



THE OLD GLOBE



A New Musical
Book and Lyrics by Aaron Jafferis
Music by Ian Williams
Directed by Ron Daniels

Lincoln High School Center for the Arts
Feb. 14 and 15, 2009
The Old Globe
Feb. 19 – 22, 2009

Study Guide

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**This Study Guide has been prepared by
The Old Globe Education Department**

**For more information on our programs please check our
website www.TheOldGlobe.org**

Roberta Wells-Famula
Director of Education
Rwells-famula@TheOldGlobe.org

Aaron Jafferis and Kingdom

Aaron Jafferis wrote *Kingdom* to try to tell the story of some people he actually knew. He had watched his classmates from high school get involved in drugs, crime and gangs. Jafferis steered clear of that path and went on to college and a career in theatre. Writing the play was his effort to open people's eyes, to help others to see what he had seen and, perhaps, to change lives.

For a playwright, seeing his or her play rehearsed and performed is an exciting and sometimes nerve-wracking experience. In the case of *Kingdom*, Jafferis felt it was particularly important for the cast to understand how important the story is to him. He wanted them to understand what he wanted to accomplish with the play.



The following is from Aaron Jafferis' blog which he wrote during the rehearsal period for an earlier presentation of the play.

"At the end of the first day of rehearsal, after the actors finished their first read-through of the script of *Kingdom*, I thanked them for helping us tell this story, which is the story of young people I've known, past and present, alive and dead. I said thank

you, but I meant be careful, I meant be passionate, I meant be truthful, I meant please do justice to this story which means so much to me, and means even more to people who have lived and died this story, not just acted in it. Not just written it. Now, three weeks later, these characters are coming to life in the actors, and of course they are doing them more justice and making them more real than I ever could.

"Today, before they had their first little performance, doing a rap from the show at the NYMF press conference, our director (Louis Moreno) and I passed out black and yellow bead necklaces to all the cast members. These are the same necklaces that Latin Kings wear, necklaces that I bought at the same Botanica Chango in New Haven where Latin Kings sometimes get their beads. It felt dead-up serious, and the warnings about not going outside wearing the beads were as strict as the warnings cast members got before they were handed their fake guns in rehearsal. We don't want a cast member getting shot by any rival clique because he's mistaken on the street for a real King."

When people go to see a play they want different things. Some people simply want to be entertained; they want to laugh and watch great dancing or listen to great music. Other people go to the theatre to think; they want the playwright and actors to push them beyond what they know and to show them another way of seeing the world. Most people who attend live theatre know that this experience will be different from what they would get if they went to a movie. Why? Partially, the difference comes from seeing live performers on the stage. Being in the same room with living, breathing characters whose performances crackle with human energy, tension, fear and joy makes the theatre experience completely different

from the movie-going experience. The actors on the stage feel the mood of the audience. They respond to the sounds of laughter and the murmurs of surprise or sadness that their audience members make.



The give and take between audience and actor is thrilling and a play about important issues that affect audience members every day can be a revolutionary event. An early reading of the show was presented at a theatre festival that sought to revolutionize theatre as we know it. Theatre has evolved and changed since its earliest times in ancient

Greece. Styles have come and gone, new genres, new techniques have been introduced and incorporated into each new era of theatre. *Kingdom* is part of a movement in which the terminology we use to describe a play has had to change to accommodate something that had not been done before. *Kingdom* is not the same as most musicals; it can't even be called a rock musical, or a hip-hop musical; it defies the descriptions we usually give to musicals. It is as revolutionary as the characters that inhabit the story.

Jafferis grappled with the idea of revolution and considered what that word means in the context of the festival and the story itself and shared these thoughts:

"And then the cast went on stage and performed, and it felt a little strange. Somewhere between comedy and drama and pimping the Latin Kings. Just strange. Doing a palatable show about a group that truly tries to be revolutionary (as in overthrow the government, create an independent Puerto Rico, class struggle in the US), in a festival whose motto is "it's not a revival – it's a revolution" feels a little weird. The word revolution is of course constantly used for different things besides the good old-fashioned social/political/military revolution. It's cheapened. After being around people in Nicaragua and Chiapas who had been part of actual or attempted revolutions, it feels a little weird to see the word applied to a festival of American musicals. And our musical, which purports to tell the story of some people who purport to be real revolutionaries... The trick will be to see what kind of real change this show can effect, not just change in the world of musical theatre."

