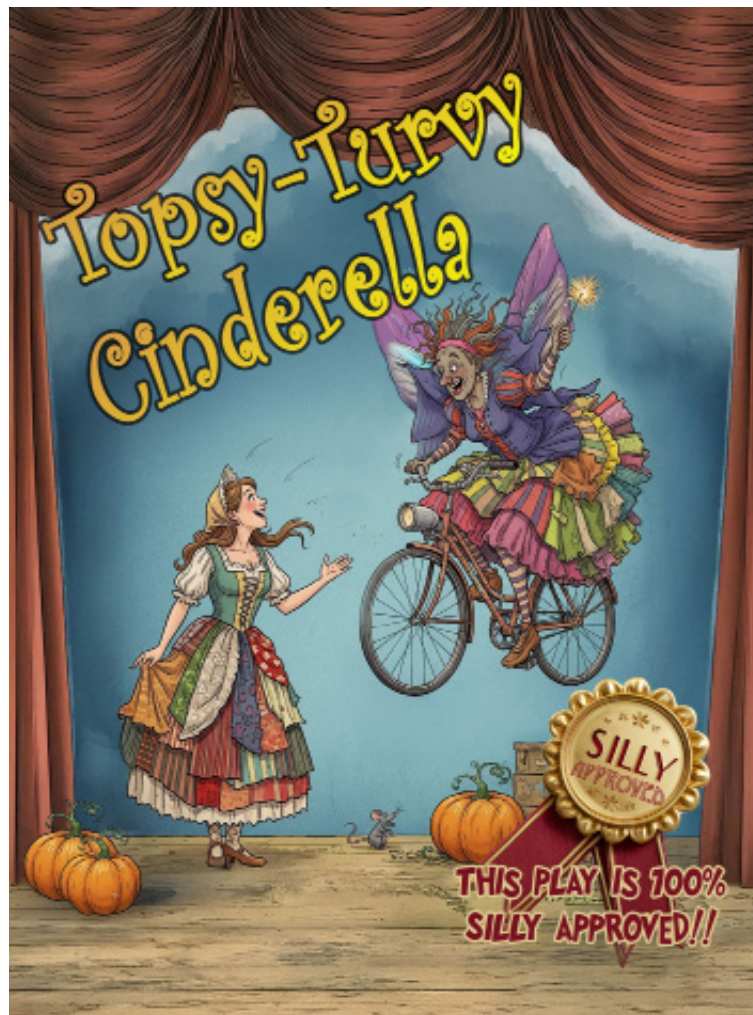


SENSORY-FRIENDLY PERFORMANCE  
PARENT'S GUIDE



Sun, Jan 18, 2026 4 PM

# 2025-26 season - Topsy-Turvy Cinderella

Written by Christopher Parks

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



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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 *Topsy-Turvy Cinderella*



Well hello there, welcome to our production of "Topsy-Turvy Cinderella!" We are delighted to have you here! But guess what? YOU'RE going to help us tell this story today, so get ready to be part of the show with us! We might even ask for some help on stage, but remember - wait for us to bring you onto the stage so everyone stays safe!

### **Sensory-rich moments:**

This fun production is milder overall, but there are some moments where we bump it up a little. Don't worry, as usual, we're here to help you be most comfortable with glowstick cues and plenty of resources for you to borrow while you're here.



Meet our storytellers - they sure know how to make an entrance, don't they? They'll be wearing a lot of...hats...in this show.

*There's no such thing as a perfect first impression - you being exactly you is the perfect way to be! :)*

### **Sensory-rich moments:**

This production opens with help from the audience to help clean up the set - wait for us to pick someone so we all stay safe! This moves into the first scene with funny sound effects/movements, a cute intro song with lighting shifts. Be ready to fill in some blanks, you're part of this from the start!



Alright, let's learn more about how you can help tell this story! Are you ready?

