

SENSORY-FRIENDLY PERFORMANCE
PARENT'S GUIDE



Sun, Dec 21, 2025 4 PM

2025-26 season - Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer

Based on the animated television special “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer” adapted from the story by Robert L. May and the song by Johnny Marks | Music and Lyrics by Johnny Marks
Script Adaptation by Robert Penola | Developed by Character Arts Creations, LLC
Originally produced, directed and conceived by Jeff Frank and First Stage with scenic and puppet designs by Brandon Kirkham | Arrangements by Timothy Splain
Orchestrations by William C. White | Presented through special arrangement with Music Theatre International (MTI). All authorized performance materials are also supplied by MTI

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

Herb & Gina Clegg
Lise Hain
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Brian & Laura Murdock

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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 *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*



Happy Holidays, and welcome to “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer!” We hope you enjoy this most-loved story as we bring the North Pole to life!

Sensory-rich moments:

This musical contains all the wonderful things that come with live theatre - lighting effects, sound effects, and very cool storytelling! As usual, we have adjusted all the things to support you for this performance, but if you need to borrow some extra supports, all you have to do is ask! :)

The show opens with some busy lights on set that are contained to the stage with light music.



Meet Sam, our beloved snowman narrator! He will guide us through the story, and he’s going to start with introducing us to some very special folks from the Christmastown....

How do you introduce others into your space?

Sensory-rich moments:

This opening scene contains lighting shifts and background music as it moves through mini-scene moments. It transitions into the next scene with busy elves entering the scene.



Woah, that was Santa Claus and Mrs. Claus! But wait, here come more friends that live at the North Pole...

If someone came into your community, what would they find to be most joyful?

Sensory-rich moments:

This scene opens with playing on stage, including throwing “snowballs,” as it moves into the first musical number. There are increased lighting shifts and active moving lights that are contained to the stage, then the scene transitions through the next brief narration scene with lighting shifts and singing.



Learning opportunities and sensory-rich moments continued



Awww, look, it's Baby Rudolph!! His parents and Santa are so proud of him, until something strange happens with that nose?

What makes you stand out? Does that have to be a bad thing? (Hint Hint - NOPE! :))

Sensory-rich moments:

This scene contains a fun musical number with lighting shifts and sound effects, particularly classic ji. There is also a particular tone that plays with a significant red light glow when Rudolph's nose lights up. The scene transitions to the next with a mini scene and mild music.



Time for Rudolph to learn to....reindeer... But he also has to learn about some of the dangers that come with being a reindeer!

It's not always easy to learn how to just BE when there are so many other things to learn...

Sensory-rich moments:

This is a mild scene to start with minimal activity and some playful shouts on stage. There is a brief "scary" moment when the puppet face of the Abominable Snow Monster appears at the back of the stage with flashy lighting changes that stay contained to the stage.



Let's head back to Santa's Castle to see what the elves are up to now!

Who are the "elves" who help keep things running with you?

Sensory-rich moments:

This scene opens with toy-making sound effects, then moves into a fun musical number with more sound effects and lighting shifts. It moves into the second half of the scene with a distinct lighting shift at the end of the song.



Learning opportunities and sensory-rich moments continued



Meet Herbie - he's an elf, but does he want to be just like the other elves?

What actually makes a misfit, a misfit?

Sensory-rich moments:

This scene contains some shouting and frustration, followed by a brief song. It transitions into the next scene with lighting and set shifts.



Rudolph's parents are worried about how he will fit in too. What kind of solution do his parents want to try?

Why do we feel like we have to hide the things that make us unique and different? Neither of those are bad words!

Sensory-rich moments:

This short scene contains another brief song before transitioning into the next scene with lighting and set shifts.



It's time for Rudolph to be introduced to the world. He's ready to make friends, even a special one!

Children have a natural ability to make friends at their own level. How do we encourage children to be inclusive from the beginning?

Sensory-rich moments:

This brief scene contains background music and playing. It transitions into the next with a whistle blow and more significant reindeer entrance.



Learning opportunities and sensory-rich moments continued



Coach Comet is ready to train these young reindeer, but are they ready for the challenge?

How do we adjust to meet learning needs, rather than trying to adjust needs to meet the learning?

Sensory-rich moments:

This scene contains whistle blowing, background music, and lighting shifts for a mini scene in the middle. There is excitement at the end of the scene with shouting, lighting shifts, background music, and even some flying! There is another nose light-up with the tone and red lights that come with some bullying.



Oh no, Rudolph's heart is broken!

How do we help others feel better when they feel so down?

Sensory-rich moments:

This scene contains a mild ballad with puppetry and some lighting shifts. It ends with a mroe significant lighting shift and some shouting before moving into the next scene with music.



The elves have been practicing a special song for Santa. But what does Santa think about it?

Everyone has different tastes in music and performances...we sure hope you like ours!

Sensory-rich moments:

This scene contains a jaunty musical number with lighting shifts and brief moments of a trombone playing. It transitions into the next scene with some shouting and lighting/set shifts.