For The Old Globe and for Aaron Jafferis that kind of change is exactly why we do what we do. Yes, entertainment is always a major part of the goal but the idea that theatre can affect the way people think and can even change their minds is utterly compelling. And in the case of *Kingdom*, it's downright imperative.

What is Hip-Hop Culture?

For many Americans the music and ideals of hip-hop culture seem entirely negative and dangerous. Rap artists often record songs with lyrics that seem to glorify gangs and violence and the depiction of women is often derogatory and demeaning. But there's more to the story.

Hip Hop culture is founded on four pillars: Graffiti, Break Dancing, DJ and Rapping. Also included in the culture are slang, beat boxing (creating rhythms without instruments by using the mouth) and hip-hop clothing style.

In his fascinating article for April, 2007 issue of National Geographic, James McBride describes hip-hop culture's roots. "This is how it worked: One guy, the DJ, played records on two turntables. One guy—or girl—served as master of ceremonies, or MC. The DJs learned to move the record back and forth under the needle to create a "scratch," or to drop the needle on the record where the beat was the hottest, playing "the break" over and over to keep the folks dancing. The MCs "rapped" over the music to keep the party going. One MC sought to out chat the other. Dance styles were created—"locking" and "popping" and "breaking." Graffiti artists spread the word of the "I" because the music was all about identity: I am the best. I spread the most love in the Bronx, in Harlem, in Queens. The focus initially was not on the MCs, but on the dancers, or B-boys. Commercial radio ignored it. DJs sold mix tapes out of the back of station wagons."



But that, as McBride says, is the short history. The rest of the story is more complicated and goes back to the angers and frustrations of life that the minority peoples of America have endured for centuries. It's a history that is enmeshed with cycles of poverty and a desire to be heard. And it is an emergence of new art-forms that, like all art, express the times from which they have sprung. Some will embrace the culture and some will turn away. Some in the hip-hop culture will figure out how to demonstrate what is good about it; a way, perhaps, for people of all cultures and generations to find common ground; to see themselves and each other through art, the mirror of life.

Want to know more? Here are some internet links that provide a glimpse into the world of hip-hop:

<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2007/04/hip-hop-planet/mcbride-text/1>
<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2007/04/hip-hop-planet/hip-hop-learn>
<http://www.daveyd.com/>
<http://www.artcrimes.com/>
<http://techno.org/electronic-music-guide/>

The Creative Team

Aaron Jafferis, Book and Lyrics

Aaron Jafferis has performed his acclaimed hip-hop poetry at Madison Square Garden, the Kennedy Center, and the National Poetry Slam Championships, where he was the 1997 Open Rap Slam champion. His solo hip-hop play *No Lie* has been seen at the Nuyorican Poets Café, H.E.R.E., Passage Theatre, The International Festival of Arts & Ideas, and at high schools and colleges across the country. His hip-hop play *Shakespeare: The Remix* (music by Gihieh Lee) was commissioned by TheatreWorks (Palo Alto) and performed by TheatreWorks, St. Louis Black Rep, and Collective Consciousness. He wrote the book and English lyrics for Ruben Flores' Latin American Songbook series at Joe's Pub. He is currently working on *The Weird Sisters*, a hip-hop opera about young women surviving in the city. In 2007, Aaron was named one of "50 to Watch" by The Dramatist. He has received artist residencies from the MacDowell Colony, TheatreWorks, and Weston Playhouse. He has written poetry for the Urban Bush Women dance troupe and for The Nation and northeastern magazines. He received his BA in Arts & Social Change from the University of California at Berkeley, studied at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, and received his MFA in Musical Theatre Writing from NYU, where he was an Alberto Vilar Global Fellow in the Performing Arts.

