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Oh, behave!

LATECOMERS are not welcome at the Esplanade - Theatres on the Bay. Turn up tardy and you will be barred from entering until there is a proper break in the performance, no matter how much your ticket cost. Should the particular show not have any interval, well, tough. No excuses will be accepted. No money will be reimbursed. Mr Lim Ewe Leong, 36, customer service manager of the Esplanade, says: 'We hope to start all performances on time. We encourage patrons to be punctual. Not only is latecoming disruptive, it is also disrespectful to the audience and the artistes.' [Full Story](#)

Arts Appreciation 101

So, you have been admonished one too many times to know that you must never clap in between movements when a symphony is performing. You have dumped your plastic bags at the cloakroom and your children with your in-laws. You have memorised all hall exit signs in the event that you have to make a mid-opera toilet sprint. [Full Story](#)

See you at the waterfront

EVER since The Straits Times moved to Toa Payoh in February, some of my colleagues and I have been experiencing shopping centre withdrawal symptoms. You see, Times House in Kim Seng Road where we used to work was directly opposite Great World City. [Full Story](#)

LIFE-LITE

Life! on Monday

Watch this space for a list of tomorrow's top stories from 6pm S'pore time

Quoteworthy

'You know they're older than you, and you look like their mother.'

- Supermodel Christy Turlington on succumbing to peer pressure to undergo a facelift

'The Hollywood system where everybody does a different thing is such a hassle.'

- Robert Rodriguez, director of Spy Kids and Spy Kids 2, on why he's going back to making indie films

'I do not deserve an entry visa any more than the ageing mother hoping to visit her children in the US, perhaps for the last time in her life. For my part, I feel this decision is somehow what I deserve.'

- Iranian director Abbas Kiarostami, on being denied a visa to the United

More of **Life!**
in print edition

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- The auto choice for those driving
- Park and walk
- Looking sharp for the main event
- You can look the part, with some help
- Pashminas are so passe, dah-ling
- Hiccup! Sneeze! Burp!
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- No durians, but you won't go hungry
- Hot mall with plenty to drink
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States to attend the
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**'She's a Karen
Carpenter with
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- Homegrown
musician-producer
Adam Lee on singer-
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**'The length of the
role doesn't
matter. The
impact does.'**

- Bollywood actor
Sanjay Kapoor on
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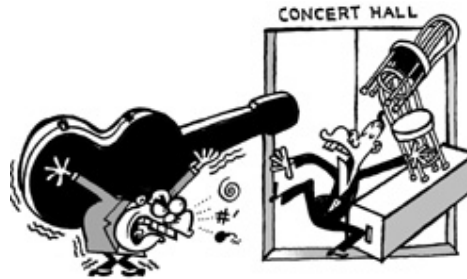
No latecomers, no eating, no ringing devices, no photography and filming, and no boisterous kids allowed at the Esplanade - as befits a world-class arts centre

By [Suhaila Sulaiman](#)

LATECOMERS are not welcome at the Esplanade - Theatres on the Bay.

Turn up tardy and you will be barred from entering until there is a proper break in the performance, no matter how much your ticket cost.

Should the particular show not have any interval, well, tough. No excuses will be accepted. No money will be reimbursed.



-- Cartoons by MIEL

Mr Lim Ewe Leong, 36, customer service manager of the Esplanade, says: 'We hope to start all performances on time. We encourage patrons to be punctual. Not only is latecoming disruptive, it is also disrespectful to the audience and the artistes.'

The rule will be applied across-the-board - to concerts, musicals, dance performances, everything. Indeed, when the arts centre opens on Saturday with its line-up of world-class acts, there will be many p's and q's to keep in mind.

Food, drinks, plastic bags, beeping and ringing devices, photography and filming are banned from the halls. And leave the kids at home if they are very young or noisy.

Break a rule and you may be shown the door, or not get through it at all.

Mr Lim says ushers will only 'admit latecomers at appropriate breaks'. Until then, tardy people have to make do with watching the performance on small TV monitors outside the Concert Hall and Theatre.

