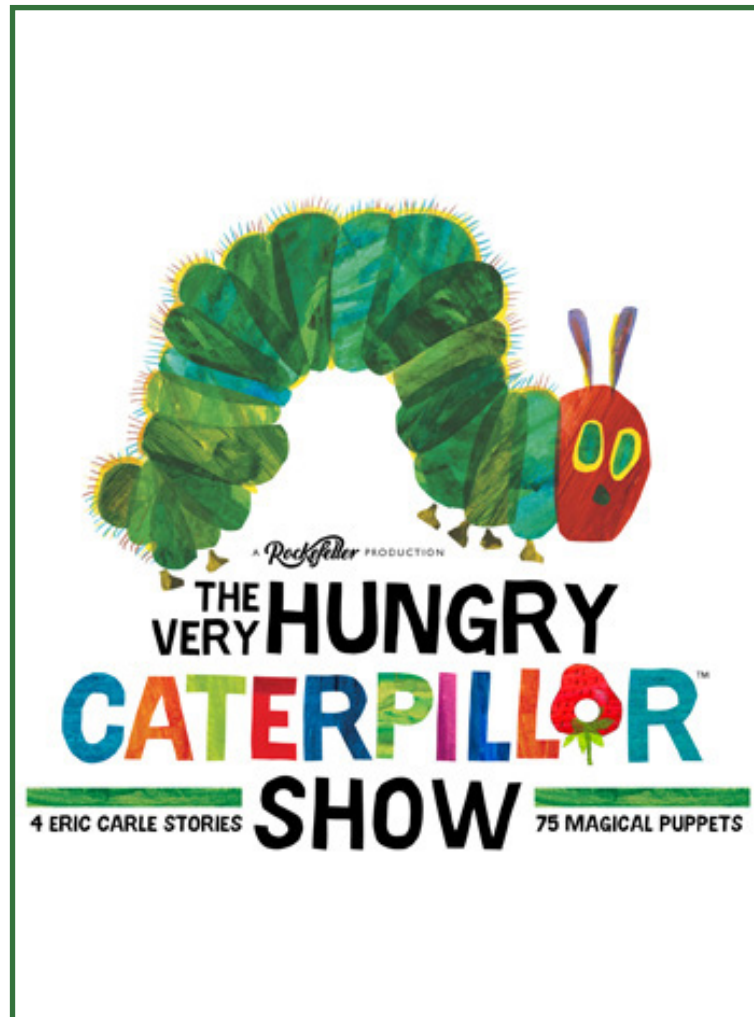


SENSORY-FRIENDLY PERFORMANCE
PARENT'S GUIDE



Sat, Feb 14, 2026 3 PM

2025-26 season - *The Very Hungry Caterpillar Show*

Created by Jonathan Rockefeller | Based on the books by Eric Carle

Produced by Rockefeller Studios | Original Direction / Staging – Jonathan Rockefeller

Composition & Sound Design – Nate Edmondson | Puppets created by The Rock Shop

Today's celebration is brought to life, in part, by:

David Holland

Brian Litwak

Lisa & Ken Miller

Sarah Pollock

Nichelle & Sasha Weintraub

Children's Theatre of Charlotte is supported, in part, by the City of Charlotte, and the North Carolina Arts Council, a division of the Department of Natural & Cultural Resources. Additional support is provided by the Shubert Foundation.



What to expect at a sensory-friendly performance

Sensory-friendly theatre is an approach to the audience experience that “softens” the environment. What does that mean exactly? In general, we make the theatre available to everyone, including those who may need more flexibility to help manage all of the sensory experiences that come along with attending a performance. Below are some of the adjustments Children’s Theatre of Charlotte is making to create a more sensory-friendly environment tailored to each show:

- Lights in the theatre will stay low during the show, instead of turning all the way off.
- We will lower the sound levels when needed.
- We sell fewer tickets for the sensory-friendly performances so families have more room to move as needed.
- We provide fidgets, headphones and weighted toys to help children feel more organized and settled.
- Someone will be at the front of the stage with glow sticks to help give families a warning when sensory-rich moments are nearing. Raising one stick means there’s a smaller sensory moment coming up (like a loud sound or a change in lighting). Raising two sticks means a more intense sensory-rich moment is about to occur.
- We provide a quiet room if children need to leave the theatre to feel more settled or regroup during the show.

Support materials for you

We provide several guides to help prepare your family for your visit:

The Social Story walks your family through our facility and what to expect on your visit.

The Child Guide goes with each performance.

The Parent Guide like this one helps parents support their children’s learning and experience in the theatre.

The Sensory Table provides access to weighted toys, fidgets, and headphones for use as needed.



Special thanks

to Julie Higginbotham of Precious Developments. Julie has worked as our consultant in the creation and preparation of our sensory-friendly performances. We’re grateful for this valued partnership.

