INCREASING ACCESSIBILITY FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER AND RELATED DISABILITIES:
MODIFYING A PERFORMANCE AND EVIDENCE BASED SUPPORTS

Sponsored by
VSA Performing Arts Access for Kids Program
The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts
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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION & COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

Nashville Opera and Vanderbilt Kennedy Center's Treatment and Research Institute for Autism Spectrum Disorders (TRIAD) have partnered since 2013 to increase accessibility and awareness for individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Both bringing their expertise to the table, it is a flourishing partnership whose work can be easily replicated to increase access for others across the country.

Nashville Opera Association’s touring education program has provided sensory friendly performances for 20 years. In addition to lesson plans prior to the performance, a children’s opera generates a high level of attentiveness by the combination of visual stimuli (sets, costumes, props), movement (staging, acting, sometimes dance), participatory engagement (such as a sing-along segment, hand motions), as well as music (piano and vocal).

Founded in 1998, TRIAD has provided services to thousands of educators and families throughout Tennessee and surrounding states. Services include training and direct consultation in state-of-the-art behavioral and educational assessment and intervention strategies, and direct behavior analytic services to families and school systems. Since its inception in 2013, TRIAD’s Organizational Engagement Program has provided 500+ professional development hours to staff at community organizations and had more than 25,000 people attend 45 inclusive events, including modified performances, awareness events, and summer camps, in the effort to increase awareness and build capacity in communities.

The three major components to the Nashville Opera and TRIAD partnership are trainings for young artists, opera staff, and caregivers; development of research-based tools for school-based and other community performances; and in-theatre modified performances for families. These performances include modifications and the opportunity to use research-based tools to increase independent participation for individuals with ASD and related disabilities.

An important consideration for the modified performances is the need to publicize the event to the community. For the partnership, TRIAD and Nashville Opera utilized social media, websites, local event calendars, and local media (i.e. newspapers, local TV news stations, arts magazines, etc.). In order to reserve spots to the free performance, attendees were required to complete a brief survey with name, contact information, number attending with and without disabilities, and how they heard about the event. By publicizing the event, the Nashville Opera is sharing its direct efforts for individuals with ASD, which is intended to encourage these individuals and their family members to attend the modified opera performance or other performances hosted by the organization. Person-first language was used on all of the materials publicizing the event. Person-first language respectfully puts the person before the disability. For example, instead of saying “autistic person,” one would say “person with autism.” Person-first language shows that the individual is a person first and the disability is one part or feature of that person; the person is not defined by his or her disability.

This toolkit was developed as a resource for other opera associations in North America. The resource will allow other associations to develop supports and implement a modified performance to reach out to the ASD community. The impact of this program in the Middle Tennessee community is extensive, but the addition of the toolkit to replicate this work is significant.
SECTION 2: OVERVIEW OF AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD)

ASD is a complex neurodevelopmental disorder that affects early brain development. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), ASD occurs in one of every 68 children, is five times more common in males, and occurs in all racial, ethnic, and social groups. In an effort to provide simple modifications to increase inclusivity, it is important to recognize how prevalent the disorder is in our community and to identify barriers to accessing community organizations like the opera.

ASD is characterized by deficits in two core areas: social communication and restricted/repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities. By understanding the core areas affected by ASD, we can better support individuals in our community programming. Common difficulties are in understanding emotions, communication, and developing and maintaining relationships. Individuals with ASD may engage in repetitive movements, prefer strict sameness and routine, have fixated interests, or react unusually to sensory input. They often struggle with social communication such as sharing enjoyment, understanding social cues and unspoken rules, directing attention, initiating and maintaining conversation, etc. ASD is a spectrum disorder, meaning the characteristics will present differently in each individual.