And while those in urgent need of the toilet may leave the auditorium, they will not be allowed back in until a break.

One Life! writer who attended a trial run of a performance by the

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-- Cartoons by MIEL

Parents have the option of dropping off their child at Happy Child, a care centre on the second floor of the Esplanade Mall. Open from 8.30 am till the time shows end, it cares for children as young as 18 months at \$15 an hour.

Currently, the Esplanade does not admit infants-in-arms or children under two into its theatres. Feedback from its trial runs, however, has led the management to consider raising the age limit to six years, says an Esplanade spokesman. The matter is under review.

'It is really up to the parents to know their child's threshold and to educate them on what's acceptable behaviour in the theatre,' she says.

'Even if he is nine, a hyper-active child bobbing in his seat during a show will irritate those around him. You would then be wasting your money and opportunity to experience an arts event.'

- Send your comments to stlife@sph.com.sg

Mind your P's and Q's

THERE'S no business like show-you-the-door business, and The Esplanade will get tough on those who disrupt performances. Here are some vital tips on theatre-going etiquette:

- Arrive early so that you can get to your seat before a show starts. You have paid for it and would not want your enjoyment to be disturbed by latecomers either.
- Leave grocery bags, umbrellas and other bulky items in the cloakroom next to the box office on the mezzanine floor. Not only is the rustle of plastic bags distracting but people could also trip on the bundles.

- Don't talk during the performance. There is no need to explain the plot to your partner. People paid for the show, not for your running commentary.
- Save the popcorn, sweets in plastic wrappers, burgers and drinks for the cinema and your living room. These won't be allowed in. You may stuff your face at the bars outside the Concert Hall and Theatre during breaks, but the food must be consumed before you return to the show.
- Keep your feet off the seats.
- Turn off handphones, pagers and other beeping devices upon entering the theatre.
- Remain in your seat till the end of a show. If you prefer to rush to your car to beat the traffic jam

before the final curtain call, then you should not bother to show up in the first place.

- If you are bored or unwell or in need of the toilet, wait for the interval, if possible, before getting up. Leaving while performers are spouting lines on stage is rude.
- Take your children to performances that are appropriate for their ages and impress upon them good theatre-going manners. It's not fair to bore them with an opera, for example, if you know they will start fidgeting. It's not fair to opera-lovers either.
- Leave cameras and recording devices at home. Respect artistic property. Copyright laws prohibit photography and recording at the Esplanade.
- Don't expect your money back for a performance that you've missed. No refunds are given for any reason.

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Arts Appreciation 101

By [Tan Shzr Ee](#)

So, you have been admonished one too many times to know that you must never clap in between movements when a symphony is performing.

You have dumped your plastic bags at the cloakroom and your children with your in-laws. You have memorised all hall exit signs in the event that you have to make a mid-opera toilet sprint.

But you're short of the one X-factor: The High-Brow Quotient. You can't tell your concertos from your sonatas.

The good news is, you don't actually have to be a chi-chi connoisseur to reap a complete arts experience at the Esplanade. You just have to pretend to be one.

Don't know where to start? Sunday Life! has collated pointers from fellow pretenders in the arty-farty scene - who prefer to be mysteriously anonymous - on the art of showing off.

CLASSICAL MUSIC

First things first: Always point out that the term 'classical music' in itself is technically wrong.

People might use it to refer to everything from Bach to Busoni to British Airways' television advertisements (Yanni's mangling of Delibes' Flower Duet). But you know better.

'Classical' music refers only to the period of Western European Art music from the mid-18th to 19th centuries. The other main periods are Renaissance, Baroque, Romantic and Modern.

You don't have to find out why the elements of harmony, motif-development and orchestration make one period different from another. It's enough to just drop the names of the big boys of classical music - Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven - now and then.



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You can also hint at minor cult figures whose works can be found on designer CD labels like Deutsche Grammophon (pronounced Doy-cher Grama-fon), the prime rib of the CD world.

