

THEATRE ARTS VOCABULARY

- act** - to perform for an audience representing another person.
- acting area** - see stage
- actor** - performer, player, thespian.
- ad lib** - create lines or action spontaneously when necessary.
- angel** - financial backer of a play production.
- apron** - part of the stage projecting past the curtain line toward the audience.
- arena stage** - see theatre-in-the-round.
- articulation**- process of starting and stopping vowel and consonant sounds.
- audible** - able to be heard.
- audience** - people who watch and or listen and respond to a performance.
- audition** - try out for a role in a play.
- backstage** - area that the audience cannot see.
- batten** - piece of wood or pipe from which lights, scenery and curtains are hung.
- believable** - convincing to the audience.
- blackout** - all stage lights go off at the same time.
- blocking** - planned movement on stage.
- "break a leg"** - wish for good luck in a performance.
- boards** - see stage.
- build vocally** - use the voice to change mood and increase intensity
- business** - 'small bit of action. ex. bouncing a ball, writing a letter, making a sandwich.
- call board** - place where announcements and notices for actors and crew are posted.
- cast** - actors in a play.
- casting** - selecting the actor who will play each role in a show.
- centerstage** - C, middle portion of the stage area; between L & R and U & D.

- characterization** - putting together all facets of a character to make that person a believable individual who can be portrayed before an audience.
- cheat, cheat out** - 'aiming body out toward the audience when talking to another character.
- climax** - 'high point in the action of a scene.
- collaboration** - the work of many people toward a common project; work done by many people.
- comedy** - play that treats situations or characters in a humorous way; play with a happy ending.
- company** - actors and crew of a production.
- countercross** - 'move to adjust stage picture after another actor has moved.
- crew** - group of workers who handle a specific aspect of a production.
- cross, X** - 'move from one stage area to another.
- cue** - last word or action before your line or action; signal for next line, sound effect, light change, etc.
- curtain call** - appearance of the cast at the end of the show in response to the audience applause.
- curtain line** - imaginary line on the stage below the grand drape.
- cyclorama, cyc** - Curtain or drop across back of stage; can serve as background for some scenes.
- deck** - see stage
- dialogue** - spoken lines in a skit or play; actual words that the characters say.
- diaphragm** - muscle below the ribs that expands out and down causing air to enter the lungs.
- director** - the person in charge of a production. - the BOSS of the play.
- downstage, down** - D, portion of the stage closest to the audience; toward the audience.
- dress rehearsal** - final rehearsal before the show opens with full costumes, makeup, lights, sound, props, etc.
- dual role** - actor's task of thinking, feeling, moving & speaking as the character while maintaining technical control - staying open and audible, remembering lines and cues, using "fake" props as if they are real, etc.

- effect** -
- emotional recall** - 'remembering a feeling from your own life to apply to a performance.
- encore** - repeated or additional performance at the end of a play.
- entrance** - 'come onto the stage.
- exhale** - expel air from the body.
- exit** - 'leave the stage.
- exposition** - beginning of the play which explains the who, what and where of the plot.
- extra** - castmember who serves as background for action. Usually used in television or films.
- eye contact** - a performer looking out at the audience directly from time to time. (Should be done at least half the time.)
- finale** - concluding part of any performance.
- flat** - canvas covered wooden frame used for scenery.
- flies** - area between the top of the proscenium arch and the stage ceiling; loft; fly area.
- fly** - to raise scenery above the top of the proscenium opening to lower it down to the stage floor.
- followspot** - spotlight that can be moved around during a performance.
- front, out front** - see house.
- full back** - actor facing away from the audience. Used only on special occasions.
- full front** - actor facing the audience directly. Used for important lines and actions.
- gesture** - 'movement of a part of the body to communicate an emotion or idea.
- give a scene** - 'give audience attention to another actor or actors.
- grand drape** - front curtain separating the stage from the audience, often simply called "the curtain."
- greenroom** - backstage lounge or waiting room for the actors (almost never painted green!)
- grip** - stagehand who moves scenery on and off stage.
- house** - the audience; place where the audience sits; front, out front.

- imagery** - words or phrases that appeal to the senses.
- imagination** - ability to form mental images or concepts that are not actually present in reality. A necessary component of theatre, utilized by actors and the audience.
- improvisation** - make up dialogue and action as you go; usually guided by an idea, theme, or topic. Acting without rehearsal.
- inflection** - gliding from one pitch level to another. Can change the meaning of words.
- inhale** - take air into the lungs.
- intermission** - short break between the acts of a play or parts of a performance.
- introduction** - announce a scene or selection to an audience, giving information ; includes title, author or playwright, and any necessary information to understand the performance.
- kill** - turn off; stop; remove from stage.
- larynx** - voice box, contains the vocal chords.
- left, stage left** - L, actor's left when facing the audience.
- legs** - narrow curtains on either side of the stage that mask the wings.
- lines** - pieces or sentences of dialogue.
- makeup** - cosmetics of various colors applied to the actor's skin so that facial features are visible and/or altered under stage lighting.
- mask** - hide from audience view.
- mime** - stylized pantomime; done in makeup and costume.
- motivation** - the reason behind a character's behavior.
- objective** - character's goal.
- off** - see backstage.
- on** - on stage.

