

Welcome to *Cuesheet*, a performance guide published by the Education Department of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, D.C. This *Cuesheet* is for you to use before and after attending a performance of *A Little Princess*.

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A Little Princess

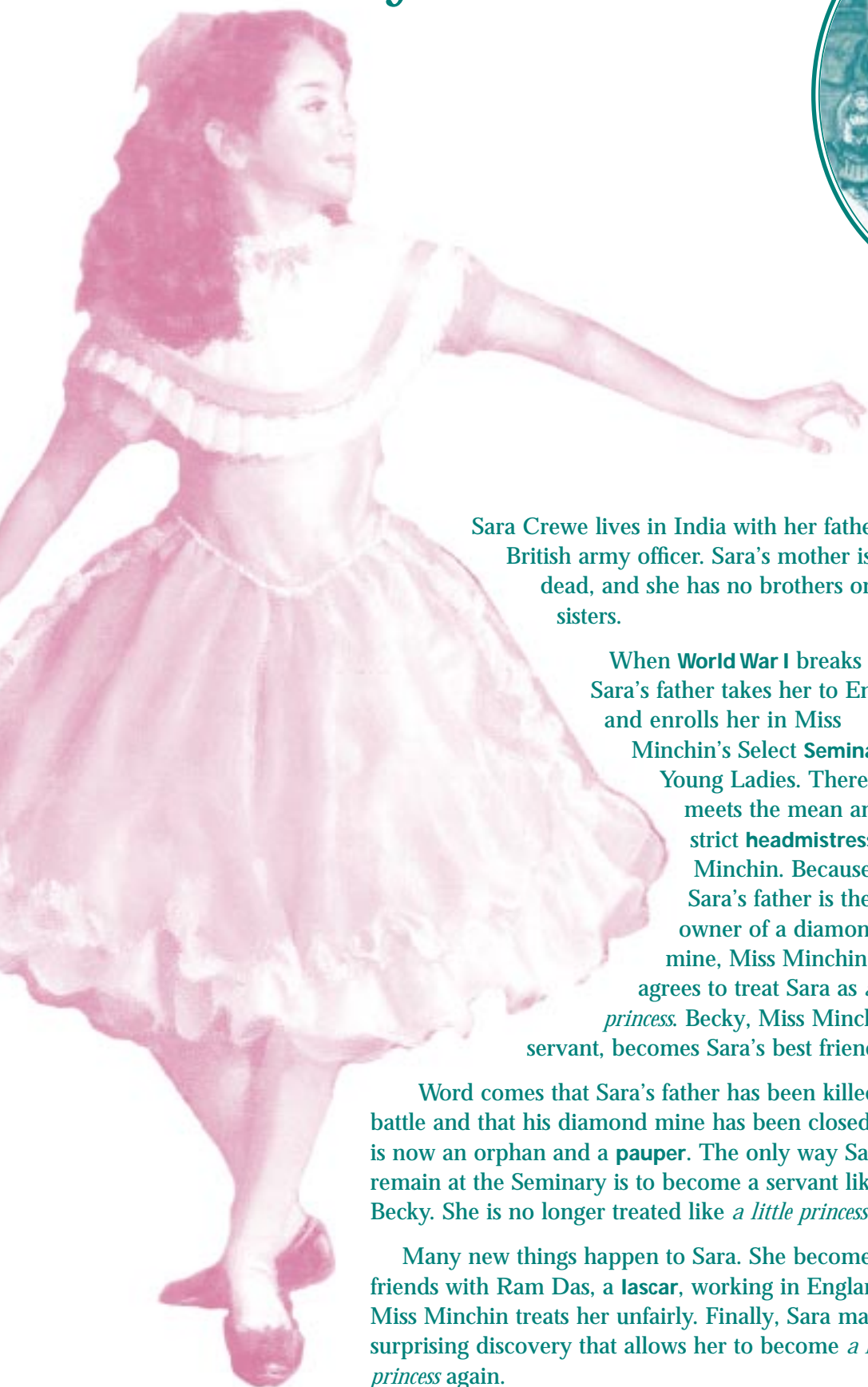
A one-act musical based on the novel
by Francis Hodgson Burnett

Book and lyrics by Greg Gunning

Music by Richard DeRosa

Presented by ArtsPower National
Touring Theater

Sara's Story



Sara Crewe lives in India with her father, a British army officer. Sara's mother is dead, and she has no brothers or sisters.