Start with the tongue-twister Carl Ditters von Dittersdorf, a contemporary of Haydn's (Hai-den). Then move on to the Romantics proper with the unfortunately-named organist William Crotch. You can then reel off names like Schubert (Shoo-burt), Chopin (Show-pun), Brahms, Stravinsky, Bartok (Bar-talk) and Tan Dun.

No need to know details; just say they successively made music thicker, noisier and more schizophrenic.

Of course, you must also know what these people actually wrote for soloists or orchestras to play - more than half the time it would be a sonata, quartet, symphony or a concerto. Each of them is usually divided into three or four movements which are punctuated by silences during which nobody is allowed to clap, for fear of upsetting the thematic and harmonic flow.

After the concert, wax lyrical about how a musician does his 'take', or interpretation of a well-known work: Is it traditional and stifled, over-emotive or confounding and post-modern?

You can also share the factual nugget about how 17th-century conductor Jean-Baptiste Lully (Jawn Bahp-teest Loo-ye) died of an abscess after injuring his own foot while beating time with a staff. Or how, 400 years ago, castrated opera singers miraculously managed to sire children.

When all else fails, put your bets on good old J. S. Bach (Bahhk, right): It is universally-acknowledged that the 18th century German schoolmaster of the Baroque age was a stuffy wig-wearer, but he also wrote the world's greatest music ever.

Potential Faux Pas: A concerto is not a Japanese car, but a piece of music existing for the purpose of having a glamorous soloist fight his aural space onstage against an orchestra. But if you are looking for a musical example of confused identity, try Michael Nyman's opera, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife For A Hat*.

Poseur Term: 'Ethnomusicology'. In today's world of shifting cultural politics, it isn't enough to be versed in Euro-Western High Art alone. Show your leanings for music with 'zero harmony', from the Gagaku court music of Japan to Laotian pipe melodies, and justify them with this seven-syllable word, which is coated with the exotic veneer of 'ethnology' - or the 1950s word for 'anthropology'.

Tip: Music critics and violists (people who play the viola) are the most despised members of the industry. It is therefore perfectly acceptable to slime them in public. But always remember to make it up to them with a suitably expensive gift from Tiffany's.

THEATRE

First things first: For all everyone may say that theatre is larger than life, your better senses tell you the houses and trees you see on the stage are suspiciously half-sized, no?

But never let slip that you have discovered the snag in the clever cover-up. A show, after all, is still a show, whether it's Shakespeare, Stoppard

(the playwright who wrote the Gwyneth Paltrow movie Shakespeare In Love, among other things) or Stanislavsky (the man behind 'method' acting where actors 'become' characters).

Play the game instead and look for the 'super-objective', or the message behind the delivery.

For example, a cardboard tree is not just a tree but very possibly an emblem for Madam X's mother-in-law's projection on Mr Y's Oedipus Complex.

The same goes, too, for Madam X and Mr Y, who are themselves very possibly living metaphors or instruments for larger-than-life notions of Greed, Jealousy, Ambition, Love, Angst, Sex and the current favourite: Disenchanted Urban Intellectualism.

And if you've no clue as to what the plot is, don't worry. Usually, it is also a deliberate case of the director not knowing what story he is supposed to tell and leaving the pre-arranged mess for actors to sort out in the name of 'collaborative' theatre.

But theatre is not always farce or huh?-inducing, so the gurus say. If you really need your unhealthy dose of naturalistic theatre, there are always musicals and - if the worst comes to the worst - variety shows.

Potential Faux Pas: Oft-heard: 'The scenery on stage very nice, hor.' Darlings, it's called the Set - and if you must - Backdrop.

Poseur Term: 'The Alienation Effect', or 'Verfremdung' (pronounced Fer-frem-doong) in German. Largely developed by dramatist Bertolt Brecht (Ber-told Brehht), this is a cheem process of de-familiarisation whereby everyday actions such as eating and walking are distorted by being interrupted, lengthened or decelerated.

Tip: Interculturalism, or the inter-weaving of various cultures in a play, is the new-old big thing in theatre today.

