ACCESSIBILITY GUIDE

Image Description: A big purple top hat on a teal background. The hat has a green feather on the brim and has Silverish-purpleish snowflakes in the background. At the top of the picture is a black silhouette of a train. Over the top of the hat is a yellow title which reads “Mr. Dickens' Hat: A Play with Music”
GUIDE INTRODUCTION
Welcome to Northlight’s production of *Mr. Dickens’ Hat* by Michael Hollinger. This production will run at Northlight Theatre in the North Shore Center for the Performing Arts from November 26 – January 2.

This guide holds many different accessibility tools to make your experience at the show as comfortable as possible. Please be aware that not every element of this guide will be useful to each individual, therefore, please feel free to pick and choose which accessibility tools would be most beneficial to you.

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PERFORMANCE SCHEDULES

**Tuesdays – Thursdays Evenings** (all times are estimates)
- 6:30pm  The lobby opens for concessions & socializing.
- 7:00pm  The auditorium (house) opens for you to take your seat.
- 7:30pm  A recorded curtain speech will play.
- 7:35pm  The show will begin.
- 9:00pm  The show will end.

**Fridays – Saturday Evenings** (all times are estimates)
- 7:00pm  The lobby opens for concessions & socializing.
- 7:30pm  The auditorium (house) opens for you to take your seat.
- 8:00pm  A recorded curtain speech will play.
- 8:35pm  The show will begin.
- 10:00pm The show will end.

**Saturday – Sunday Matinees** (all times are estimates)
- 1:30pm  The lobby opens for concessions & socializing.
- 2:00pm  The auditorium (house) opens for you to take your seat.
- 2:30pm  A recorded curtain speech will play.
- 2:35pm  The show will begin.
- 4:00pm  The show will end.
SHORT SHOW SYNOPSIS (spoilers ahead)

*Mr. Dickens’ Hat* is about a young girl named Kit, working at Mr. Garbleton & Mrs. Prattle’s hat shop in London during the 19th century. Kit, whose father has been imprisoned for failure to repay a debt, is working at the hat shop in order to free her father. At the shop is a hat which was once worn by famed British writer, Charles Dickens. Two villains named Fleece and Gnat (who work at the prison), attempt to steal the hat so that Fleece may sell it to a rich Countess. While Mr. Garbleton & Mrs. Prattle get married at a church far away, Kit and her friend Ned are able to stop the dastardly duo from stealing the hat, with a showdown at a nearby railway track. Kit outwits Fleece and he is arrested by the well-meaning but buffoonish Constable Witslow, who frees her father as carolers sing Christmas songs to end the play.

ELONGATED SHOW SYNOPSIS (spoilers ahead)

At the start of the play, a group of carolers wearing 19th century hats enters to sing the song “Round and Round.” At the end of the song, the six carolers remove their hats and address the audience. The Carolers introduce us to the hat shop on Crownwell street which belongs to Mr. Garbleton, a shop where Charles Dickens had bought his hat. The carolers then begin to name all of Charles Dickens’ great stories, eventually overlapping and delving into chaos. The actors walk us through the setting of the shop, explaining to us all the different types of people who buy hats from the shop. One actor puts on a black eye-patch and turns into the character Fleece.
The official story begins in London on December 21, 1865. Mr. Garbleton and Mrs. Prattle are looking to close the shop early to not miss their train. Their young son, Ned, continually has trouble completing his various tasks. Constable Witslow enters the shop and asks Mrs. Prattle if any crime is in progress, since he needs to stop a big crime to receive a promotion. She assures him that there is not and she leaves.

The lights shift to the basement of the building where we discover Kit, a young girl attempting to work at the shop so that she can buy her father’s release from prison. Witslow enters, excited by the news that someone is in prison, but is told that Kit’s father did not commit a felony and was instead imprisoned for debt. At this point, she only has three more months before she will have enough money to buy his freedom and return to school. Ned enters, discouraged by the fact everyone thinks he is stupid. He begs Kit to read to him and she obliges.

The lights shift and we return back upstairs where we meet Lady Plume and her dog Montague (who is invisible). From her, we learn that Mrs. Prattle and Mr. Garbleton used to own two separate shops with a wall dividing them. Recently, they have torn down the wall and combined shops to form one big shop because they are in love and will be getting married. Both are widowers and their friendship has bloomed into a relationship. They are to be married that evening, although Mr. Garbleton is very nervous about meeting her family.

The lights shift to the basement where Kit is reading to Ned. The carolers show us a flashback when Mr. Garbleton gave Kit the collected works of Charles Dickens. Mr. Garbleton tells us he got the book from a young Charles Dickens, whom he calls Charley, who he worked with at his father’s shop. Charley, much like Kit, was working at the shop in order to pay off his father’s debt.
The lights shift again and we are back with Mrs. Prattle and Lady Plume, who is waiting for Kit to bring her new hat. Eventually she enters with it and begins to write up Lady Plume’s receipt. Mr. Garbleton enters, desperately looking for his ascot and hat and exits with Mrs. Prattle. Two shady men enter the shop from the Queen’s Prison, their names are Fleece and Gnat. Fleece points Gnat’s attention to a hat at the top of the store. He recounts the tale of when he met a French countess who owned hats from various famous writers through history, but was missing Charles Dickens. She paid Fleece an undisclosed sum of money to get her Dickens’ hat.