When **World War I** breaks out, Sara's father takes her to England and enrolls her in Miss Minchin's Select **Seminary** for Young Ladies. There she meets the mean and strict **headmistress**, Miss Minchin. Because Sara's father is the owner of a diamond mine, Miss Minchin agrees to treat Sara as *a little princess*. Becky, Miss Minchin's servant, becomes Sara's best friend.

Word comes that Sara's father has been killed in battle and that his diamond mine has been closed. Sara is now an orphan and a **pauper**. The only way Sara can remain at the Seminary is to become a servant like Becky. She is no longer treated like *a little princess*.

Many new things happen to Sara. She becomes friends with Ram Das, a **lascar**, working in England. Miss Minchin treats her unfairly. Finally, Sara makes a surprising discovery that allows her to become *a little princess* again.

World War I — between 1914–1918, Great Britain, many European countries, and the United States fought and defeated Germany and other nations.

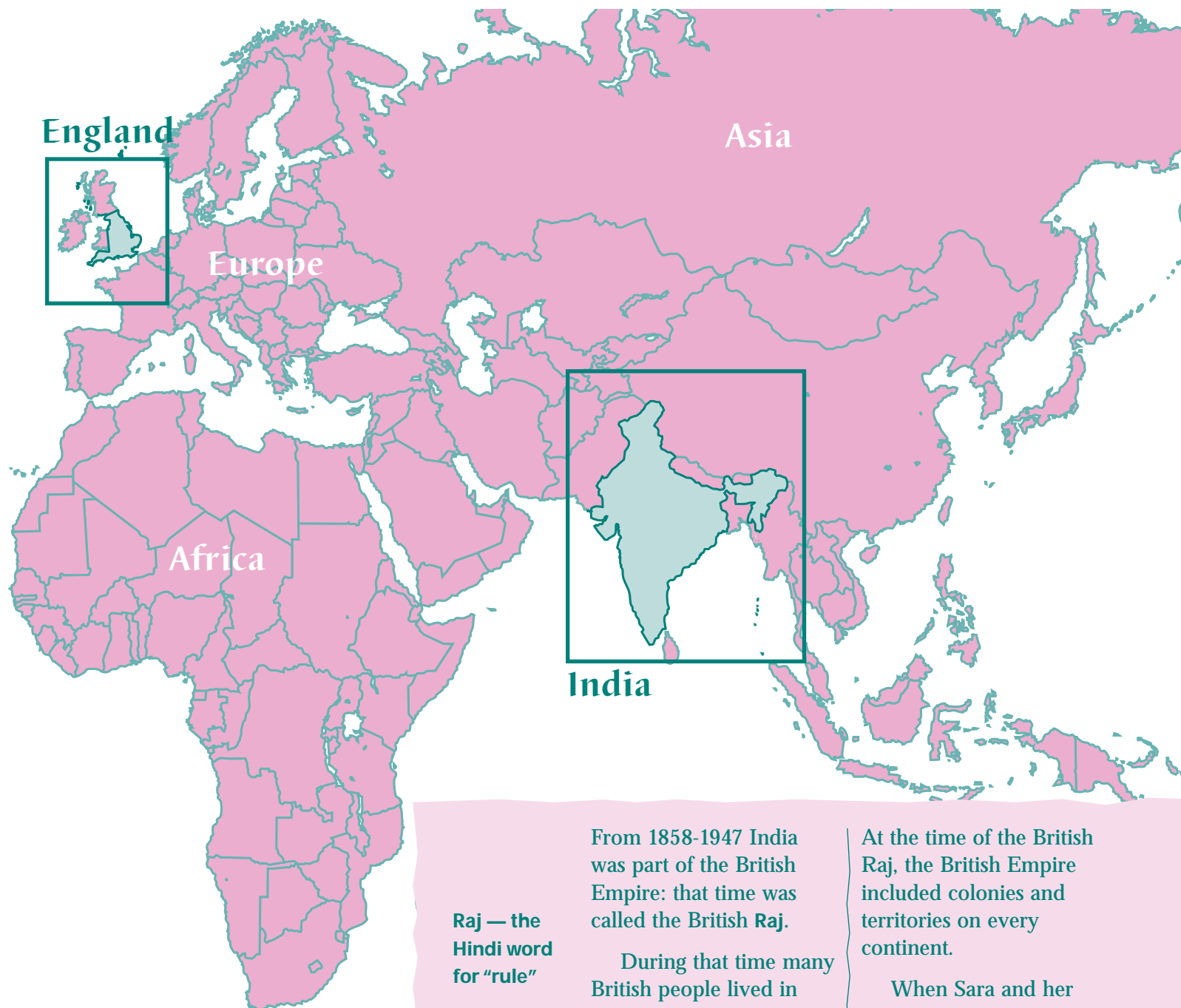
seminary — a private boarding school for girls