Ian Williams, Music

Ian Williams has written several original musicals, including *Kingdom*, *Story of an African Farm*, and *SkidZoeFranNya*, as well as writing original music for several plays. He received his BM in Music Composition from Eastern Washington University, and his MFA from New York University in Musical Theatre Writing. Ian also has written for and performed in various rock and jazz groups in New York City and in his native Washington state.

Ron Daniels, Director

Ron Daniels was born and brought up in Brazil, where he was a founding member of the renowned Teatro Oficina, in São Paulo. He is an Honorary Associate Director of the Royal Shakespeare Company and a former Artistic Director of The Other Place Theatre, the RSC's experimental theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon, England. His work over 15 years with the RSC includes many productions of Shakespeare plays such as *The Tempest*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, two productions of *Hamlet* (the first with Roger Rees and the second with Mark Rylance), as well as major new works by contemporary British playwrights David Edgar, David Rudkin, Pam Gems, Paula Milne, Naomi Wallace, Paul Thompson, Stephen Poliakoff and Anthony Burgess, with whom he collaborated on an adaptation of *A Clockwork Orange*, which had music specially written for the production by Bono and The Edge of U2.

At the National Theatre of Great Britain he directed Stephen Poliakoff's *Blinded by the Sun* and *Remember This* and in the West End he directed *Breaking the Silence* by Stephen Poliakoff, *Across From The Garden of Allah* by Charles Wood, *Camille* by Pam Gems, J.P. Donleavy's *The Beastly Beatitudes of Balthazar B.* and Olaf Olafsson's *The Feast of Snails*.

In 1991 he moved to the US and became the Associate Artistic Director of the American Repertory Theatre, in Cambridge, MA. His productions for the A.R.T include *Henry IV*, parts 1 and 2, *Henry V*, *The Tempest*, *Hamlet*, *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, *The Seagull*, *The Cherry Orchard*, *The Threepenny Opera* as well as new plays by Naomi Wallace, Ronald Ribman and Stuart Greenman.

The Set

“This is this generation’s art-form,” says Ross Ambers, Director of Youth Development for the Jacob’s Center for Neighborhood Innovation. Standing in the first legal graffiti park in the nation focused on urban artwork, Ambers described the multi-colored walls set up to provide a legal outlet for young people’s creativity. This is Writerz Blok, a simple building surrounded by a chain link fence and a world of color on Market Street in southeastern San Diego.

The park is part of an amazing initiative created by the Jacob’s Foundation to find a solution to one of the more persistent problems for residents and business owners in southeastern San Diego: graffiti.

Writerz Blok, started in partnership with The Jacobs Center and “began as a nomadic program called ‘Graff Creek’ from 1998-2000 because the meeting places changed weekly and would be centered around the creek that runs through the community. The name changed to Writerz Blok in 2000 with a donated facility which is the current hub of operations. The beginning of the program was just a meeting place/ hang out for local youth interested in Graffiti art,” explained the current director of the program, is the articulate and talented DJ, Marcus Tufono, also known as Kut Father in the Hip Hop world (see sidebar). Tufono works with partners Jose Venegas and Sergio Gonzalez to help neighborhood taggers transform themselves into graffiti artists. According to Venegas, part of their job is to “turn the perception around; it’s all about creativity.” But they understand that general public prefers not to see that type of creativity in public places.

There’s a difference between the random “tags” that show up on walls, signs, bridge overpasses and bathroom doors and the fanciful and often powerful murals that adorn bridge underpasses and building exterior walls. Some of these massive, colorful paintings are perfectly legal, authorized by the property owners. But many, probably most, are illegal and are considered a part of neighborhood blight; symbols of communities ridden with crime and poverty.

