**Drama Glossary**

* APRON: That part of a stage that extends in front of the proscenium arch.
* ARENA THEATRE: A theatre in which the audience completely surrounds the playing area. Also called theatre in the round.
* AUDITORIUM: The theatre area usually designated for the audience; often called the house.
* BACKDROP OR BACK CLOTH: A flat screen, curtain, canvas or scrim hanging behind the performers, usually painted with a sky or scene.
* BACKSTAGE: All of the theatre back of the stage proper including the wings, shop, dressing rooms and so forth.
* BLOCKING: Stage movement for actors, given in rehearsal (usually) by the director.
* BOX OFFICE MANAGER: The person responsible for all activity connected with the ordering, printing, and selling of tickets. After a performance he/she must account for sold and unsold tickets against the money received.
* BOX SET: Interior setting represented by flats forming three sides (the fourth wall being the proscenium line); first used around 1830 and common after 1850.
* CALL: A request for actors to appear at a certain time for a definite purpose: rehearsal call, photo call, curtain call (which is, in effect, “called” by the audience)
* CAST: 1. Performers in a play 2. To assign roles to actors.
* CASTING: The decision as to which actor should play which role. This decision is in the hands of the director, where actors are known to him/her, it may be made in part before a casting session. Where there is some choice, good casting is one of the most important elements in the creations of a sound production and, on a long-term basis, in building of a group.
* CATHARSIS (KATHARIS): The purging of emotion and suspense which occurs at the end of a tragedy; experienced by the audience and at times by the characters as well.
* CATWALK: A narrow bridge above and across the stage, or in the roof of an auditorium, giving access to lights and/or scenery.
* CHEATING: Turning the actor’s body or face towards the audience during a performance or improvisation so that the actor can be seen and the audience feels included in the performance.
* CLOWN: A comic performer. There are two distinct types of clown, the court jester or all-seeing fool to be found in Shakespeare, and the circus buffoon of the Commedia dell’Arte. The loveable innocent and the quipping cynic combine to make the clown as we know it today: an extremely funny, but somehow pathetic figure now rarely seen outside the circus. Each clown creates his own “character” and patents the make up that expressed it.
* CROSS: a move across a stage. It may be indicated by referring to the actor’s left or right.
* COMPLICATION: An incident which alters the direction of a play’s action line (turns the action in a new direction).
* CONFLICT: Forces of opposition, central to the action of most plays.
* CUE: A signal, usually a word or a gesture, to which an actor or member of the crew must respond.
* CURTAIN CALL: a raising and lowering or opening and closing of the curtain at the end of a performance, by which the cast acknowledges the audience’s applause.
* Dialogue: A conversation between 2 or more characters on stage.
* DIRECTOR: The person responsible for the entire artistic approach to a production. He is the invisible conductor of the eventual performance, and is the accepted leader of the total production unit working through producer, designer, lighting designer, stage manager, and, of course, actor. (In England often called the producer)
* DOWN-STAGE: 1. The part of the stage nearest to the audience. 2. Ar, on, or toward this part of the stage (see stage direction)
* DRESS: to trim and supply furnishings for a set. When a set is dressed, it its ready for use and decorated as required by the designer, who must approve the finishing touches.
* DRESS REHEARSAL: A final rehearsal in which all visual elements of production, including costumes, are used. Typically insofar as possible, an actual performance.
* EXPOSITION: The essential information provided the audience to begin the action of a play, or given later to clarify action.
* FLAT: A light wooden or metal frame covered by canvas and used for scenery
* FOCUS: 1. The setting of the size and angle of a beam of light. 2. In a working production, the invisible pointing by the director, working through the cast, of moments of special significance. 3. Personal concentration on the role and situation.
* F.O.H.: Front of House, that area of the house, or theatre, which belongs to the audience; the auditorium, entrance foyer, etc. For example, lights hung in front of ta balcony or from a pipe across the auditorium are referred to as F.O.H. or front of house lights.
* GESTURE: In one sense, any human act that conveys meaning (i.e. a speech is a gesture). In a more limited sense, a planned physical movement that conveys meaning, like waving a hand or pointing a finger.
* HOUSE MANAGER: as representatives of the theatre organization, the “host” to the audience is his/her “house”. He/She is responsible to the front-of-house section of the the theatre.
* IMPROVISATION: Acting without a set script. As an exercise, improvisation is often used to help an actor explore his/her role by exposing him/her “in character” to situations not encountered in the script.
* LEGS: Tall, relatively narrow curtains used as part of a set for masking the wings. Legs are usually used in pairs, one on either side of the stage.
* LIGHTING BOOTH: a small room in a theatre, usually at the back of the auditorium, from which to operate the control board.