headmistress — principal

pauper — a poor person

lascar — an Indian military servant

A Little Princess and the British Raj



**Raj — the
Hindi word
for “rule”**

From 1858-1947 India was part of the British Empire: that time was called the British Raj.

During that time many British people lived in India. Most of them were soldiers and government officials. Some of them brought their families with them. Even though some people spent many years in India, they always thought of Great Britain as their home.

At the time of the British Raj, the British Empire included colonies and territories on every continent.

When Sara and her father left India, Sara had to adjust to life in England, a part of Great Britain. Just as Sara and other British people were the minority in India, Ram Das, her new friend, was in the minority in England.

Turning a Novel into a Musical

A Little Princess is based on a novel. When playwrights adapt (change) stories for the stage they sometimes have to

- combine, simplify, or eliminate characters and events
- add characters and events
- simplify the settings of the story

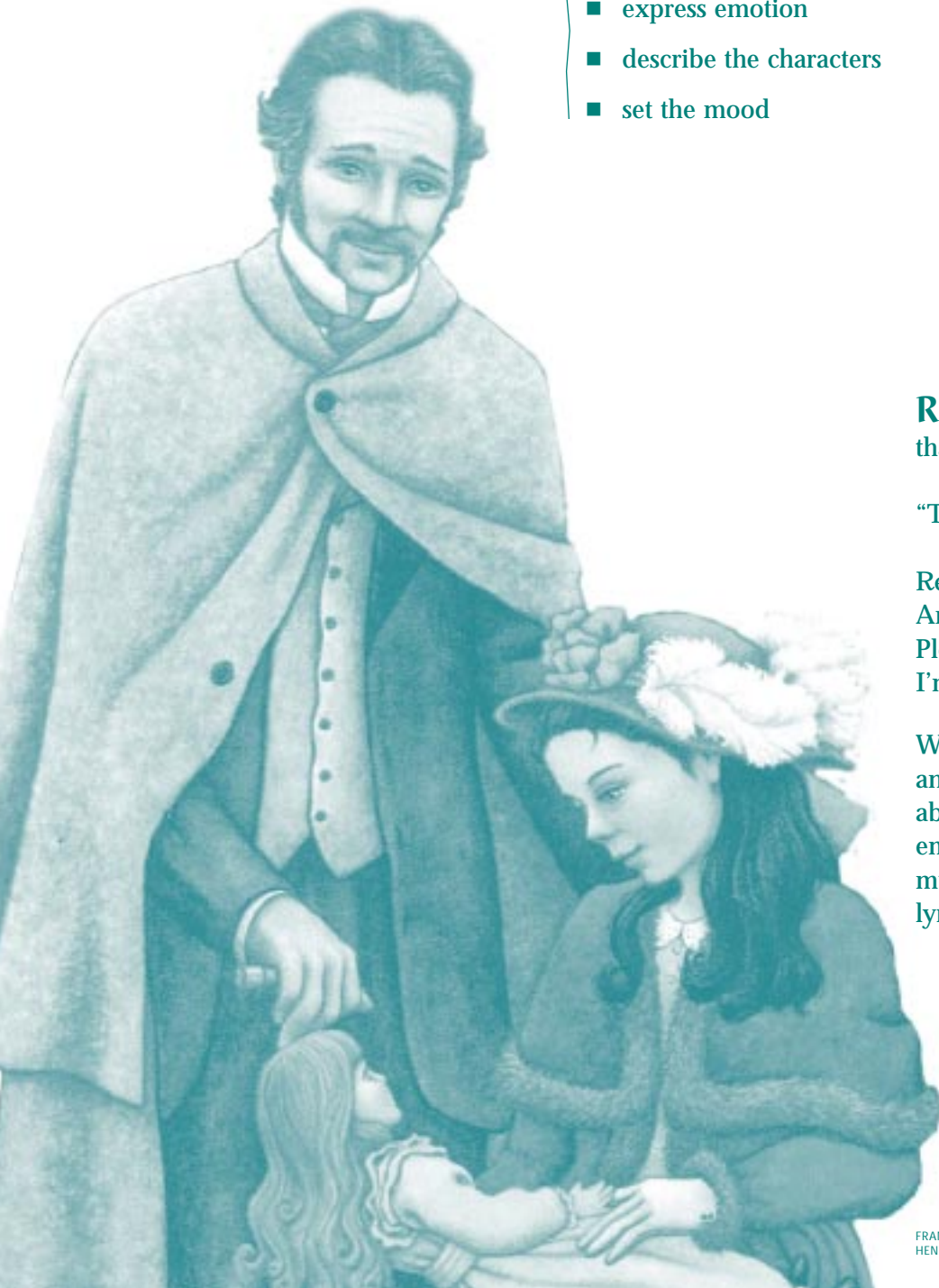
Sometimes playwrights adapt novels into **musicals**, using songs (music and lyrics) to help tell the story. To turn the novel *A Little Princess* into a musical, playwright Greg Gunning wrote the book (script) and lyrics and Richard DeRosa composed the music.

