



VALLAKI'S GOT TALENT



Will your performance turn the tide in Vallaki?

AND THE CROWD WENT...

Upon entering the town of Vallaki, the importance of tomorrow's Festival of the Blazing Sun is immediately clear. Decorations are being hung, the streets are swept and children put the final touches on their paper mache masks, all with a noticeable lack of joy.

Your party settles down at the Blue Water Inn. As you sip your glass of Purple Grapemash No. 3, a boisterous man swings the door open and announces, "Rictavio has arrived!"

The colorfully dressed man quickly surveys the room, and pulls up a stool to your table. "You must be new to town! Well, you have come just in time."

"Just in time for what?" you ask.

"Tomorrow, I will be performing for the good people of Vallaki, and I need a few more performers to make this the most spectacular festival they've seen! Won't you join me?"

Never missing an opportunity for adventure, you look at your fellow adventurers and nod in approval.

"Excellent!" Rictavio shouts. "Let's make this a festival no one will forget!"

BREAK A LEG

Vallaki's Got Talent leads your players through an exciting and potentially plot-influencing performance in **Curse of Strahd**. Get ready for a session of memorable role-playing!

Upon meeting Rictavio, or during a subsequent meeting, he will invite them to perform with him at the upcoming festival. Rictavio, who has a secretive and important role to play, needs to build trust with adventurers before he reveals his true identity to them. Pulling off an excellent performance is a sure-fire way to do that.

SET THE STAGE

Prior to the session, let your players know that their characters will need to perform two or more times. Give them time to brainstorm amongst themselves to avoid repeating each other.

Players might recite a poem, tell jokes or a story, sing a song, perform or describe a magic trick or daring stunt, or even share YouTube videos of other amazing feats, as if being performed by the characters. Get creative and try to wow the crowd; improving life in Vallaki.

If your players want to use the opportunity to stir up a revolution, they would plan performances that purposefully anger Baron Vallakovich and diminish his authority. This could include a poem or play that hints at the Baron's cowardice. The performance might involve vandalizing the statue in the square, exposing Izek's secret doll obsession or even an assassination. Instead of impressing the crowd, the party is attempting to convince the Vallakians to rise up against the Baron.

WRITE UP A SET LIST

Ideally, you will want between 9-12 performances in total. This means that some (or all) characters may perform twice or more. Fewer performances will usually result in a lower rating on the **Aplauda-Meter** (see next page).

Rictavio, the headliner of the show and a gifted performer, also has a few tricks up his sleeve. See **The Headlining Act** for suggestions, but feel free to make up your own!

Before taking the stage, determine the order of your performances. A party of 4 (plus Rictavio makes 5) would each perform twice for a total of 10 performances. A party of 6 or more might have only a few members perform more than once.

Each character's performance might take as little as 30 seconds or as long as a few minutes, depending on your players' enthusiasm, preparation, and the DM's narration.

THE HEADLINING ACT

Rictavio wants to keep his vampire hunter identity a secret, so his performance uses cantrips that could pass as sleight of hand or illusionary. Rictavio is given a +5 Performance for this event.

- Using Thaumaturgy, Rictavio and Piccolo perform a ventriloquist act. His beloved pet monkey magically speaks with a loud booming voice, converses with Rictavio, tells jokes, talks while Rictavio drinks ale, etc.
- Rictavio casts Light on a nearby object to amaze the people of Vallaki. Perhaps the bald spot underneath a resident's hat or the tip of his cane?
- Rictavio picks up a Blinsky doll and shows it to the crowd. While playing with the doll, he "accidentally" rips the head off. He acts sad while making sure the crowd can see that the doll is broken. He asks a shocked child to come up and inspect the broken doll. Rictavio drapes the doll in a shiny cloth, then puts the doll back together using Mending. This takes a minute, but he uses the time for typical showman banter. He unwraps the doll and reveals the mended toy to the crowd.
- Rictavio is a storyteller and singer. This is a great opportunity for the DM to prepare a story or song that fits thematically with Barovia. A sample folktale, "The Black-Winged Kite of Lake Zarovich" is included for you to use.