* LINE OF SIGHT: A straight line, imaginary or drawn, indicating the direction of the eyes from any seat in the auditorium to the stage or to a particular point on the stage or set. Ideally, theatres should be built and sets designed so that all lines of sight are clear and uninterrupted.
* MASK: to interrupt the line of sight as to prevent someone or something from being seen from all or part of the audience. Backing is used to mask the wings and other off-stage areas. Actors should not be placed so that they mask each other, unless such masking is done deliberately.
* MIME: 1. The use of gesture and movement alone to convey character and situation; acting without words, sometimes done to music. 2. An actor who performs in mime. 3. A play enacted in mime (also called pantomime, which originally meant “a person who mimed everything”)
* MONOLOGUE: a lengthy speech delivered by one person. Now also used to refer to any dramatic composition for a single actor.
* OFF STAGE: The part of the stage out of view of the audience
* PIT: 1. Area of the audience on the ground floor and adjacent to the stage. Historically an inexpensive area because originally no seats were provided there and later only backless benches were used. By the end of the 19th century a preferred seating area (now called the orchestra section). 2. Now refers often to the area reserved for members of the orchestra.
* PRODUCER: the individual who is responsible for the financing of the performance, budget and advertising.
* PROSCENIUM (theatre): Theatre building in which the audience area is set off from the acting area by a proscenium arch frames the stage, protects the perspective-, masks the backstage area, etc. The audience views the onstage action from 1 side only.
* PROTAGONIST: In Greek theatre, the first (or Major) actor, the one who competed for the prize in acting. Later, the leading character in any play (the hero)
* PROMPTER: A person who sits in the wings to “feed” actors when they forget their lines.
* PROPERTY OR PROP: 1. Any small article set on the stage (and so 1 belonging to, or the property of the stage), as opposed to larger articles of furniture 2. A hand prop, an article, such as a letter, which “belongs” to a character and is brought on-stage by him/her. 3. A costume prop, an article, such as a purse, sunglasses or a sword which is part of an actor’s costume.
* PROP TABLES: tables set in the wings, accessible an yet out of the way, for properties to be taken on and brought off-stage during a performance by the actors.
* RUN-THROUGH: A continuous rehearsal of a n act or whole play, without interruption by the director or any break in the action. It is usually held only after the act or acts concerned have been rehearsed in some detail.
* RHYTHM: A combination of tempo, emotion, mood; imagery, stress beat, sound, accent, motion and so forth, that creates a pattern of activity. A play has a rhythm, a production has a rhythm; an actor and his/her role have a rhythm.
* SET: 1. The scenery and all that it includes and contains; the whole physical setting as seen by the audience. 2. Install or place on-stage in its proper position 3. To arrange and then retain as part of the permanent plan of production. The lights involved and their levels of intensity are set for each cue at the technical lighting rehearsal. The procedure for music cues must be set in the same way.
* SOLLILOQUY: A length speech delivered by one character alone on stage who is speaking their thoughts aloud.
* STAGE DIRECTION: In the script, an instruction to actors or director which is not part of the dialogue. In so far as they refer to actors’ moves, they are given in terms of the actors’ point of view, his left and right as he faces the audience. The stage is also thought of as being divided into areas labelled “up” and “down” terms derived from the slope on a raked stage.
* STAGE MANAGER: Responsible for all technical aspects of production and running the show, becomes the leader of the production on opening night.
* STAGE RIGHT: the right side of the stage from the actor’s point of view as he/she faces the audience.
* STAGE LEFT: the left side of the stage from the actor’s point of view as he/she faces the audience.
* TABLEAU: a frozen picture of a dramatic moment. Like a painting it conveys a concept, an action, or an emotion. A tableau can capture a frozen moment in time. The most interesting tableaux have three levels (high, medium and low) and have a definite focal point.
* THEATRE IN THE ROUND: a form of presenting a play with the audience seated in radiating circles around the acting area. The idea dates from the mid ages but has only recently returned to vogue. When used effectively it can result in a vibrant and involving theatre for both actors and audiences.
* THEME: The intellectual content in a play. Generally considered to be that idea basic to the thought of the play; the author’s central idea. Usually the theme is expressed in one full sentence using an active verb.
* THRUST STAGE: dominant kind of staging during Shakespeare’s time in England that is being revived in many contemporary theatres. Also called 3/4 round because the audience surrounds the action on 3 sides as the stage juts into the audience area.
* UPSTAGE: The sections of the stage closest to the back wall. Comes from a time when stages were slanted from the front to the back so that upstage meant quite literally walking up the stage toward the back wall.
* WILLING SUSPENSION OF DISBELIEF: Samuel Coleridge’s phrase to identify the basis upon which “poetic faith” is operated in the theatre. An audience usually does this to appreciate and “Believe” the play being enacted before it.