The lights shift and we enter another flashback to learn about the hat. Charles Dickens was once on a runaway train with many injured survivors. He used his hat to get water to them, but then required a new hat which he got from Mr. Garbleton, giving him his old hat in return. We return back to the present and Fleece tells Gnat that they are going to steal it so that he can finally leave his employer, the Queen’s Prison. Ms. Prattle returns and pays Kit’s wages to Mr. Fleece. Ms. Prattle and Mr. Garbleton exit for the train, leaving Kit and Ned to their own devices in the shop. They are joined by the carolers who sing them another song. After talk of spending the entire night reading, Kit agrees to stay with Ned. Kit exits to go see her father, promising to return soon.

Kit trudges along the railway track with nothing but a blanket to keep her warm, finally arriving at the prison to see her father. She shows her father a box that Mrs. Prattle gave her which contains feathers that she cannot use for hats. Kit’s father is discouraged that she won’t be staying with him that evening. She gives him a feather and leaves.

The lights shift to Fleece and Gnat who are planning their burglary. Fleece tells Gnat that he has been in the prison system his entire life and cannot wait to leave it. The lights shift again and we see
Kit speaking with her mother who is forlorn that Kit has to work so hard. Eventually, we learn that Kit’s mother is not really there and has passed away a while ago. Kit leaves the prison and enters into the freezing cold.

The lights shift and we enter the wedding church where a group of carolers sing “When the Winter Wind is Blowing.” Mr. Garbleton is getting quizzed on the family names by Mrs. Prattle but he keeps making mistakes, which frustrates him greatly.

The lights shift back to the hat shop where we see Kit reading to Ned. Outside, Fleece and Gnat are preparing to rob the store. Before they enter, Fleece wants to make sure the hat is still there, so Gnat gets on his back to look through a window. They see the hat and begin to work on picking the lock to the shop. Constable Witslow enters and approaches the thieves, but Fleece tells him the carolers are disturbing the peace and he should go arrest them. After a back and forth, Witslow goes to do so. We go to a flashback where we see how Fleece obtained the key to the door, by bribing the locksmith.

Meanwhile, the lights shift to a split scene between the wedding and Ms. Plume’s event. Both of them simultaneously open their hat boxes and realize that their hats have been switched. Mr. Garbleton’s hat is a feathered hat for a woman, and Ms. Plume’s is a man’s hat.

The lights shift and we are back at the shop where Fleece and Gnat have entered the store, being overheard by Kit and Ned who realize they are here to steal Mr. Dickens’ hat. The burglars freeze when they hear a voice, but it turns out to be the shop’s parrot. Witslow arrives and the two burglars pretend to be mannequins. Once Witslow exits, they look up to realize the hat is gone. They see a light from downstairs and enter the basement where Kit & Ned are trying to look inconspicuous. After searching them, the
burglars find the hat. The burglars make Kit leave but before she does, Ned hands her the feather box and tells her that her father will want to see the “Norwegian Peacock.” She leaves. A couple moments later, Fleece realizes that something is amiss and opens the hat box, revealing that Ned switched the boxes and gave Kit the box with the hat.

The carolers begin to sing again as Kit runs away from the store with the precious hat in tow, being chased by Fleece. Eventually, Kit finds herself on a train track with a train barreling towards her. Unable to move from fear, she braces herself for impact. The conductor blows his whistle, freeing Kit, who jumps to the side right before she is about to be hit.

On the other side of the train track, Kit threatens to throw the hat into the river rather than give it to Fleece. Fleece offers a trade: his little red book with accounts of how much money has been paid for her father’s freedom in exchange for the hat. Kit agrees but Fleece double-crosses her, keeping both the book and the hat. As he is making his escape, his shoe slips and he falls down into the river below.

The carolers tell us that Fleece survived and wakes up in the custody of Witslow, now an inspector since he has arrested Fleece. Due to Fleece’s treachery, Kit’s father is released. The hat floated down the river and was retrieved by a little girl who returns the hat to the Garbletons. The carolers sing one more song as the play ends.
SENSORY WARNING

Moments in the play that have loud sounds, bright lights, and heightened terror.

• Toward the end of the play when Kit and Fleece are crossing the bridge, a train approaches while they’re on the tracks. There is a loud moment of a train screeching its brakes, bright lights, and a loud train whistle followed by a brief blackout.
• Halfway through the play, there is a scene of heightened terror when Kit is crossing a treacherous bridge and is afraid of falling into the river. In this scene, ghostly figures dressed in black robes, with their faces covered, haunt the character Kit and sing an ominous song in dark lighting.

