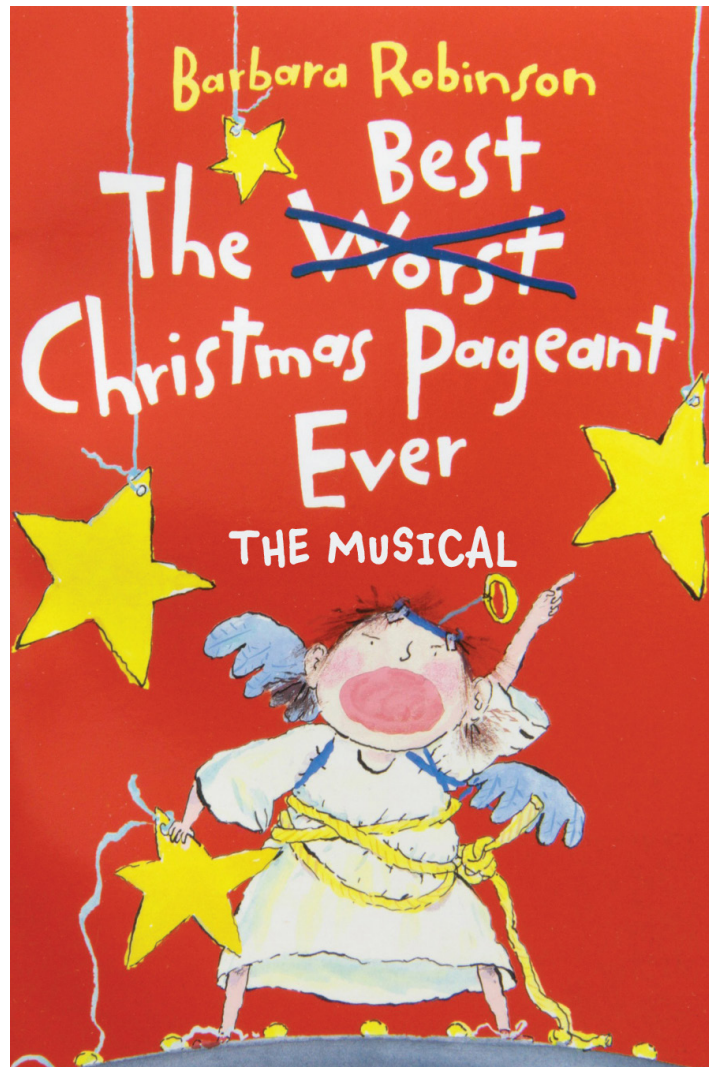


SENSORY-FRIENDLY PERFORMANCE  
PARENT'S GUIDE



Sunday, Dec 10 at 4 PM

Sponsored by



**AUTISM STRONG  
FOUNDATION**

# 2023-24 season - *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever: The Musical*

By Jahnna Beecham & Malcolm Hillgartner

Adapted from the book by Barbara Robinson

Orchestrations and vocal arrangements by Deborah Wicks La Puma

Produced by special arrangement with Broadway Licensing

Presented by:

**BANK OF AMERICA** 

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

Rosa Maria Vega

April & Thomas Whitlock

National Endowment for the Arts

Clear Blue Insurance Group

The Hensley Family

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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 *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever: The Musical*



Welcome to the church! These kids are sharing their favorite things about Sunday School, but wait until you hear what Charlie Bradley likes most about it....

*How do we help our children learn that our words matter?*

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

The show opens with a light church singing moment, then there are more lighting shifts as it moves into a very busy musical introduction to the Herdman children. The production is full of commotion whenever the Herdmans are involved!



Meet the Herdmans! They really know how to make an entrance!

*There is usually more to the story when we see "bad" behavior in other people.*

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

This scene contains lots of lighting changes, shouting, pretend bullying, and chaotic movement all over the stage.



Meet the Bradleys - and look, there's a little Bradley on the way! :) The Bradleys discuss the annual Christmas pageant over dinner, but it sounds like there may be some changes this year....

*How do we handle it when there are changes to our expectations?*

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

This scene contains doorbell rings and phone rings.



## Learning opportunities and sensory-rich moments continued



Uh-oh, Helen Armstrong doesn't look too good! She's about to ask Grace to do something big....

*It's so hard to ask for help when we need it!*

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

This scene contains lighting shifts and a somewhat busy musical number. The song will come to a quick conclusion and end with lights out on stage.