The music and lyrics help to:

- tell the story
- express emotion
- describe the characters
- set the mood

musical — a play with music and lyrics and sometimes dancing

lyrics — the words in songs



Read these lyrics

that Sara and her father sing:

“There is an endless sky that
surrounds us.
Remember, I’m looking at it too.
And even though we’re miles apart,
Please know that
I’m thinking thoughts of you.”

What do the lyrics tell you about Sara and her father? What clues do they give about what happens in the story? What emotion is expressed? What kind of music do you think will accompany the lyrics? Why?

4 Actors = 11 Characters

Four actors play all the characters in the musical, *A Little Princess*. They do it by “doubling” – some actors playing several roles.

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Actor #1 plays | Sara Crewe |
| Actor #2 plays | Captain Crewe (Sara’s father) Rajah (an Indian king) Ram Das (an Indian servant) |
| Actor #3 plays | Becky (a maid) Indian Servant Attendant |
| Actor #4 plays | Miss Minchin (headmistress of the school) Indian Servant Chemin (an evil sorceress) Nurse |

At the Performance

Listen and watch carefully. The characters, times, and places in the story change quickly.

After the Performance

How did the actors show that they had become other characters?

Listen for these Lines

Captain Crewe

“Nothing’s too good for my little princess.”

Miss Minchin

“A princess. That’s what she is! And we’ll treat her like one—always.”

Work with a partner to say the lines in different ways (excitedly, fearfully, boldly, sadly, etc.). Which ways do you like best? Why?

When you attend *A Little Princess*, compare the way you say the lines with the way the performers say them.

Becky

“Beggin’ your pardon, Miss, but we shouldn’t be talkin’.”

Sara

“Why?”

Becky

“Well... ’cause there’s like...like a wall that separates us.”

Be a Storyteller

In *A Little Princess*, Sara tells a story that begins

“Once long ago in a mystical land called *India*, the Great King Rajah had taken his child on a journey. They encountered terrible storms and cold fog! But the good king, because he had magic...”