Coming to an opera performance in the community or in a school setting can present many challenges related to the core areas. As mentioned above, understanding emotions can be challenging and a performer’s emotions can quickly change throughout a performance. Another example related to the core areas is the preference for sameness and routine. Coming to an opera performance would be a change in their routine and can cause an increase in anxiety, not knowing what to expect when coming to the performance. There are several modifications and supports that can be utilized to make engagement in community and group settings more successful for individuals with ASD.
SECTION 3: STAFF AND YOUNG ARTIST TRAINING

Training is an important component of the partnership because it increases comfort levels for interacting with people with ASD and related disorders. To date, the partnership has included two training opportunities: one for all staff and one for young artists at Nashville Opera. Through TRIAD’s community partnerships with Nashville Opera and other community organizations, TRIAD has learned there is a strong desire to be inclusive for all people but hesitancies are rooted in the possibility of supporting or responding to a person in an inappropriate manner.

ALL STAFF RETREAT TRAINING

The purpose of the all staff training was to increase staff knowledge about ASD and how to best support a person with ASD through discussion (with people with ASD and each other) and activities. Below is an overview of the training components.

- **Overview of ASD** - To become familiar with ASD, a brief overview was included in the training. Information regarding prevalence and diagnostic characteristics were reviewed. This information was selected so opera staff could identify the areas associated with ASD and the best way to support potential challenges in these areas.
- **Guest Speakers** - Two speakers participated in the training, including an adult with ASD and a parent of a child with ASD who attended a modified children’s opera. The speakers shared what ASD means to them, their perspective on the importance of the opera’s mission to be inclusive and what they want the community to know about ASD.
- **Open Discussion** - Staff completed a brief survey prior to the training to gather information about their experience, comfort, and previous training on ASD. The results were shared and common themes were identified. Most reported hesitancies interacting with people with ASD personally and professionally were correlated to an unfamiliarity with the diagnosis and how it affects people in different ways, similar to how patrons with disabilities may hesitate to come to the opera because of the unknown. This conversation was a great way to start the discussion of how to break barriers and decrease anxiety for all.
- **Break Out Activity** - Scenarios were developed that emphasized common challenges (i.e., physical disability, deaf/blind, rude, and nonverbal/disruptive) for staff to identify potential barriers as well as possible modifications and supports to remove potential barriers.

YOUNG ARTIST TRAINING

The purpose of the young artist training was to increase the young artists’ knowledge about ASD and how to best support a person with ASD using the research-based tools developed for the specific opera performance. The goal was to help prepare the young artists for interacting with children with ASD while on tour with the children’s opera. Information from the training was put into practice by the young artists during the performance tour, and they were able to evaluate the school setting, use inclusive language and increased inclusion in the performance environments. The Director of Education also participated in the training, so there was a continuum of learning. Below is an overview of the training components.

- **Terminology and Appropriate Language** – Reviewed person-first language.
- **Overview of ASD** – Reviewed the core areas affected by ASD and how that could impact a person attending an opera performance in the community or in a school.
- **Communicating Effectively** – Reviewed tips for communicating effectively with parents and with individuals with ASD, including using clear, concise language and avoiding sarcasm or abstract concepts.
- **About Partnership** – Briefly described the history of the partnership between Nashville Opera and TRIAD to put the goals of the performances and tools in perspective for the young artists.
- **Evidence-based Practices** – Defined and described the research-based tools that were developed specifically for the performance that the young artists would be performing. This is to better prepare them for referencing the materials with children or directing teachers to the tools.
- **Application to Children’s Opera** – Directly applied how the tools developed benefit children with ASD and what information will be included in each support.
SECTION 4: EVIDENCE BASED SUPPORTS

Evidence-based supports are intervention approaches that have scientific findings to demonstrate effectiveness, improving outcomes for individuals with ASD.