OTHER PERFORMANCE NOTES (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

• In this play, the actors create the environment of the story through movement and sound. The actors depict objects and scenery that are imaginary, and sometimes the sound comes from surprising places on stage.
• There are a variety of bells, chimes, gongs, whistles, and sound making objects used in this play. They are played at a medium volume.
• At the beginning of the show, the actors enter from the vomits (entrance tunnels) between the audience with masks on.
• When Lottie picks up the “speaking tube” she uses a loud voice to yell at the children.
• When the scenes transition in the play, there are bells, chimes, and gongs that are used to mark the transition.
• The Countess in a big red dress sings a very high note when she tells the story of her hat collection.
NORTHLIGHT THEATRE

- In the scene with the Countess, there are shadow puppet figures that appear behind the screen.
- The platform at the center of the stage becomes a train and all the actors stand on top of the platform. In this scene, there are bells, train whistles, and other loud train noises.
- When Kit walks outside at night, snow falls from the ceiling.
- Halfway through the play, there is a scene of heightened terror when Kit is crossing a treacherous bridge and is afraid of falling into the river. In this scene, ghostly figures dressed in black robes, with their faces covered, haunt the character Kit and sing an ominous song in dark lighting.
- Two carolers with mustaches sing loudly outside of the hat shop at the front of the stage.
- Halfway through the play, Lady Bloom enters house left and stands next to the audience. She rings a bell and calls in a bold voice for her servant. She walks down the stairs next to the audience.
- Toward the end of the play, Mr. Fleece breaks into the hat shop. He tries to grab Kit’s arm and she screams and he reacts with a loud growling voice.
- Mr. Fleece chases Kit and there is a scene of her running and trying to escape.
- Toward the end of the play when Kit and Fleece are crossing the bridge, a train approaches while they’re on the tracks. There is a loud moment of a train screeching its brakes, bright lights, and a loud train whistle followed by a brief blackout.
- When the lights come on, Mr. Fleece and Kit hang from the bottom of the platform and both are afraid of falling.
- Mr. Fleece falls into the river and is wrapped up in the black waves.
- The show ends with the actors singing a song together at the center of the stage.


NORTHLIGHT THEATRE

• At the end of the show, you can applaud, cheer, and stand up in front of your seat to show the actors how much you enjoyed their performance!

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

• Does this production contain any technical elements that could be loud, bright, or shocking?

Like many of Northlight’s plays, this production will include technical elements that may trigger sensory sensitivities. Northlight has done its best to design elements so that they will be accessible to all, but each person is of course different, thereby making it impossible to plan for every individual. If you believe that you may have some sensory sensitivities to the show, please consult the guide above to make you aware of them before they happen. Please also remember that Northlight has noise canceling headphones as well as sunglasses available to borrow for any of these moments.

• What types of accessibility options does Northlight provide?

Northlight provides a wealth of accessibility options for its audience members. These tools can be broken up into two specific categories: Specific Date Accessibility and General Accessibility.

For specific date accessibility, Northlight will provide accommodations on predetermined dates throughout the run. We highly recommend reserving tickets for these dates ahead of time as they tend to sell out. These accommodations include: Audio Description, Open Captions, and Relaxed/Sensory Friendly Performances.
For general accessibility, Northlight provides a wide range of tools that can be requested at any performance of the show free of charge. These include: assisted listening devices and accessible seating. For accessible seating, it is recommended to request the necessary seats when purchasing your tickets, as they may not be available the day of the performance. For assisted listening devices, go to the House Manager or ask an usher.

For more information, please visit northlight.org/visit/#accessibility or email Ruben Carrazana, Community Engagement Manager, at rcarrazana@northlight.org.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>North Shore Center for the Performing Arts</th>
<th>Exterior</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Id: The front of North Shore Center on a sunny day. The building has white columns and its sides are primarily made of windows.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>North Shore Center for the Performing Arts</th>
<th>Entrance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Id: The doors to North Shore’s building. The doors are paneled glass and there is a hand railing leading up. A man is entering the doors.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>North Shore Center for the Performing Arts</th>
<th>Parking Lot</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Id: The parking lot at the theatre. It is a sunny day with many clouds, there is a sign that says “Theatre Parking Only” and several cars parked.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Northlight’s Auditorium</th>
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<tr>
<td>Id: The doors leading directly into the theatre. There are three doors which are all light brown wood. One door is open. A man is waving hi.</td>
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<tr>
<th>The Set for Mr. Dickens’ Hat</th>
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<td>Id: A metal structure, that looks like a bridge, sits in the middle of a dark and gloomy stage surrounded by fog. There are thick ropes hanging from the ceiling and many cardboard boxes placed around the structure.</td>
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<td>Name</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruben Carrazana</td>
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<td>Sara Perry</td>
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<td>BJ Jones</td>
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<td>Christine Bunuan</td>
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<td>Cordelia Dewdney</td>
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<td>Kasey Foster</td>
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<td><strong>Mark David Kaplan</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Ruchir Khazanchi</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Nick Sandys</strong></td>
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<td><strong>David Catlin</strong></td>
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