Learning opportunities and sensory-rich moments in *The Very Hungry Caterpillar Show*



Welcome to the show, we're glad you're here! Today, you won't just get to see 1 story, you will get to see 4! But you've never seen storytelling like this before.....

Sensory-rich moments:

This is a generally mild production, but we're going to use lighting shifts and over 75 puppets to tell it! There are just a few more intense lighting moments, and you'll see information about those scenes in this guide. As always, we have resources available for you to borrow to help you feel comfortable while you're with us. Enjoy all the things!



Meet our storytellers! They love to read, and they want to bring these stories to life!

Books open up a whole world for us - enjoy the ride!

Sensory-rich moments:

This opening scene sets the tone for the music in this production - mild and consistent. There are minor lighting shifts to get us started, and when the first story begins, there is a more significant lights up effect with a music change to get us started.



Here's our first story, "Brown Bear." Get ready, you're about to meet our first new friends...

You don't need big puppets to bring a story to life - how can we use our imaginations to create these new worlds?

Sensory-rich moments:

This story has lighting shifts for each of the animals and their colors. We'll cue each one so you know they're happening. If you need to borrow sunglasses to help you feel more comfortable, we're ready!



Learning opportunities and sensory-rich moments continued



Meet Brown Bear - he may be big, but he's friendly, we promise!

How do we celebrate all the wonderful colors we see around us and in each of us? It's really a beautiful thing....

Sensory-rich moments:

Here is our first puppet, and he's the biggest! Lighting shifts continue with each character, and our actors use different voices for each one.



Do you see the beautiful red bird flying around? Just wait, he might just fly out into the audience to give you a closer look! Now, sit back and meet the rest of our colorful friends....

Sensory-rich moments:

This is the first time an actor is out in the house - be sure to help keep all the humans in their seats for safety! :) Each animal will come out with their color changes. Once each one is introduced, they will all come out one after another. To end the story and transition to the next one, there is a more significant lighting shift to show the change.



Here's the second story - "10 Little Rubber Ducks." I wonder how this story will go...

We don't have to create stories the same way as anyone else - that's what our imagination is for!

Sensory-rich moments:

This mini transition will move into a brighter lighting shift.



Learning opportunities and sensory-rich moments continued



Wow, did you know this is how rubber ducks are made? What's your favorite part?

Have you ever watched a child pretend to build something? Hopefully they'll go home with some new sounds to make....

Sensory-rich moments:

This scene contains vocal sound effects to "make" the rubber ducks, then this moment will transition to the next with a lighting shift.



The rubber ducks are going on an adventure...be careful little ducks....

"Are we there yet?"

Sensory-rich moments:

This scene contains some minor shouting and boat horn sounds, and **there is a more significant thunderstorm moment**. This picture shows the moment right before the actor says "Suddenly..." before the lighting shifts and the actual storm begins. **From "Suddenly," the whole storm moment lasts approximately 28 seconds.** There is a spotlight moment that indicates that the storm is over.



Oh dear, the rubber ducks are floating out in the water! Watch and see where each one goes on their own adventures.

Being brave and venturing out can be a wonderful experience.

Sensory-rich moments:

After the storm, each duck will go on a separate adventure. There will be more puppets with animal sounds and mild lighting shifts. This story will transition to the next with a darker lighting shift to set up the next fun story.



Learning opportunities and sensory-rich moments continued



Oh wow - look at the fireflies!! Aren't they beautiful? This must be the story of "The Very Lonely Firefly."

How do you look for the light in each other? I promise, it's there....even in YOU! :)

Sensory-rich moments:

This opening scene contains "flashing" lights for the fireflies that the actors control. They will not be blinking them fast, but if you'd like to borrow sunglasses to help you feel comfortable, just let us know!



Aw, that poor firefly is lonely! Wait...is that a friend over there in that window? Watch and see where some friends might be hiding....

Have you ever found a friend in a surprising place? They often turn out to be the best ones!

Sensory-rich moments:

This story moves through multiple "friends" for the firefly. Lighting remains mostly darker for this story so we can see the firefly, of course! There is one more significant lighting shift that is brief and contained on stage, and as well as a tiny car moment with lights on it that we will buffer.



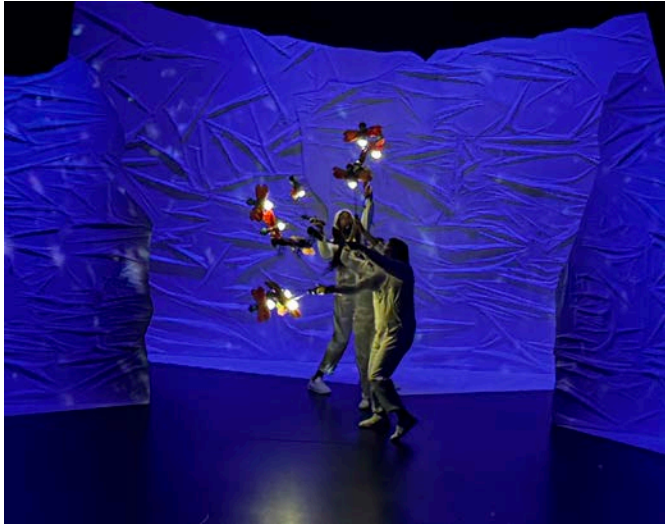
The firefly still can't find another firefly friend.....