VISUAL STORY BOARD (VISUAL SCHEDULE)

One of the tools developed to help include individuals with ASD was a visual story board of the performance. Visual schedules are an evidence-based practice proven to be effective in helping communicate with individuals with ASD, as written information is often easier to understand than spoken word. The story board was available to teachers and parents ahead of time, so it could be reviewed with individuals before the performance, as needed, in order to help them understand what to expect. The slides were also projected during the performance. Each slide contained a 1-2 sentence summary of the scene and a picture to illustrate what was happening in the story. Individuals could look at, read, or have someone read it to them. A portable poster version of this story board was also created for artists to bring with them to the traveling school performances. The visual schedule used for the 2016 modified school performances can be found in the Appendices.

SOCIAL STORIES

Another evidence-based tool developed for attendees were Social Stories™ describing the experience of coming to the opera. Many people with ASD and other related disorders benefit from having a written guide for situations that may be new, scary, or confusing. A Social Story™ is a helpful way to provide that guide. The goal of a Social Story™ is to help children understand the situation and to help decrease anxiety that comes from entering an unknown situation. Social Stories™ can be used to describe other unfamiliar social situations or environments such as a birthday party, school field trip, having a substitute, etc. Social Stories™ give individuals social information through pictures and text instead of spoken word, which can be difficult for individuals with ASD. Social Stories™ are part of a category of interventions known as story-based interventions or social narratives. They have had significant research showing the effectiveness of their use to be considered an established treatment for children with ASD. For more information about evidence-based treatments, go to The National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders at http://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/. Social Stories™ were created by Carol Gray; for more information visit, www.thegraycenter.org.

The following are different versions of the social stories that were provided to the Nashville Opera and schools. These can be found in the Appendices.

a. Illustrated Social Story
b. Brief Social Story
c. Detailed Social Story
d. Illustrated Social Story (School)
e. Brief Social Story (School)
f. Detailed Social Story (School)

STORY BOARD TIP SHEET (SCHOOL)

A tip sheet was provided to the schools on how to use the story board appropriately. Information about each scene was printed on a large fabricated book along with a digital file. Schools were encouraged to review the story board with students prior to and during the performance to increase engagement. The story board will help increase an understanding of each scene by including a brief summary and picture representing the scene. Cues for when to switch the cards during the performance were also provided. The tip sheet used for the 2016 modified school performances can be found in the Appendices.
A tip sheet was also created and made available to the public to let them know what to expect for the inclusive performance, modifications that were made, and supports that were available. Giving families an idea of what to expect on the day of the performance can increase their comfort in attending and help them prepare their children for the event. All supports were made available on TRIAD’s website and performances were advertised on social media. The tip sheet used for the 2016 modified performance can be found in the Appendices.
The modified/inclusive performance is held annually at the Noah Liff Opera Center in Nashville, Tennessee. It is a beautiful facility and many family members are so excited to bring their child to the venue. One of our goals with the modified/inclusive performance is to make small changes to the performance day to increase independence and success for individuals with ASD, while encouraging audience members to return for future shows that may not have the same modifications. The modifications to the performance are easy to do and do not require many additional resources. The modifications included:

### PHYSICAL STRUCTURE OF CHAIRS

Potential Barriers Considered:
- not understanding unwritten rules of personal space
- getting too close to others or the stage
- preference to stand or move during performance

Modification – The chairs were set up in rows to indicate where and how close to the stage people could sit. Audience members could sit in the chairs, sit on the floor or stand or walk in the open space on either side of the chairs.

### DIM LIGHTING

Potential Barriers Considered:
- Varying sensory needs related to bright lights or lights changing

Modification – The lights remained dimly lit for the entire performance.

### VISUAL SCHEDULE/STORYBOARD PROJECTION

Potential Barriers Considered:
- Hard time following storyline due to communication challenges
- Hard time following character emotions due to social skill challenges

Modification – The visual schedule (see Section 4 for description) was projected to the side of the stage during the performance to increase awareness of the performance storyline.

