

## Safety and Child Performers in Theatre

Recent technological advancements have brought about some new and challenging situations that parents and teachers of young performers participating in live theatre need to be aware of. The anonymity and global reach of the internet has greatly increased the ability of those with ill intentions to prey on children. What would have remained a small local event published in a newspaper ten years ago now has the potential to be accessible on the internet forever. Curbing the risk to the child actor is a joint effort between family and theater.

Although many of your young performers will not achieve stardom or any level of fame, it is important to protect them against the same predators as their more famous counterparts. These predators unite in a strong community seeking out and exploiting child performers and the groundwork to protect these children must start with the beginning actor.

**The BizParentz Foundation** is a non-profit corporation providing education, advocacy, and charitable support to parents and children engaged in the entertainment industry. BizParentz promotes a positive public image regarding child performers and educates the public regarding the safety and rights of child performers including child labor laws and regulations.

We recommend putting some or all of the following safety recommendations into practice for your child performers:

- Actors' bios: Omit specific identifying information regarding hometown, school, grade, teachers, etc. on your young actors' bios. Consider using first name, last initial to identify the actor. Consider suggesting all actors under age 18 to use a stage name.
- Protect actors' hometown information in press releases.
- Limit personal identifying questions during theatre talkbacks, interviews and other meet and greet situations.
- Identify and enforce a procedure for collection and destruction of headshots/resumes used for casting purposes. Many photos of child actors end up for sale on ebay and/or in pedophile collections.
- Educate parents and child actors to understand the potential for privacy invasion through what they believe to be innocent means.
- Password protect or right-click disable any photographs depicting children on the theater website.
- Perform a background check on all theater staff including volunteers who work with children.
- Maintain strict confidentiality with regard to child actor personal records.

By utilizing the above guidelines, the children in your theater will be better protected both now and in the future.