THE APLAUDA-METER

The Aplauda-Meter is a visual representation of the crowd's enthusiasm for the performance. It works similarly to a modern day Crowd-Meter.

After a player describes their character's performance (or better yet, they actually *perform* it), they roll d20 and add their Performance modifier. Players may ask to substitute another skill in place of Performance. That's up to the DM. Since this is an exercise in winning over an audience, Performance is a better fit. Not to mention it is an often underutilized skill.

Roll	Result
Nat 1 (or lower)	-2 on the Aplauda-Meter
2-6	-1 on the Aplauda-Meter
7-12	No change
13-17	+1 on the Aplauda-Meter
18 (or higher)	+2 on the Aplauda-Meter
Nat 20	+3 on the Aplauda-Meter

The rolled result shows the crowd's reaction. The most spectacular talent might fall flat with the Vallaki crowd. This will require narration from the DM.

As Charisma is often a stronger skill across the party, be sure to keep it challenging without becoming too difficult.

HELLO VALLAKI!

The group's performance has been gaining steam, thanks to Queg's exhibition of strength.

Next, Storm hopes to impress the crowd with some trick archery. The player describes the trick that Storm will attempt, perhaps even providing visuals via actions or otherwise. The player rolls d20, adding their Performance skill modifier.

Unfortunately, Storm rolls low and ends up with a result of 4. The DM describes how the trick fails and the crowd is unimpressed. The Aplauda-Meter falls -1 due to Storm's failed trick. A few Vallakians sneer at Storm as he leaves the stage.

Maybeline walks on to the stage to little fanfare due to Storm's lacklustre performance. She has prepared a few limericks. The player recites the limericks at the table. They roll d20 and add their Performance skill modifier. Hooray! They've rolled an 18! The Aplauda-Meter rises by 2. The crowd was entertained by Maybeline's poetic prowess.

For his act, Rictavio chooses his 'Blinsky doll routine' (see **The Headlining Act**). Playfully, he tosses the doll high into the air but fumbles it and it lands hard on the stage. He gasps and reveals the doll's separated head. A child near the front starts to whimper. Rictavio places the cloth over the doll and while talking to the crowd, subtly uses his Mending cantrip to repair it.

But the DM (controlling Rictavio) rolls a Nat 1! The child bursts into tears and can't bear to look at the once-beheaded doll. The parents scoff at Rictavio. The Aplauda-Meter drops by -2. Hopefully, the next performer can get things back on track!

TOUGH CROWD

The people of Vallaki are not thrilled to be there, so the Aplauda-Meter starts at a score of -3. It would be wise to start the show with a character with a higher Performance modifier to make a good first impression.

If the Aplauda-Meter falls below -5, roll with disadvantage. The crowd heckles and boos, and the party may be banished from town if they can't turn things around by the end.

Roll with advantage if the Aplauda-Meter is +6 and above. The crowd is on your side!

EXIT STAGE LEFT

What happens with a successful, mediocre or horrible Aplauda-Meter score at the end of the performance should affect how your Vallaki story plays out. Modify these possible consequences according to the tone of your campaign.

1. Ending with an Aplauda-Meter below -3

Baron Vallakovich wants Rictavio and the party removed from Vallaki. Vallakians are not only miserable, they are angry. The crowd heckles the party on their way out. Strahd is pleased and Lady Wachter's cause gains momentum.

2. Ending with an Aplauda-Meter between -2 and +5

Rictavio thanks the performers. The DM decides what information Rictavio wishes to reveal, as the party has earned his trust. The crowd's mood is anywhere between unchanged to mildly pleasant toward the party, but the situation in Vallaki does not change in a noticeable way.

3. Ending with an Aplauda-Meter between +6 and +10

The performers have become heroes within Vallaki - given discounts at stores, offerings of free food while walking down the street, etc. Impressed, Rictavio is prepared to let them in on his true identity and goals when the opportunity arises.