### QUIET SPACE AVAILABLE

Potential Barriers Considered:
- Varying sensory needs related to sound levels for an extended period of time

Modification – The kitchen area near the theater was designated as a quiet space available to audience members. Picture icons were created using Boardmaker™ (see below) and posted outside and inside the kitchen area.
DECREASED VOICE VOLUME FROM SINGERS

Potential Barriers Considered:

- Varying sensory needs related to sound levels for an extended period of time

Modification – It was requested the singers decrease the volume of their voices during the performance and limit unexpected increase in volume levels (i.e., screaming, high notes, etc.)

The modifications we included are not the only modifications that could be made and do not all have to be made to increase accessibility for individuals with ASD. These are the potential barriers and accommodations we identified for the Nashville Opera performance.

Following the performance, audience members had the opportunity to ask the young artists questions regarding the performance or about their experiences as a performer, as well as the opportunity to take pictures with the young artists and interact with the set.
SECTION 6: FEEDBACK FROM AUDIENCE

Following the performance, a survey was sent via email to all registered attendees. The survey included information about the use and perceived benefit of the evidence-based supports and modifications made to the performance. Below is a summary of the questions asked and feedback received regarding the modified/inclusive performance of Goldie B. Locks and the Three Singing Bears.

What supports did you use prior to coming to the opera?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support</th>
<th>% of 2016 Survey Respondents</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Story</td>
<td>17% of respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Story Tip Sheet</td>
<td>50% of respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Tip Sheet</td>
<td>17% of respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storyboard</td>
<td>50% of respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>33 % of respondents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What supports did you and your child use during the performance?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support</th>
<th>% of 2016 Survey Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Storyboard</td>
<td>33% of respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiet Space</td>
<td>17% of respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>50% of respondents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What modifications to the performance did you feel were beneficial to your child?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support</th>
<th>% of 2016 Survey Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Storyboard</td>
<td>33% of respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dim Lights</td>
<td>83% of respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased Volume from Singers</td>
<td>50% of respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiet Space Available</td>
<td>17% of respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Structure of Chairs</td>
<td>17% of respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>17% of respondents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Are you likely to attend another performance by the Nashville Opera?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>% of 2016 Survey Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>50% of respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, if modifications and supports are provided</td>
<td>33% of respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>17% of respondents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What are other modifications you would like to be included for future performances?

- N/A
Other comments

- We enjoyed the performance!! There was a great lesson in the story! Providing snacks and letting the children eat them during the performance was appreciated.

- Maybe put the seats in a circle to allow an unblocked view or allow floor seating. This was so much fun. I enjoy taking my son somewhere to experience these kinds of opportunities without fear of being judged if he has an outburst. The relaxed setting makes it easier for all of us. He really paid attention this year and loved it.

- It was a delightful performance that my granddaughter, age 12, and I enjoyed. Since she lives in Memphis, she likely will not be here for upcoming events. If she or her younger sister are here, we would certainly consider coming for future events. Neither child is autistic. If you had not told me, I'm not sure I would have realized that some of the children are autistic. Thank you for including us. I have been a subscriber and small donor to Nashville Opera for many years.

- I was so impressed with the talent and effort that went into the production. So proud to have this in Nashville!
The Community Engagement Initiative includes the Families First and Organizational Engagement Programs. Families First is a free workshop series for caregivers of young children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. The Organizational Engagement Program focuses on supporting organizations in building capacity for inclusion by providing training, developing supports, and collaborating on modified events.

A toll-free helpline for families and professionals to access information about autism-related clinical, research, and outreach services at Vanderbilt University.

The Tennessee Disability Pathfinder is a free, statewide, information and referral service for persons with disabilities, family members, service providers, and advocates.

The National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders is a multi-university center to promote the use of evidence-based practice for children and adolescents with autism spectrum disorders.

DynaVox Mayer-Johnson is the leading provider of speech generating devices and symbol-adapted special education software used to assist individuals in overcoming their speech, language and learning challenges.
Meet the three singing bear family: Papa Bear, Mama Bear, and Piccolo.

The three singing bears get asked to join the circus! This means they can fix up their house and make soup, and Peek can join the Smokey Scouts Troop.