- one quarter** - actor turned halfway between full front and profile. Used to share a scene.
- onomatopoeia** - words that sound like what they mean. ex. boom, clack, zip.
- open, open up** - turn toward the audience.
- out front, front** - audience seating area.
- pacing** - tempo or speed at which scene is played. Very important in comedy.
- pantomime** - acting without talking or sound effects.
- pick up cues** - quickly begin a speech without allowing a pause between the first words of the speech and the cue.
- pitch** - highness or lowness of the voice.
- places** - order for actors and crew to get into position for the beginning of a scene.
- plant** - place a prop on stage before the show so that it is available when the script calls for it.
- player(s)** - see actor.
- playing area** - see stage.
- playwright** - person who plans and writes plays.
- practical** - set piece or prop that is usable, actually works. Ex - door or window that opens and shuts, rock or hill you can stand on, lamps that can be turned on.
- producer** - person who finds financial investors, hires the director and production staff, sets the budget, etc. for a play production.
- profile** - actor position facing the wings, left or right. Used for arguments or love scenes.
- project, (pro' ject)** - throw the voice to the farthest person in the audience.
- prompt book** - script marked with directions and cues for use by the crews.
- prompter** - person situated offstage who supplies missed lines during a performance.

pronunciation - producing the sounds of words. (Correct sounds, stresses and accents can be found in the dictionary.)

properties - all articles and furnishing needed on stage in a play. with the exception of scenery and costumes; can be carried on or planted; props.

proscenium - permanent framed opening through which the audience sees a play.

raked stage - stage floor tilted toward the audience.

rate - speed or tempo.

Reader's Theatre -

rehearsal - cast members working on a production under the guidance of the director.

resolution - ending, happy or sad; conclusion to a story.

resonance - enrichment of sound from its vibration in a closed space.

resonators - body chambers where sound vibrates; throat, mouth, nasal cavity & sinus cavities.

right, stage right - R, actor's right when facing the audience.

rising action - conflict in a scene gets worse and/or more complicated.

role - part or character played by an actor.

royalty - money paid to a playwright for permission to stage his/her play.

scene - performance with beginning, middle and end; section of a play that occurs at one place, at one time.

scenery - hangings, structures, etc. that represent a location or decorate the stage; set.

script - written copy of a play.

sensory recall - 'remembering how an action or object felt, looked, smelled, sounded or tasted.

set - see scenery.

share a scene - 'have equal audience attention with another actor.

- stage area(s)**- sections of the stage, named for their relation to the audience.
- stage directions** - script instructions for movement, business, lighting, sound, etc. Usually in parentheses.
- stage fright** - 'nervous feeling about performing.
- stage hands** - see grip.
- strike** - to clear from the stage completely; take down and store away when the run of the play has ended.
- take a scene** - 'get audience attention.
- teasers** - short curtains hung above the stage to mask the lights and battens.
- technical director** - person in charge of everything back of the grand drape except the actors and costumes; answers to the stage manager.
- technical rehearsal** - rehearsal for perfecting lights, scenery, sound, and other technical elements.
- theatre in the round** theatre facility where the audience surrounds the
- stage on the all sides; arena stage.
- thespian** - see actor.
- three quarters** - actor facing upstage corners of the stage. Used to give a scene.
- thrust stage** - stage that extend well past the proscenium arch so that the audience surrounds it on three sides.
- tongue twister** - difficult to pronounce phrases or sentences used as articulation exercises.
- top** - lines begin before the previous line is finished.
- tormentors** - see legs.
- tragedy** - a play in which the protagonist fails to achieve their goal; a play with a sad or tragic ending.
- trapdoor, trap** - an opening in the stage floor that permits actors to enter from and exit to an area beneath the stage.
- traveler** mid-stage curtain; act curtain.
- troupe** - group of actors, especially those that tour from place to place. (Source of the term "trouper.")

up, upstage - U, portion of the stage farthest from the audience; away from the audience.

vocal variety - changes in rate, pitch, volume and intensity that help a listener stay interested in a vocal performance.

volume - loudness or softness of the voice, sound effects or music.

wagon - platforms or large set pieces on casters.

walk on - part where an actor comes on and off stage without saying a line.

wardrobe - costumes.

wings - backstage area on either side of the stage.