The opportunity for taggers to try their hands at graffiti art without risking a fall from a highway overpass or arrest in the wee hours of the morning behind a warehouse is compelling. Daily, one can see young people standing before the huge walls outside the Writerz Blok offices, spray cans in hand learning the techniques for creating beautiful and amazing artworks from the simplest of tools. This guidance and education provided by the Writerz Blok staff gives youth a more positive place to express their creative impulses.

Often when a tagging incident has occurred somewhere in southeastern San Diego the staff of Writerz Blok will approach the culprit and offer him or her the opportunity to visit them and try their hand at legal graffiti art. This type of

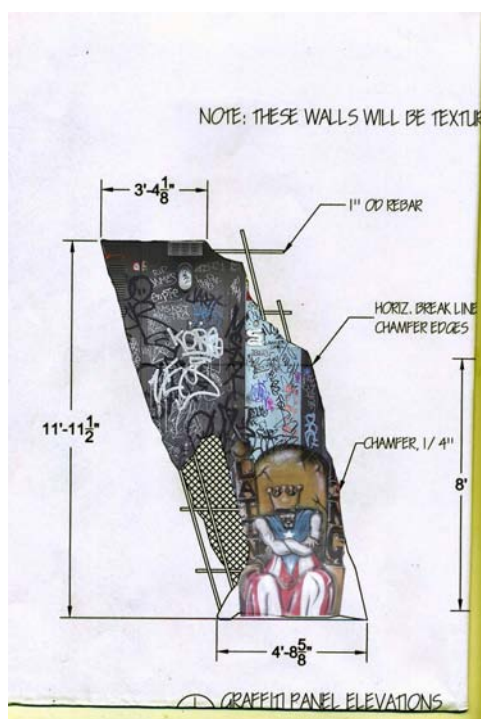
personal contact is critical to turning young lives around. No one is saying that this organization is going to change the world but there is no question that when a young person has an opportunity to refocus his or her negative energy and is given guidance by someone he or she respects the chance for positive change is good.

Most of us limit our spray can work to the occasional, desperate attempt to “refinish” an old piece of metal, outdoor furniture (often with less than desirable results), but the people at Writerz Blok know how to take the humble spray can and turn it into a tool as noble as a palette of oils.

With that in mind, The Old Globe approached them with an idea: The theatre’s production of the new Hip Hop/Rock musical *Kingdom* might be enhanced by the use of real graffiti art on its set. It’s not that the Globe’s scenic artists couldn’t paint such a set (indeed, our scenic artists have reproduced myriad styles of art from Renaissance masterworks to abstract expressionism with awe-inspiring technique) but the idea of a partnership with artists from a community organization seemed to be a unique and compelling opportunity to engage with our new neighbors in southeastern San Diego.

Ross Ambers, from the Jacob’s Foundation, laid the groundwork for the partnership and introduced the Globe’s production staff to Marcus, Jose and Sergio. They toured The Old Globe’s new Technical Center on Market Street and got a crash course in set design. They discussed the show with the playwright, Aaron Jafferis, and conversed with the play’s director, Ron Daniels about his concept for the set design.

Old Globe Resident Design Assistant, Sean Fanning, designed the set and worked with Writerz Blok to plan how their work would be used in the overall design of the set.



Fanning’s design incorporates structures that evoke a raw cityscape. The design includes rough-edged surfaces that seem to embody the troubled characters in the play. But Fanning left the surfaces of his set model (a small-scale, cardboard, three-dimensional depiction of the set) blank; a blank canvas for the Writerz Blok staff, intern Ben Ramirez, and several other selected graffiti artists.

Writerz Blok sent samples of their work to Fanning who overlaid the pictures on a computer image of the set. Suddenly the vision for the world of the play came alive. The director wanted the graffiti images to be the more raw “tags” of the streets rather than

the more sophisticated images that Writerz Blok is capable of doing, but some of those will be in evidence too.

Once the design was approved it was turned over to The Old Globe's Technical Director, Ben Thoron, who worked closely with Fanning to plan the construction of the set. The set was planned to be built in several small sections that would be relatively easy to transport because this set would need to move from its first home at Lincoln High School to The Old Globe in a short period of time.