Sensory-rich moments:

After the car drives offstage, **there is a bigger firework moment coming up next.** When the actor says, "...and flew toward them, but they were not other fireflies," there is a pause and then the fireworks lighting and sound effects begins. **When you hear "...not other fireflies," the full fireworks moment will last for approximately 42 seconds.** Then, an actor will walk from the back of the house with 2 firefly sticks. He will not be flashing the lights quickly or holding them close to the audience for safety. Be sure to stay in your seats while he walks!



Learning opportunities and sensory-rich moments continued

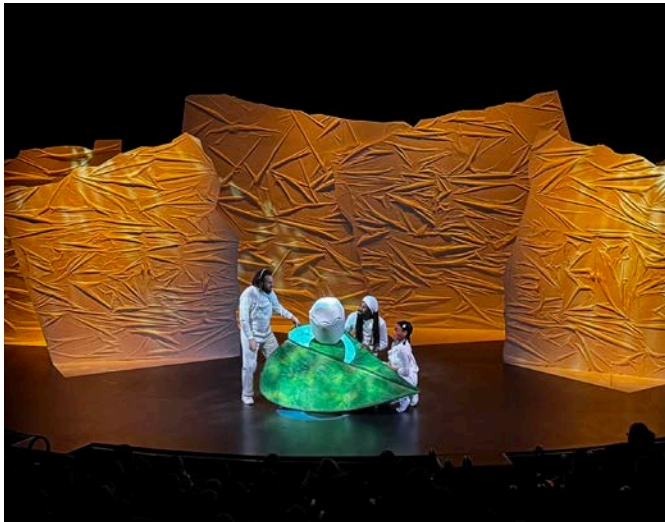


How wonderful, the firefly found some friends!
Aren't they beautiful?

It's good to be with the ones who really get you.

Sensory-rich moments:

This concluding scene contains more blinking firefly lights, and the actors will control them to minimize fast flashing. There are mild lighting effects at the end, then the lighting will shift once more to move into our final story of the show.



A-ha! There is "The Very Hungry Caterpillar!" At least, we think that's what's in there?

What do we do when we see an opportunity to start fresh and do something different?

Sensory-rich moments:

This story opens with mild lighting shifts as the caterpillar comes to life!



Yep, there he is! Whew! Wait until you see this little guy move around, he's very cool!

Swagger is a sense of being - no one gets to assign it to you or take it away.

Sensory-rich moments:

This is a continuation of the opening scene, no major shifts besides allowing you to be prepared to see the caterpillar's face.



Learning opportunities and sensory-rich moments continued



The caterpillar is so adorable....and so hungry.... Watch to see what he finds to eat....

No one deserves to be hungry, ever. How can we support our village and community around us?

Sensory-rich moments:

This scene walks through all the things this caterpillar is going to eat. Each moment contains mild lighting shifts contained on stage.



Can you believe the caterpillar is still VERY HUNGRY? He's going to move on to some bigger and better and more delicious foods...

Feeling the bottomless pit on this one, right?

Sensory-rich moments:

This scene builds in lighting shifts and moves at a faster pace. It is still milder on the scale of all the things we've done here at Children's Theatre, but it's every bit as beautiful and magical!



Aw, poor caterpillar....he has a tummy ache! What will he do now?

There's nothing like a belly ache after a feast to make us rethink our decisions....

Sensory-rich moments:

This is a softer scene that will move into a surprise in the next one with a lighting shift.



Learning opportunities and sensory-rich moments continued



Whelp....did you see this coming? The caterpillar is a bit more.....round....

Every single shape is beautiful - celebrate yours and make sure the humans around you know that you celebrate theirs too!

Sensory-rich moments:

This is a goofy scene with lighting shifts. It moves into the next moment with a more significant lighting shift.



Have you ever heard of a cocoon? What do you think the caterpillar is doing in there? We won't spoil the beautiful surprise....

Every choice we make gives us a new opportunity to be a beautiful butterfly...

Sensory-rich moments:

This scene has more significant lighting shifts that are contained on the stage. There are moving lights against the backdrop and a blackout before the big final moment with a huge butterfly (sorry to give the spoiler here, adulty humans...). The show will conclude with a final lighting shift before the cast comes out for their curtain call. We hope you loved this as much as we do! :)

Thanks for joining us at Children's Theatre of Charlotte for this special performance. We hope to see you at our other sensory-friendly performances in the future.



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