Blame it on cult directors like Singapore's very own Ong Keng Sen and American Richard Schechner (pronounced Shek-ner), who have been using the word as an excuse to 'curate' elements of Asian and world theatre on stage, re-framing 'exoticism' over the past 10 to 15 years.

DANCE

First things first: Proclaim confidently that the ballet Swan Lake isn't really a work by Russian composer Piotr Illych Tchaikovsky.

Quibble with established fact and point to conspiracy theories that say the ballet is actually a 'global multi-national company' whose major shareholders are France's Marius Petipa, Russia's Lev Ivanov, Iceland's Helgi Tomasson, Britain's Peter Wright and Denmark's Peter Martins.

Now, if you must put a label to these people, they are 'choreo graphers', or men who realise a musical blueprint into action on stage, otherwise known as a 'performance'.

Tchaikovsky may have drafted the ground plan. But these international choreographers have each invested talent and ego in his ballet, so that the many interpretations are now known as 'So-and-So's version of Swan Lake'. They, not Tchaikovsky, are the true 'owners' of the work. Or so the

theories go.

Whatever the case, you should acquaint yourself with a separate list of dancers kicking hairless legs on stage and coffee-cup-throwing prima ballerinas. Most happen to be Russian.



Start with grande dame Anna Pavlova (after whom the egg-white dessert of the same name was created), then follow up with British-born Margot Fonteyn (Mar-gow Fon-tain) and Darcey Bussell (Bustle), Uliana Lopatkina (Loh-pat-keena) and their male counterparts Vaslav Nijinsky (Ni-jeen-ski) and Mikhail Baryshnikov (Bah-reesh-nee-kof).



But the ultimate fey queen was Tartar-born Rudolf Nureyev (Noo-re-yev), whose legs were said to have been the target of Soviet KGB agents on a secret destruction mission after he defected from the former USSR to the United States in 1961.

Thank goodness the plan was never carried out, for he lived on to give credit to the Men-In-Tights look. He died in 1993.

From the 1940s, the Modern Dancers, most of whom have been Americans, started muscling into the classical scene: Enter Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham, and German Pina Bausch (Pee-na Bowsh).

No need to know too much about disjointed bodies or spasmodic movements or subtext here; just know that they have helped, or are helping, to bring on the early death of tutus.

Potential Faux Pas: A male ballet-dancer is not a ballerino. Premier danseur (pruh-mee-yay don-serr) is the best way to describe such a man without sounding, er, unmanly.

Poseur Term: So what if you know your grande jete (gronde jer-tay, meaning a high leap with split legs) from your pas de deux (pah dur durr, meaning a big duet). The ultimate foreign word is 'Jo-Ha-Kyu', or the conveniently-abstract Japanese aesthetic of 'beginning, middle, end', borrowed from Noh Dance and Theatre.

Show off your insider knowledge by noting that many Eastern dance forms are healthily centred on the torso or the ground. Stick your nose in the air and sniff that it is a realistic complement to feather-clad madmen who think they are birds tiptoeing, leaping and flying around in an enclosed space.

Tip: For some reason, artistes, producers, managers and important people in the ballet world still insist on calling grown men and women 'boys' and 'girls'. Best not to question the practice.

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See you at the waterfront

For a shopper who loves familiar and intimate Orchard Road, the Marina area is big, scary and to be avoided. But the splendid Esplanade arts centre might change all that

By [Sumiko Tan](#)

EVER since The Straits Times moved to Toa Payoh in February, some of my colleagues and I have been experiencing shopping centre withdrawal symptoms.

You see, Times House in Kim Seng Road where we used to work was directly opposite Great World City.

Oh, how spoilt we were, if only we knew it then.

When it was time for a coffee break, we'd take a two-minute stroll across the road to pick up a latte from Spinelli's or Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf.

McDonald's was round the corner, the food court was one floor below and restaurants a floor above.

We could get anything from a Hallmark card to a \$1.99 Japanese snack, a pair of Nike sneakers to a Buddha Bar CD.

We could even catch a movie at GV Grand during lunchtime, although, alas, I never ever got round to doing that.