Construction of the set took place at the theatre's Technical Center on Market Street and then Writerz Blok came in to work on the painting. The Old Globe's scenic artists graciously moved aside to allow the graffiti artists this opportunity to paint the work that would be seen by the thousands of the sophisticated theatre-goers who attend Old Globe productions.

Not all of our audience members love graffiti but none can ignore the gritty meaning that comes from the entire experience of *Kingdom*. For The Old Globe this play is about recognizing a new art-form; it's about experiencing hip-hop culture; it's about embracing a community and collaborating to build relationships that may have seemed impossible at an earlier time. It's about art and what it does for our lives – whatever our perception of art may be.

The Costumes

Making the characters seem realistic to the audience is a collaborative effort of the actors, the director and the costume designer. An actor can create a truly accurate portrayal of a character and perform it extremely well but if the costumes appear to be inauthentic or if they don't fit what the character is supposed to be then the actor's work is made nearly impossible.

Charlotte Devaux designed the costumes after doing painstaking research on modern, urban style. She spent many hours exploring websites about gangs and in particular, the Latin Kings. She collaged photographs from a variety of sources in order to provide the cast with some images that would help them to get a feel for what their characters would look like.

Colors were an important part of the research Devaux conducted. Knowing that various gangs associate themselves with certain colors she was careful to select clothing colors that would not confuse knowledgeable audience members. She discovered the colors used by the Latin Kings so that the clothing the actors wear would give a good representation of the look of their characters. Sketches of the characters helped to pull together all of the ideas and research.



Making Connections: Questions to Consider

Kingdom explores some very difficult issues that many audience members will want to discuss after they have seen the play. Use some of the following talking points to launch a dialogue about the themes presented in Kingdom:

Joining

- The Latin Kings are initially portrayed as a very positive group (history, support, protection). Positive words – Respect, Honor, Unity, Power, Love, God, Prayer. How does a person separate truth from fiction when deciding whether or not to join a group?
- Why would you join a gang? Why would you join... (anything)?
- When does a group become a gang?
- How do you choose your friends?
- What is family?
- What makes one group (family?) more influential than another?
- People have an innate need to belong to a group. When is belonging a positive thing and when (or how) does it become negative?
- What are some positive examples of groups?



Power

- Some people have a need to feel powerful or superior to others. What is power? What empowers you?
- What is Disempowerment and how does it affect groups of people and individuals?



Need

- What do you do in your lowest moment?
- What do people need to survive? What do people need to make them happy?

Anger and Violence

- What do you do when somebody does you wrong? How do you react when someone makes you angry?
- How do people justify violence?
- What choices can a person make to avoid violence but still communicate disagreement with another person?
- What are some alternatives to violence?



After the Show: Tools for Reflection

Try some of the following ideas and activities to begin a dialogue about the issues that are brought up in *Kingdom*.

Andres considers his course of action following Cano's death. He sings: "I will stop time, find some peace of mind, dive into the street and take an eye for an eye." The idea of revenge is embedded in many cultures. How does revenge affect the people involved? When (or if) is revenge appropriate? What else could Andres have chosen to do?

Overlapping Andres on his words about revenge we hear Marisa singing "Never ends." Why do you think the playwright wrote the song this way? What do you think Marisa is referring to when she repeats the words, "never ends?"

Juan grapples with what it means to be a Latin King. He is torn between what he has been told and what his conscience is telling him. Discuss Juan's words and why they mean literally and what he is implying:

King means swallowing your doubts and trying not to choke on them.

King means trying to believe that we are acting out the will of God even when his will seems kind of odd.

King means living for your family, not just for yourself.

King means giving up what you believe, sometimes, for something else.

When (or if) is it appropriate to give up what you believe?

Consider Juan's words when he is arguing with Andres:

What if you could catch a bullet?

What if you could pull it back?

What if you could snatch a bullet out of thin air,
And follow, follow it back?

What if you could make the gun the bullet came from
Swallow, swallow it back?