Here are the Herdmans again, and they brought more trouble with them to the lunch room! Charlie Bradley has had enough though, so he's ready to take a stand.

*How do we help kids stand up for themselves when they are being bullied?*

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

This scene opens with a spotlight that opens lighting into the scene. It contains an extended bullying scene with some shouting. It moves quickly into a busy musical number with lighting shifts.



Helen says she's helping Grace direct the pageant, but is she really ready to give up that control?

*It's important that kids see that there's more than one way to do things in the world.*

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

This scene contains an "oops" moment.



## Learning opportunities and sensory-rich moments continued



The Herdmans decide to check out this thing called "church."

*How do we talk to our kids about safety when they see other children doing things that are unsafe or unhealthy?*

**Sensory-rich moments:**

Imogene is smoking a fake cigarette in this scene. There is also an implied bullying moment that carries into the next scene.



It's time for pageant auditions! This might not go as Mrs. Bradley planned.....

*It's not always easy to include everyone, but it's always possible!*

**Sensory-rich moments:**

This scene contains an active musical number with implied bullying and lots of lighting changes, dancing, and general increasing energy.



Ivy wants to know, what on earth happened at auditions?

*Managing friendships is hard, especially when one friend's perspective starts to shift.*



## Learning opportunities and sensory-rich moments continued



Uh-oh, Helen is back with more “problems” to share with Grace. What is Grace going to do?

*How do we find a balance between supporting our kids and letting them find their own way of doing things?*

**Sensory-rich moments:**

This scene shifts across multiple moments through two short musical numbers.



It's time for the first pageant rehearsal. It seems to start out alright, but do you think the Herdmans will let it stay that way?

*Do you think the Herdmans really want to be involved in the pageant? Why or why not?*

**Sensory-rich moments:**

This scene contains a busy group “fight” and moves into a strong musical number with a lot of lighting shifts and movement.



Beth's friends are really unhappy with her and her mother!

*It's hard when kids take on adult perspectives and try to manage them with their friends.*

**Sensory-rich moments:**

This scene contains a musical number and ends with Beth shouting out toward the audience.



## Learning opportunities and sensory-rich moments continued



Mrs. Bradley is worried about whether she's doing the right thing by including the Herdmans in the pageant....

*Doing the right thing isn't always easy. How can we adjust our perspectives to make it happen?*

**Sensory-rich moments:**

This scene contains a soft musical number.



It's time for the second pageant rehearsal. What will happen when the Herdmans learn more about the Christmas story?

*Kids should always get credit for the things they don't know, and it's our job to help them learn.*

**Sensory-rich moments:**

This scene contains a very busy musical number with shouting, lighting changes, and bullying moments. Imogene is smoking a fake cigarette again, and as it ends, there is fake smoke, a fire truck siren, and a more abrupt lighting shift into the next scene.



Well, the plan for this pageant keeps changing. What does everyone think of the Bradleys now?

*It's so easy to jump to conclusions, especially when there's someone that seems easy to blame!*

**Sensory-rich moments:**

This scene contains a mild, brief musical number with movement around the stage, as well as a significant lighting shift toward the end.





## Learning opportunities and sensory-rich moments continued



Those Herdmans are a rough crew, right? But wait...they do have a softer side that just might change the game for them.....

*How do we work to see children for more than the behavior that's in front of us?*

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

This scene contains a quick shift from a quieter moment into a louder one. There are brief moments of shouting as well.



The Bradleys are convinced that the Pageant should go on, but will they be able to convince a whole church to let the Herdmans participate, too?

*We can't control other people, but we can control our reactions and responses to them.*

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

This scene contains a musical number with lots of movement and 2 brief shouting moments.



The show must go on....with or without the Herdmans? You're going to want to see what happens next!

*We can learn a lot about our kids' perspectives when we allow them to share stories from their points of view.*

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

This is a longer scene with a few busier moments and moments of shouting, as well as a soft ballad, as it transitions into the concluding fun musical number.



## Learning opportunities and sensory-rich moments continued



OK, what does everyone think about the Christmas Pageant? Do you think it was the best or the worst Christmas Pageant ever?

*Sometimes, we don't see the bigger picture until after we see the lessons in life.*

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

This final scene contains a busy final musical number with lighting shifts before it moves into the curtain call.



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