Meet Goldie B. Locks and her toy tarantula. She loves to look for bugs near and far and keep them in her jelly jar.

The bear family is in their home. Mama Bear made Peek a scouts uniform and he can’t wait to get started solving a mystery for his first patch.

The bears begin to eat the soup, but it is too hot. They decide to go for a walk.
Goldie is lost and finds the bears’ home. She is hungry and tastes the soups until she finds one just right.

The bears come home and see someone has been eating their soup! Papa sees Goldie’s spider!

Goldie and Peek find each other in the woods. They decide to become best friends. Goldie is going to help Peek find the soup-eater, even though he’s talking about her.

Goldie and Peek look for the robber. Goldie is very sorry but afraid to get caught. She knows she should tell the truth. Goldie is worried and wants to find her lost spider Danielle.

The bears go marching into the woods in search of the robber. Goldie stays behind to look for her spider.

Goldie searches the house for her pet spider. She hears the bears coming back! Goldie hides in the bed that’s just the right size to cover her.
The bears come back and fear a ghost ate the soup! Goldie decides to come out of hiding and tell the bears the truth. She was the one that ate the soup.

The three bears forgive Goldie for not telling the truth and remind her to tell someone next time she’s in trouble. Papa Bear then takes Goldie home to her mom and dad.

The End

UPCOMING INCLUSIVE EVENTS

http://vkc.mc.vanderbilt.edu/vkc/triad/community/
TRIADOutreach@vanderbilt.edu

Resources Directory
http://vkc.mc.vanderbilt.edu/vkc/triad/ceiresources/
Going to the Nashville Opera for
*Goldie B. Locks & The Three Singing Bears*

Social Story™
Nashville Opera

I am going to a special performance at the Nashville Opera.

When we get there, I will have to go up the stairs to get to the theatre.

Inside the theatre, there will be a lot of seats and it might be crowded with many people. This is okay.

When people go on the stage at the front, I will know the show is about to begin.

During the show, the performers will be wearing costumes and singing. I will try to be respectful by staying in my seat, sitting quietly and watching the performance.
If it gets too loud, I can ask to go to the quiet space in the kitchen.

I might need to go to the bathroom during the show. If I need to go, I can ask my mom or dad to take me to the bathroom.

At the end of the show, people might clap if they liked the show. I might want to clap too.

When it is time to leave, everyone will stand up and walk to the exits in the back.

If I am respectful during the show, my mom and dad will be so proud of me. I might like going to the opera!
The opera is a place where actors wear costumes and sing songs to tell a story.

Before the show begins, people might be talking a lot and it might be noisy. That is okay. There will be quiet spaces where I can go to get away from the noise. If I need a break from the noise, I can ask my family to take me to the quiet space.

When the show starts, people will come onto the stage. Some of them might be wearing costumes that look like people, and some might be wearing costumes that look like animals. There might be music playing and sometimes the people might sing. The people in the audience will try to stay quiet to listen to the show. I will try to be respectful to the performers and others watching the performance by staying in my seat, sitting quietly and watching the performance.

I might need to go to the bathroom during the show. If I need to go to the bathroom, I can ask my family to take me to the bathroom.

At the end of the show, people might clap if they liked the show. I might want to clap too. The characters will bow and ask the audience if there are any questions. If I want to ask a question, I can raise my hand and wait for them to point to me to ask my question. If they point to me, I will try to talk loudly so everyone can hear my question.

When it is time to leave, everyone will stand up and walk to the exits in the back of the room. I will try to wait my turn to walk out of the theater and out of the door. If I am respectful during the show my family will be so proud of me. I might like going to the opera!
A Detailed Social Story™

Goldie B. Locks & the Three Singing Bears
at the Nashville Opera

The opera is a place where actors wear costumes and sing songs to tell a story. When I go to see Jack and the Beanstalk, I might go with my family.