What lessons can be learned from regret?

Juan makes a very strong choice near the end of the play. What causes him to make this choice? How does his confusion and sorrow contribute to his choice? What could he have done differently?

I'd rather be dead than alive with my soul cut in two.

I'd rather leave you behind and lift myself above

All this bullshit you spit'n try to pass off as love.

I love you, Andres, and I want this to end.

I want to go back to when you were my friend,

But there's a mask in the place where your face used to be.

There's a hole in my heart where Andres used to be.

I hope when I die, we all fill up with love.

I hope death brings me the life I been dreamin' of.

How is Juan mistaken in believing that his actions will have the desired outcome?

What tactics did the Latin Kings use to convince Juan and Andres to join them? (positive ideals; quoting Nelson Mandela; promising power; brotherhood; strength; egalitarianism; subtle shame – “a coward dies a thousand deaths”; promise of peace; calm and intelligent demeanor; omitting negative rules until members have pledged themselves; etc.). List the tactics and discuss times when you have been subjected to a sales pitch. How did you respond? What were you thinking? Did you feel confused, empowered, smart, stupid?

How did Andres use similar tactics to convince Juan to do what he wanted him to do? What tactics did he use to convince the other members to change their beliefs and follow him?

You gonna be a doctor? I wish your wish could come true.
But it's a wish, Juan. A word. A lie.
We couldn't afford college if we worked at Dunkin Donuts 'til we die. You gonna join the Army? If you're too weak to kill,
I won't force you to do it, Juan. They will.
What if you listened to yourself, not to her?
What if you were strong like you always wished you were?
You taught me it's not what you say, it's what you do.
You love me like a brother? Like a father? Show me it's true.
You gonna abandon me too instead a bein' a man?
It's time to take matters into our own hands.
Cano's dead and it's time to show the size of our hearts.
Let the whole Nation know the size of your heart.
Stand up for yourself, or you will be powerless.
Juan! A coward dies a thousand deaths!

Marisa has a change of heart late in the play. What causes her to change? Discuss her words to the rest of the gang as she tries to convince them not to follow Andres?

So now we have Juan's blessing to teach our enemies a lesson.
He's reciting King law, line by line, verse by verse.
For his soul to rest, we must get his enemies first.
I hope that is a blessing, instead of something worse.
What if it's not a blessing, y'all. What if it's a curse?
If every time we feel fear, if every time someone dies,
If every time we feel tears in the back of our eyes,
The only way to feel better is to attack someone else,
And make sure if we feel bad, someone else is feeling worse,
That's not a blessing, y'all. That shit's a curse.

Discuss Marisa's last speech to the gang.

It means blood is the thing that can link us, it's true –
Like the links of a chain, linking me to you to you.
So each time blood is spilled, each time one of us is killed,
Our blood becomes a link in a chain called revenge.
That's why when one of us is killed, our soul can never rest;
'cause each death is linked to the death that comes next.
King Cano to King Juan, and King Juan to who?
King to King to King, and on and on to you.
It's a bloodline of Kings, an unbroken chain
Of brothers who use guns to cope with their pain.
And if the chain isn't broken, if you lift your guns too,
The next link in the bloodline is gonna be you.
Blood will have blood. Blood always wants more.
War doesn't want peace. War wants war.

Try some of the following writing and theatre activities in class:

Have three class members create their own “nations.” They should list numerous positive and negative elements of their nations. Have them try to recruit classmates to move to their nations. After everyone has selected a nation discuss the tactics that convinced them to join.

Have each student write a sentence about a time he/she felt powerful or a sentence about a time he/she felt powerless. Mix up the sentences and then read them aloud as a poem. Students may want to put this group poem to a beat to make it a song.

Write a poem describing a time when you felt at your lowest point. What words did you use to describe your emotional state? What things did you do as a result of how you were feeling? What actions did you take to feel better?

Select a character from the play and put him/her on trial. Use evidence from what you know from the play to create a line of questioning and response.