And then we moved to Toa Payoh.

Don't get me wrong. The Singapore Press Holdings headquarters is spacious and modern, with a pretty roof garden.

But for someone whose working life revolved around daily trips to a big, bright mall, Toa Payoh does take some getting used to.

Czech writer Milan Kundera uses the phrase 'the unbearable lightness of being' for the title for one of his books. It examines how people cope with conflicting desires, responsibilities and opportunities lost.



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In an entirely different context, the phrase describes the feeling shopaholics like me get when we walk into a shiny, happy mall packed with dozens of shops.

A frisson of excitement shoots up our spines. We have reached Civilisation. Opportunities beckon. Adventure awaits. Desires will overcome us. We will have Choices to make. Some will cause us Regret, others Rapture.

We feel both light-headed and light-hearted.

Shopping is such a grand experience.



TEST YOUR EYESIGHT: Unless you go really close, you might miss the Esplanade carpark sign. -- ALAN LIM

IF GREAT WORLD CITY has sentimental value, it is actually the malls at Orchard Road that I really love.

Over the years, I have walked up and down Orchard Road so many times that I know it like the back of my hand.

It began in the 1970s with Liat Towers and the first McDonald's. Then C.K. Tang, followed by Centrepoint, Paragon and Scotts Shopping

Centre.

Today, there's also the Heeren, Wisma Atria, Hilton Shopping Arcade, Forum and the evergreen Far East Plaza.

My favourite, though, is Ngee Ann City. I could live there. It's big, it's bright, it has the best food hall in town (have you tried Beard Papa puffs yet?) and the nicest mix of shops (Zara!).

The buildings are familiar, the walkways green and shady, and everything is packed closely and intimately.

When it comes to shopping in Singapore, I can't imagine why anyone would want to venture anywhere but Orchard Road.

THE Marina area is touted to be The Next Big Thing because of the Esplanade.

The arts centre will draw the crowds, who will, hopefully, also translate into shoppers.

In a recent story in Life!, shopkeepers in the five malls in the area were quoted as saying how they wanted to beat Orchard Road to become Singapore's premier shopping district.

But to Orchard Road shoppers, the Marina area has always been a mystery.

We might venture to Raffles City on the farflung fringes of Orchard Road, but anything beyond that is unattractive. The carparks are unfamiliar, the roads bewildering, and there is, really, such an impersonal air there.

The handful of times I had been to Suntec City, I did because of work.

The experience wasn't pleasant. I got lost among its towers, and the carpark got my blood boiling.

But with the Esplanade opening there, I thought I should give the malls another chance.

At lunch the other day, I took the MRT to City Hall.

Feeling very much like an accidental tourist indeed, I found myself in the subterranean CityLink Mall, a place I had never been to before.

The mall is not bad at all. It boasts a pleasing grey colour scheme, flattering lighting, nice-smelling corridors and a quirky blend of shops. Even the 7-Eleven store looks posh.

From CityLink Mall, I made my way into Suntec City. And, yes, though it is still big, ugly and gloomy, it does have an impressive range of outlets, including my favourite eatery, Marche.

Esplanade Mall, on the other hand, is a weird mix, from a Kodak Express outlet to a shop selling - bewilderingly - tatami mats. But it will settle down.

I didn't have time to check out Marina Square, though I'm sure there are some pleasant surprises in store.

But, of course, the biggest attraction of Marina is the splendid Esplanade. So much has been written about it that suffice for me to say, I love its thorny design.

Clearly, many other Singaporeans do, too.

On an escalator leading out of CityLink, I saw three middle-aged women on an outing. One of them pointed skywards and said excitedly: 'There, there, there.'

Looming ahead was the spiky outline of the Esplanade.

It is unlikely that Marina will replace Orchard Road as the place I want to shop and hang out.

But with the Esplanade's opening on Saturday, you'll be seeing me - and thousands of others - going to Marina a lot more now.

And, who knows, even die-hard Orchard Road fans like myself might just find ourselves growing fond of the malls along the waterfront.

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