4. Ending with an Aplauda-Meter above +10

In addition to the benefits of Ending #3, you affect the state of the political unrest in Vallaki. Lady Wachter's followers lose whatever foothold they've gained, and Vallaki is more favourable toward the Baron. Some even look forward to the next festival. This result angers Strahd greatly.

YOU SAY YOU WANT A REVOLUTION

If the party aims to incite a rebellion, their performance will yield different results. Unless they have persuaded, bribed or coerced some town guards, their performance might not last long. Rictavio distances himself from the party during or after the show, and perhaps for the rest of the campaign.

1. Ending with an Aplauda-Meter 0 or below

The crowd is just as miserable as they were, but after the horrible performance, they are relieved to get on with the festival. Baron Vallakovich is pleased and Lady Wachter second-guesses her alliance with the party.

2. Ending with an Aplauda-Meter between +1 and +5

The party stirs up dissent and Lady Wachter's cult gains momentum. Baron Vallakovich orders Izek and the town guards to remove the party from the town.

3. Ending with an Aplauda-Meter at or above +6

Lady Wachter's cult is ready for a take-over. The Baron is forced to implement stronger measures to prevent a riot, including immediately imprisoning the party, which further angers the crowd. Strahd is pleased by the outbreak of chaos in Vallaki.

THE BLACK-WINGED KITE OF LAKE ZAROVICH

Long ago, Lake Zarovich had been occupied by large numbers of fish. Until along came a Black-Winged Kite, which thought of a plan to prey on them. The Kite stood at the edge of the lake.

But the fish, shaking in fear from the presence of a predator, swam away from it. The Kite spoke to them, "I mean you no harm! I am not like the other birds that have preyed on you before. I have killed many fish, I do admit, but I am now grown very old, and I wish to repent my old ways. Do not fear harm from me. You may roam anywhere you please. Let this be my penance."

The fish believed the words of the Kite, especially as the Kite did not interfere with them at all, even when they approached it.

After some time had thus elapsed, the Kite appeared to be very much dejected and melancholy. The fish approached it, and asked it what the matter was.

The Kite replied: "What shall I say? A famine will very shortly visit the land. Not a drop of water will then remain in this lake. I am able to know this by second sight, and, as you are my close friends, I cannot resist the temptation of informing you, lest you die when the famine comes."

The fish were exceedingly joyed at the humane nature of the Kite, and requested it to save them from the impending peril. The Kite thereupon informed them that there was another lake not far away, a lake which would never dry, and that it would be a very happy refuge for the fish. The fish pleaded with the Kite to take them up and leave them there.

One-by-one, The Black-Winged Kite took them up out of Lake Zarovich, and left them in the sun in a nearby field, and slowly devoured them.

Now, there was also a crab living at the edge of the lake. The Kite, wanting a taste for something new, approached the crab with the same offer. The crab accepted. The Kite picked it up to take it to the field.

As they flew overhead, the crab spotted the piles of fish bones scattered all over. Realizing the Kite's ruse, the crab squeezed the Kite's neck with its claws and killed it. Then he crawled back to the pond and told the rest of the fish.

The crab and the fish lived peacefully from that day forward.

*-based on the folktale "The Crane, the Crab and the Fish"
by Leo Tolstoy*

TAKE THE SHOW ON THE ROAD

A performance like this does not need to be restricted to Vallaki, or even to **Curse of Strahd**. You can use the Aplauda-Meter and the performance rules in any campaign.

Perhaps your party is a band of bards looking to entertain the locals at the tavern or inn. Maybe the adventurers have been roped into a play in order to impress some nobles. The results of the **Exit Stage Left** section (*see previous page*) can be easily altered to suit any story.

Now, get out there and show 'em what you've got!

USING THE APLAUDA-METER

Print off the Aplauda-Meter (*on the following page*) or upload it to your virtual session. Choose an item to be your score indicator so that the whole party can keep track of their progress.

CREDITS

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Aplauda-Meter

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