Select a character from the play who you most identify with. Write a scene or monologue describing what you would have done differently.

Brainstorm a story about issues that are happening in your community. Create characters and scenes to tell the story. Write the scenes and use music, hip hop poetry, and dialogue to create a short play that explores the issues. Rehearse the scenes and perform them for other classes. Use the play as an opportunity to explore social issues that are a part of your lives. Discuss the issues with your audiences. Theatre has been used as a catalyst for change; consider how you can create theatre pieces and then perform them to educate, irritate, initiate and integrate your ideas in the community.

Improvise scenes that are similar to those in the play. Try to find alternate outcomes to those that occurred in the show. (i.e. What if Andres didn't quit his job? What if Juan decided not to join the Latin Kings? What if Hector hadn't shot Cano? What if the rest of the Kings decided to follow Marisa instead of Andres?)

Basic Theatre Etiquette

The pointers below will help you prepare for your theatre experience. Please take the time to read and understand these notes on appropriate behavior at the theatre.

- 1. Arrive on time**
The time posted is the time the show actually starts... unlike at the movies, there are no commercials or previews! If you have arrived after the performance has begun you may be asked to wait to take your seats until it is appropriate to do so.
- 2. Keep the theatre clean**
We allow no food or drinks in the theatre.
- 3. Be considerate of other audience members**
Talking, whispering, shuffling about in your seats or rattling candy wrappers during a live performance is disruptive to other audience members who are trying to enjoy the show.
- 4. Do not distract the actors**
The actors can see and hear what goes on in the audience. While our actors appreciate your enthusiasm for their performance, please do not attempt to interact with, talk to or touch them while they are on stage or entering/exiting via the aisle. Your comments to one another (both good and bad) can be heard by the actors. Please do not talk about their performances while the show is going on.
- 5. Turn off electronic devices**
Pagers, cell phones and electronic watches are disruptive and may interfere with the theatre sound system. The lights from text messaging are distracting to the actors. Turn electronic devices off completely during the show.
- 6. Remain seated during the performance** (except for emergencies)
Actors frequently enter and exit via the aisles and so for safety reasons the aisles need to remain clear during the show. Be sure to use the washroom before the show or during intermission. Do not exit the theatre until the show is over.
- 7. No photographs or recording devices**
For the safety of cast members, stage crew and the enjoyment of other patrons, no photography (flash or no flash) or recording devices are permitted during the performance. It is also illegal, since we are bound to the copyright rules of several labor and artists' unions. Avoid a situation in which the house manager might be forced to confiscate photographic equipment.

With your cooperation in following theatre etiquette, rules and guidelines, we are sure you will have an enjoyable and entertaining theatre experience!

The Old Globe's production of Kingdom is supported by:

The James Irvine Foundation, Legler Benbough Foundation, San Diego Foundation, Supervisor Bill Horn and the County of San Diego

The Old Globe's Education and Outreach Programs are supported by:

Donald and Darlene Shiley, The James Irvine Foundation, The San Diego Union-Tribune, The City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture, County Supervisor Pam Slater-Price, Mary Ann Blair, Bank of America, QUALCOMM, The Shubert Foundation, Wells Fargo, HM Electronics, Anonymous, California Bank and Trust, San Diego Foundation, Union Bank of California, American Airlines, U.S. Bank, Sempra Energy, Torrey Pines Bank, Peter Cooper and Norman Blachford, The County of San Diego Community Enhancement Program, National Endowment for the Arts, ResMed Foundation, The San Diego Foundation's Weingart-Price Fund, Starbucks Coffee Company, The Kenneth T. and Eileen L. Norris Foundation, National Corporate Theatre Fund, Samuel I. and Henry Fox Foundation, John and Marcia Price Family Foundation, Ric Torres, WD-40, Nordstrom, Cushman Family Foundation and Globe Guilders.



Financial support is provided by the City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture.

Special Thanks to:

Lincoln High School
Mel Collins
R. Vernon Moore
Donald Robinson
Scott Grabau
The San Diego Unified School District