Learning opportunities and sensory-rich moments continued



Oh dear, Herbie wanted to help and fit in, but how did that work out?

How do we combine our passion with our work?

Sensory-rich moments:

This brief scene contains some more unkind words and a brief song before transitioning into the next with set and lighting shifts.



These two might be unlikely friends, but wait to see what happens next....

Sometimes the "strangest" matches are the best matches!

Sensory-rich moments:

This scene contains a cute musical number with lighting shifts. It transitions into the next scene with scarier music, running and shouting, flashing lights contained to the stage, and another sighting of the Abominable Snow Monster.



Oh no, Rudolph is lost! His family must go find him, but it's not going to be easy....

Every person deserves to be seen and to be found!

Sensory-rich moments:

This scene contains a brief simulated storm with wind sounds and set shifts. It transitions into the next with offstage shouting to bring in the next character.



Learning opportunities and sensory-rich moments continued



Meet Yukon Cornelius - he's a character for sure! They don't get too far before Rudolph's nose gives them away....

If we don't have to hide, we don't have to worry about being found out!

Sensory-rich moments:

Yukon Cornelius is a boisterous character that comes with his own fun sound effects, like boings! This scene contains a more significant "scared" scene with more red lighting and flashing lights contained on stage. There is also shouting, growling, and a full-size Monster sighting with set shifts.



Whew, they made it! These 3 are about to learn more about what they really want in life....

How do we celebrate each other's goals?

Sensory-rich moments:

This scene contains a fun musical number with some minor lighting shifts. The scene transitions into the next with Monster growls and lighting shifts.



Silver and gold, is that the ultimate goal?

The important things might not be what you think...

Sensory-rich moments:

This scene contains a sweet ballad with beautiful set movement. It transitions into the next with lighting and set shifts.



Learning opportunities and sensory-rich moments continued



Did you know there was a whole place in the North Pole for other “misfits?”

Sometimes the “misfits” create the most beautiful village for each other...

Sensory-rich moments:

This scene contains more puppetry and a smooth musical number. There are some sound effects and lighting shifts, and the scene transitions into the next with lighting shifts, trumpeting music, and set changes.



Of course the Island of Misfit Toys has a King, but do you think these 3 will be surprised by what he has to say?

Remember what the King said - “A LIVING CREATURE CANNOT HIDE HIMSELF ON AN ISLAND.” Don't hide, BE SEEN!

Sensory-rich moments:

The king's voice is a deep voice audio effect. This scene transitions into a mini scene with trumpets and lighting shifts. It then moves into the next with lighting shifts.



Rudolph decides to go out on his own so he can keep his friends safe! But what will he find when he runs into Santa at home?

Home should be the safest place to be exactly who we need to be!

Sensory-rich moments:

This section contains multiple mini-scenes and includes a short ballad, lighting and set shifts, background music, and even a little flying. It moves into the next scene with wind sound that will build into a simulated snow storm.



Learning opportunities and sensory-rich moments continued



Yikes! It's the Storm of the Century, and Rudolph ends up right in the cave of the Abominable Snow Monster! Time to be brave....?

What happens when we land exactly where we don't want to go?

Sensory-rich moments:

This scene starts with a very sensory-rich snowstorm simulation with lots of lighting effects contained to the stage and sound effects, then moves into the full scene with the full-length Monster, including a cast member flying in upside-down. The next section of this scene continues with intensity.



It's time to try to defeat the Monster - can they do it??

You don't have to be the biggest or the scariest to win the game...

Sensory-rich moments:

This scene continues with more significant lighting effects and music, as well as simulated fighting. It concludes with the defeat and lighting/set shifts into the next scene.



The elves give their final performance for Santa, and the "misfits" all get some really good news! Wait until you see who makes a fantastic return....

It is possible to be a "misfit" and still fit in!

Sensory-rich moments:

This scene contains an active, fun musical number with lighting shifts and sound effects. The Monster returns in full form, but not scary anymore. The scene ends with a zippy musical number with lots of lighting changes and increasing energy/chaos.



Learning opportunities and sensory-rich moments continued



Oh no, Santa gets bad news about a storm! But Rudolph is about to be the most surprised of all...

Everyone needs a "misfit" now and again!

Sensory-rich moments:

This scene contains more energy and another red light/tone effect for Rudolph's nose. There are cheers and a transition to a mini scene with more Yukon shenanigans. It then moves into the next scene with set and lighting shifts.



Look, Santa kept his promise after all! Looks like it is the Merriest of Christmases after all! There's one more surprise coming your way during the curtain call....be sure to cheer extra loud.....

Sensory-rich moments:

This scene contains a light musical number and will transition into the final scene and curtain call with lighting shifts and energy shifts on stage. At the end of the bows, Rudolph will fly down from the back balcony on the right side of the house! He will land on the stairs in the front half of the house, so be sure to stay in your seats to keep everyone safe! Oh, and cheer extra loud! :)

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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