When I get into the theatre, there will be a lot of places to sit. My family will help decide where we should sit. Before the show begins, people might be talking a lot and it might be noisy. That is okay. There will be quiet spaces where I can go to get away from the noise. If I need a break from the noise, I can ask my family to take me to the quiet space.

When an adult goes on stage and starts talking loudly, this means that the play is about to start and everyone in the theater should finish their conversations and be quiet. I will try to finish my conversation and be quiet when an adult starts talking loudly on stage. The adult will teach us some new words to say when we see something we like. If I get scared, I can hold a family member’s hand or ask to take a break. I will try to be respectful to the performers and others watching the performance by staying in my seat, sitting quietly and watching the performance.

When the show starts, I will see a screen on the wall too. The screen will tell the story in pictures and words. I can look at the screen to help me follow the play.

When the show starts, people will come onto the stage. Some of them might be wearing costumes that look like people, and some might be wearing costumes that look like animals. There might be music playing and sometimes the people might sing. The people in the audience will try to stay quiet to listen to the show. I will try to stay quiet and listen to the show also. If the music or the singing gets too loud, I can ask my family to go to a quiet space.

The people in the opera are called characters. Sometimes the characters might pretend to be happy and sometimes they might pretend to be angry. When the characters are angry, they might yell or growl or stomp around. I might get scared. If I am scared, I can ask a family member to hold my hand, take a break, go to the quiet area or ________________.

I might need to go to the bathroom during the show. If I need to go to the bathroom, I can ask my family to take me to the bathroom.

At the end of the show, people might clap if they liked the show. I might want to clap too. The characters will bow and ask the audience if there are any questions. If I want to ask a question, I can raise my hand and wait for them to point to me to ask my question. If they point to me, I will try to talk loudly so everyone can hear my question.

When it is time to leave, everyone will stand up and walk to the exits in the back of the room. It might be crowded with everyone trying to leave at the same time. I will try to wait my turn to walk out of the theater and out of the door. If I am respectful during the show by staying in my seat, sitting quietly, and watching the performance, my family will be so proud of me. I might like going to the opera!
Nashville Opera is coming to my school for a special performance.

An opera is a performance where actors wear costumes and sing songs to tell a story. The opera I will see is called Goldie B. Locks & the Three Singing Bears.

There will be a lot of seats and it might be crowded with many people. This is okay.

When people go on the stage at the front, I will know the show is about to begin.

During the show, the performers will be wearing costumes and singing. I will try to be respectful by staying in my seat, sitting quietly and watching the performance.
If it gets too loud, I can ask to go to the quiet space in the kitchen.

I might need to go to the bathroom during the show. If I need to go, I can ask my mom or dad to take me to the bathroom.

At the end of the show, people might clap if they liked the show. I might want to clap too.

When it is time to leave, everyone will stand up and walk to the exits in the back.

If I am respectful during the show, my teachers will be so proud of me. I might like going to the opera!
A Brief Social Story™
Goldie B. Locks & the Three Singing Bears
is Coming to My School

The opera is a performance where actors wear costumes and sing songs to tell a story.

Before the show begins, people might be talking a lot and it might be noisy. That is okay. There will be quiet spaces where I can go to get away from the noise. If I need a break from the noise, I can ask my teacher to take me to a quieter space.

When the show starts, people will come onto the stage. Some of them might be wearing costumes that look like people, and some might be wearing costumes that look like bears. There might be music playing and sometimes the people might sing. The people in the audience will try to stay quiet to listen to the show. I will try to be respectful to the performers and others watching the performance by staying seated, sitting quietly and watching the performance.

I might need to go to the bathroom during the show. If I need to go to the bathroom, I can ask my teacher to take me to the bathroom.

At the end of the show, people might clap if they liked the show. I might want to clap too. The characters might bow and ask the audience if there are any questions. If I want to ask a question, I can raise my hand and wait for them to point to me to ask my question. If they point to me, I will try to talk loudly so everyone can hear my question.