*Storytelling is more fun when everyone gets to participate!*

### **Sensory-rich moments:**

This scene is all about practicing to tell this story - jump right in and participate however you feel most comfortable. It opens with a song and moves into the practice parts. This is a safe place to be brave, silly, and have a great time! This scene transitions into the next with some classic Cinderella music.



## Learning opportunities and sensory-rich moments continued



Look, it's Cinderella! Isn't she lovely? Oh, and she's going to introduce us to her whole family!

*How would you introduce yourself to the world?*

### **Sensory-rich moments:**

This scene contains sound and musical effects, tossing props on stage, and mild lighting effects. There are some sensory-rich moments that include more prominent lighting shifts and sound effects like crashes, but they are brief. There is also a brief ballad with more significant lighting shifts that gets interrupted with lights and sound effects, as well as a second longer song with lighting changes.



Woah, Cinderella's step-sisters sure are....unique... aren't they? Too bad they're not kind to her....

*It's always the right answer to be kind, even if someone is unkind to you.*

### **Sensory-rich moments:**

This scene contains a silly song with lighting shifts. There are also sound effects, including a crash moment that we have turned down some to make them more comfortable.



It's hard to tell a story like this with only 4 humans, no matter how amazing they all are! No worries, we're here to fill in with bad jokes LOL!

*There are so many fun ways to help the time pass!*

### **Sensory-rich moments:**

This scene is literally about telling bad jokes - enjoy! It transitions seamlessly to continue telling the story.



## Learning opportunities and sensory-rich moments continued



OK, back to the story. Here's Cinderella's step-mother. Another unkind person, right?

*It's never worth it to make someone feel worthless!*

### **Sensory-rich moments:**

This scene contains musical sound effects and some lighting effects. There is a slightly abrupt moment with a more significant lighting shift, a whistle sound, and drum sound effects. It transitions into the next scene with a little bit of classic Cinderella music.



There's someone at the door...maybe? Oh ok, we're good. There's a ball to be had!

*How do we prepare kids to expect the unexpected?*

### **Sensory-rich moments:**

This scene contains a soft buzzer doorbell sound, then we'll invite someone to come onto the stage to help us out. Remember, wait for us to bring someone up! There is a brief musical number with lighting shifts, followed by another officer moment with a whistle and drums. It transitions next with lower lighting and some gear-like sound effects.



Oh dear, Cinderella was so excited about the ball. What will she do about a dress?

*Inclusion matters - everyone is invited to our table here at Children's Theatre of Charlotte!*

### **Sensory-rich moments:**

This scene contains some more significantly unkind moments as Cinderella's dress is torn apart. There are additional lighting shifts and sound effects as well. It



## Learning opportunities and sensory-rich moments continued



That wasn't nice at all! But wait, who is this bringing in all the magic?

*Believe in the magic! If you can't find it, make it!*

### **Sensory-rich moments:**

This scene contains an active entrance that starts with a clown horn and music. There is also a brief explosion moment with sound effects and brief lighting shifts. The scene continues with more sound /lighting effects. and silliness. It transitions into the next scene with significant lighting effects, music, and a crash sound effect.



Well, we seem to have confused 2 of our storytellers. I mean, this is a familiar story, after all, right? But they keep asking, don't they?

*Everyone tells the same story in different ways!*

### **Sensory-rich moments:**

This is a very mild scene that contains a fake end to the show with some music. Don't worry, we're not going anywhere quite yet....



Finally, Cinderella gets to go to the ball with her prince! But what happens at midnight?

*What is the most magical thing you've ever gotten to do?*

### **Sensory-rich moments:**

This scene contains a lovely ballad with ball dancing, and it includes lighting shifts. It transitions into the next with another sensory-rich moment to change the set which includes a clock ringing 12 and lighting shifts.



## Learning opportunities and sensory-rich moments continued



The ball is over, and not everyone had a good time. But now is Cinderella's chance to live the dream! But it might not quite happen the way you expect, so stay tuned.....

*Sometimes we have to do the thing and get to our own happiness!*

### **Sensory-rich moments:**

This scene contains sound effects and lighting shifts to move into the end of the show with a short musical number.

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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