Becky and Sara

Story Helpers

Setting (Where and when does the story occur?)

Characters (Who is in your story besides King Rajah and his child?)

Plot (What happens to the king and his child?)

Conclusion (How does the story end?)

Theme (What big idea do you want readers to think about?)

Remember a Good Story:

- has interesting characters and events
- contains some kind of problem that must be solved
- might have something unexpected happen (a surprise)
- sometimes has a lesson or moral that the author wants readers to think about
- keeps readers' attention by being exciting, interesting, funny, or sometimes even a little scary

Using the ideas you've written under the “story helpers,” finish your story on other paper. After writing your story give it to a classmate. Ask your classmate to help you improve your story by answering these questions:

“What did you like most about my story?”

“Was there anything you didn't understand?”

“Do you have suggestions for improving my story?”

Revise your story, using ideas your classmate suggests or new things you think of.

Share your story with friends and family.

Using the “story helpers,” write down ideas for a story of your own. Let your imagination **GO!**

“Seeing” a Performance

When you attend a performance, you “see” the work of many playmakers. Some of them are theatrical designers.

What do theatrical designers do? They plan and create:



Lights



Make-up

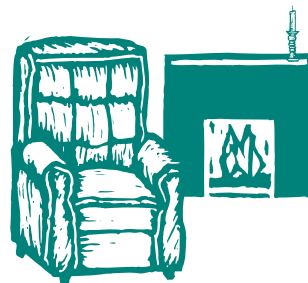


Props

props — objects used by actors, for example, suitcases, dolls, books



Costumes



Scenery

Student Activity

Imagine that the story you wrote about the king and his child has been adapted as a musical.

- What kinds of costumes should the characters wear? Draw some sketches or cut and paste examples from magazines.
- What should the sets look like? Draw some sketches or cut and paste examples from magazines.
- What colors do you want for special lighting effects? Why?

- Will characters wear special make-up? If so, draw some sketches or cut and paste examples from magazines.
- What are some props characters will use? Draw some sketches or cut and paste examples from magazines.

Tell your story to classmates and share your design ideas with them. Ask your teacher if you and your classmates can make a classroom exhibit of your stories and designs.

Resources

You may want to read...

Books by Francis Hodgson Burnett:

A Little Princess. NY: Grosset & Dunlap, 1996.

Little Lord Fauntleroy. NY: Dell Publishing Co., 1986.

The Secret Garden. Hong Kong: Everbest Printing, 1992.

Books about Frances Hodgson Burnett:

Carpenter, Angelica & Jean Shirley. *Frances Hodgson Burnett, Beyond the Secret Garden*. Minneapolis: Lerner, 1990.

Thwaite, Ann. *Waiting for the Party: The Life of Frances Hodgson Burnett 1849–1924*. NY: Scribner, 1974.

The Audience: You

As audience members you and your classmates help make performances come alive! Here are a few tips that will help you and your classmates do that when you see *A Little Princess*:

- Listen and watch attentively.
- Be considerate of your neighbors: talking and moving around disturbs others.
- Laugh if you want to.
- Clap after songs you like.
- Let yourself feel the magic of theater!

After the Performance

Would you recommend *A Little Princess* to any of your friends? Who? Why?



The Kennedy Center

Visiting the Kennedy Center

The John F. Kennedy Center is a “living memorial” to John F. Kennedy, a popular president of the United States from 1961 to 1963. As a “living memorial,” the Kennedy Center is a place where dance, music, theater, and film can be experienced every day.

The Kennedy Center has two entrances: the Hall of Nations and the Hall of States. You will enter through the Hall of States. Overhead you will see the flags of all 50 states and the District of Columbia. *A Little Princess* will be performed in the Theatre Lab, which is on the Roof Terrace level. You and your classmates will walk to the elevators and ride to the Roof Terrace level. The Theatre Lab has 400 seats arranged in rows that go upward like big steps. An usher will direct you to your seats.



The Kennedy Center

James A. Johnson
Chairman

Lawrence J. Wilker
President

Derek E. Gordon
Vice President, Education

Cuesheet / A Little Princess

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