When it is time to leave, everyone will stand up and walk to the exits. I will try to wait my turn to walk out of the door. If I am respectful during the show my teacher will be so proud of me. I might like watching the opera!
Nashville Opera is coming to my school for an opera performance. An opera is a performance where actors wear costumes and sing songs to tell a story. The opera I will see is called *Goldie B. Locks & the Three Singing Bears*.

When I get to the performance, there will be a lot of places to sit. My teacher will help decide where I should sit. Before the show begins, people might be talking a lot and it might be noisy. That is okay. There will be quiet spaces where I can go to get away from the noise. If I need a break from the noise, I can ask my teacher to take me to a quieter space.

When an adult stands in front of the big picture and starts talking loudly, this means the play is about to start and everyone should finish their conversations and be quiet. I will try to finish my conversation and be quiet when an adult starts talking loudly at the front. The adult will teach us some new words to say when we see something we like. If I get scared, I can ask to take a break. I will try to be respectful to the performers and others watching the performance by staying seated, sitting quietly and watching the performance.

When the show starts, people will come onto the stage. Some of them might be wearing costumes that look like people, and some might be wearing costumes that look like bears. There might be music playing and sometimes the people might sing. The people in the audience will try to stay quiet to listen to the show. I will try to stay quiet and listen to the show too. If the music or the singing gets too loud, I can ask my teacher to go to a quieter space.

The people in the opera are called characters. Sometimes the characters might pretend to be happy and sometimes they might pretend to be angry. When the characters are angry, they might yell or growl or stomp around. I might get scared. If I am scared, I can ask to take a break, go to a quieter area or ________________.

I might need to go to the bathroom during the show. If I need to go to the bathroom, I can ask my teacher to take me to the bathroom.

At the end of the show, people might clap if they liked the show. I might want to clap too. The characters will bow and ask the audience if there are any questions. If I want to ask a question, I can raise my hand and wait for them to point to me to ask my question. If they point to me, I will try to talk loudly so everyone can hear my question.

When it is time to leave, everyone will stand up and walk to the exits. It might be crowded with everyone trying to leave at the same time. I will try to wait my turn to walk out of the door. If I am respectful during the show by staying seated, sitting quietly, and watching the performance, my teacher will be so proud of me. I might like watching the opera!
Using the Story Board
for Goldie B. Locks & the Three Singing Bears

What is a Story Board?
Many people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and other related disorders benefit from having a visual representation of what is going to happen during an activity or portion of the day.

The goal of a story board or visual schedule is to help your students understand what is going to happen during the opera performance. Visual schedules can be used to direct a student to complete an activity or follow along with an activity taking place, such as an opera. Visual schedules can give individuals information through pictures and text instead of spoken word, which can be difficult for individuals with ASD.

Visual schedules have had significant research showing the effectiveness of their use to be considered an established treatment for children with ASD. For more information about evidence-based treatments, go to The National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders at http://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/.

How Can I Use the Story Board to Help Increase Engagement for my Students?
Nashville Opera will bring 14 large cue cards with information about each scene on the card and send a digital file prior to the performance day. You can review the story board with your student prior to the performance and during the performance to increase engagement. The story board will help increase an understanding of each scene by including a brief summary and picture representing each scene. Below are tips for what will be happening on stage to switch to the next card.

Cues for Switching Cards
Below is information to help you know when to switch the cards in the story board. Switch the card after the completion of the situation described. Feel free to cut out the table and have the information with you during the performance.

| Card 1 | After teaching Brava, Bravo, and Bravi |
| Card 2 | After song introducing Bear Family |
| Card 3 | After Mama Bear speak “Not far from here…Goldie B. Locks” |
| Card 4 | After Goldie leaves the stage chasing a butterfly |
| Card 5 | After Mama Bear enters with pot saying, “Soup is ready.” |
| Card 6 | After Bears exit stage to take a walk and let their soup cool |
| Card 7 | After the Bears start singing and come back to eat their soup |
| Card 8 | After Papa Bear leaves the stage and Mama explains Peek and Goldie are lost in the woods |
| Card 9 | After Peek and Goldie leave looking for Papa Bear |
| Card 10 | After Goldie says, “I...myself…and me,” and the Bears start marching |
| Card 11 | After the Bears start singing offstage and come back |
| Card 12 | After Goldie comes onstage with a sheet over her |
| Card 13 | After Goldie asks about fuzz busters |
| Card 14 | After cast takes a bow |
Nashville Opera and TRIAD Partnership

We are pleased to offer the 3rd annual Nashville Opera and TRIAD Partnership Opera Experience. This is an inclusive performance where families are invited to do what is necessary to make this experience more successful for your family (e.g., take a break in our quiet space, stand during the performance, etc.). The two organizations have collaborated to develop supports to bolster opera accessibility for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and related disorders in order to open new learning opportunities and experiences surrounding the performance’s moral of the golden rule, treat others like you want to be treated.

Supports

1. **Social Story™**
   We have developed and provided three versions of a Social Story™ for your child’s use prior to the opera. Social Stories™ describe a situation or experience in order to provide children with an idea of what to expect. Creating predictability can be reassuring for children entering a new situation and can allow children to respond to challenges in an adaptive way. We recommend reviewing this social story with your child prior to attending the opera. Social Stories™ are an evidence-based practice as identified in the autism intervention literature review, *Evidence-Based Practice for Children, Youth, and Young Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder* (2014) by the National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders.

2. **Story Board**
   We have developed and provided a story board online that will also be projected during the performance. A story board is visual schedule that outlines the sequence of events. Visual Schedules can be used to outline what might happen a doctor's visit, the sequence of events occurring over a whole day, or, as in this case, the sequence of events occurring within the plot of the opera. Reviewing the story board prior to the performance will also familiarize your child to the story and prepare them for what to expect, both of which may enhance their experience at the opera. Visual schedules are an evidence-based practice as identified in the autism intervention literature review, *Evidence-Based Practice for Children, Youth, and Young Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder* (2014) by the National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders.
3. Quiet Space

If you or your child needs to take a break from the noise and/or commotion, the kitchen will be open and designated as a “Quiet Space” to visit. It is located in the hallway to the left of the theatre near the bathrooms. Please feel free to visit the quiet space as needed.


Refreshments

Cookies will be available in the lobby upstairs outside the theatre. Your family is welcome to enjoy refreshments. If you would not like your child to have or see the refreshments available, you can enter the theatre using the first door on the right after coming upstairs. Please finish all refreshments before entering the theatre.

Resources

- **VKC-TRIAD Community Engagement Initiative**: [http://vkc.mc.vanderbilt.edu/vkc/triad/community/](http://vkc.mc.vanderbilt.edu/vkc/triad/community/)
  The Community Engagement Initiative includes the Families First and Organizational Engagement Programs. Families First is a free workshop series for caregivers of young children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. The Organizational Engagement Program focuses on supporting organizations in building capacity for inclusion by providing training, developing supports, and collaborating on modified events.

- **Vanderbilt Autism Resource Line**: Local 322-7565 or Toll Free (877) ASD-VUMC (273-8862)
  A toll-free helpline for families and professionals to access information about autism-related clinical, research, and outreach services at Vanderbilt University.

- **Tennessee Disability Pathfinder**: 1-800-640-4636 or tnpathfinder@vanderbilt.edu
  The Tennessee Disability Pathfinder is a free, statewide, information and referral service for persons with disabilities, family members, service providers, and advocates.

- **National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders**: [http://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu](http://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu)
  The National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders is a multi-university center to promote the use of evidence-based practice for children and adolescents with autism spectrum disorders.

- **Mayer-Johnson** [www.mayer-johnson.com](http://www.mayer-johnson.com)
  DynaVox Mayer-Johnson is the leading provider of speech generating devices and symbol-adapted special education software used to assist individuals in overcoming their speech, language and learning challenges.