

## THEATRE VOCABULARY

**Accent:** Way of speaking used in local area or country.

**Antagonist:** A person or a situation that opposes another character's goals or desires.

**Arena/"theatre in the round":** Stage in which the audience sits on all four sides.

**Articulation:** The clear and precise pronunciation of words.

**Aside:** A remark to the audience only.

**Audition:** Try out for a role in a play.

**Avenue:** Audience seated on two sides of the acting area.

**Backcloth/backdrop:** Canvas cloth which covers the back of the stage: can be painted.

**Backstage/offstage:** Area that the audience cannot see.

**Believable:** Convincing to the audience.

**Blackout:** All stage lights go off at the same time.

**Black Box:** Adaptable playing space.

**"Break a leg":** Wish for good luck in a performance.

**Booth:** Room above the audience wherein the light board operator, sound board operator, and stage manager run the show.

**Catharsis:** The purification or purgation of the emotions (such as pity, fear, grief, etc.) affected in a work of tragedy.

**Catwalks:** Platforms and walkways above the audience that are used by stage technicians to access lighting, sound and effects instruments.

**Character:** A personality or role an actor/actress re-creates.

**Character Analysis:** The exploration of internal and external traits, including character histories, based upon given imaginary circumstances.

**Characterization:** The process of exploring the physical, social, and psychological aspects of a role in order to create a believable character.

**Cast:** Actors in a play.

**Casting:** Selecting the actor who will play each role in a show (see Audition).

**Choreography:** Planned movement/dance in a play or musical.

**Climax:** The point of greatest dramatic tension or transition in a theatrical work.

**Company:** a) Actors and crew of a production. b) Chorus in musical.

**Concept Production:** The unified, physical expression that fulfils the director's vision.

**Conflict:** Opposition of persons or forces giving rise to dramatic action.

**Constructive criticism:** Reaction to a performance that explores both the strengths and weaknesses with the intention of improvement.

**Context:** Interrelated conditions in which a play exists or occurs.

**Costume:** Clothing worn by an actor on stage during a performance.

**Creative drama:** An improvisational, process-centred form of theatre in which participants are guided by a leader to imagine, enact, and reflect on human experiences.

**Crisis:** A decisive point in the plot of a play on which the outcome of the remaining action depends.

**Critique:** Opinions and comments based on predetermined criteria that may be used for self-evaluation or the evaluation of the actors or the production itself.

**Cue** (*narážka*): A signal, either verbal or physical, that indicates something else, such as a line of dialogue or an entrance, is to happen.

**Curtain Speech:** Opening announcements that inform the audience of pertinent information such as safety protocol and audience etiquette.

**Dance Drama:** A drama presented through dance moves.

**Denouement** (*rozuzlení*): The final resolution of the conflict in a plot.

**Design:** The creative process of developing and executing aesthetic or functional designs in a production, such as costumes, lighting, sets, and makeup.

**Dialogue:** The conversation between actors on stage.

**Diction:** The pronunciation of words, the choice of words, and the manner in which a person expresses himself or herself.

**Directing:** The art and technique of bringing the elements of theatre together to make a play.

**Docu-drama:** A documentary style drama, including reconstructions of events.

**Downstage:** The stage area toward the audience.

**Dramatic activities:** Such activities as pantomime, creative movement, improvisation, creative drama, storytelling, choral speaking, story dramatization, theme oriented drama, story theatre, readers' theatre, role playing, theatre games, and puppetry.

**Dramatic Irony:** Actions or remarks whose significance is not realised by all the characters.

**Dramatic structure:** The particular literary structure and style in which plays are written.

**Dramaturg:** A person who provides specific in-depth knowledge and literary resources to a director, producer, theatre company, or even the audience.

**Dress rehearsals:** The final few rehearsals just prior to opening night in which the show is run with full technical elements. Full costumes and makeup are worn.

**Elements of Drama:** Six major elements of drama according to Aristotle: plot, character, theme, dialogue, music, and spectacle.

**Empathy:** Ability to feel with another person or to put oneself in another's position; to vicariously experience the emotional state of another person. To empathize is to "walk in the shoes" of another. Empathy feels with a character; sympathy feels for a character.

**Emphasis:** The stress on a word or phrase.

**Encore:** Repeated or additional performance at the end of a play.

**Entrance:** To come onto the stage.

**Ensemble:** A group of theatrical artists working together to create a theatrical production.

**Exit:** To leave the acting area.

**Exposition:** Detailed information revealing the facts of a plot.

**Extra:** Castmember who serves as background for action.

**Facial expression:** Look on the face which shows emotion.

**Falling action:** The series of events following a climax of a plot.

**Farce:** A comedy with exaggerated characterizations, abundant physical or visual humour, and often an improbable plot.

**Finale:** Concluding part of any performance.

**5 W's:** *Who* refers to roles and characterizations. *Where* refers to setting, locale, environment. *What* refers to dramatic action. *When* refers to time of day, year. *Why* refers to motivation.

**Flashback:** Acting out an event in the past.

**Flashforward:** Acting out a future or imagined event.

**Flats:** Wooden frames, joined together and covered with canvas, which can be painted.

**Flexible Staging:** Any space in which a play can be performed other than a theatre (i.e. gymnasium, cafeteria, outdoors).

**Flies:** Area between the top of the proscenium arch and the stage ceiling; loft; fly area.

**Slow Fade To:** The lighting/sound is faded out slowly.

**Fast Fade To:** The lighting/sound is faded out quickly.

**Follow Spot:** Powerful spotlight used to follow actors around the acting area.

**Focus:** The concept of guiding the attention of the players and audience to a particular place or person at a given moment.

**Form:** The overall structure or shape of a work that frequently follows an established design. Forms may refer to a literary type (e.g., narrative form, short-story form, dramatic form) or to pattern of meter, line, and rhymes (e.g., stanza form, verse form).

**Formal Theatre:** Theatre that focuses on public performance in the front of an audience and in which the final production is most important.

**Forum Theatre:** The audience suggest changes to a drama in order to affect outcomes.

**Freeze Frame:** The action is frozen in time.

**Genre:** In literary and dramatic studies, genre refers to the main types of literary form, principally tragedy and comedy. The term can also refer to forms that are more specific to a given historical era, such as the revenge tragedy, or to more specific sub-genres of tragedy and comedy, such as the comedy of manners.

**Gesture:** An expressive movement of the body or limbs.

**Ground Plan:** Bird's eye view of the set showing what is on the set, entrances/exits and position of the audience.

**Informal Theatre:** A theatrical performance that focuses on small presentations, such as one taking place in a classroom setting. Usually, it is not intended for public view.

**Initial incident:** The first incident leading to the rising action of the play.

**Inside-out acting:** A technique that first defines a character's inner psycho-emotional condition and the personal motives born out of that condition. External behaviour results from these internal conditions and motives.

**Intermission:** Short break between the acts of a play or parts of a performance.

**Lines:** Pieces or sentences of dialogue.

**Melodrama:** Refers to plays that present a conflict between good and evil with good prevailing.

**Mixing desk:** Control desk for sound effects being used in a drama.

**Mood:** The overall feeling of the play.

**Motif:** A recurrent character, incident, or concept.

**Musical Theatre:** A type of entertainment containing music, songs, and, usually, dance.

**Narration:** Part(s) of the drama that are told by a narrator.

**Objective:** A character's goal or intention.

**Obstacle:** Anything that prevents a character from achieving his/her objective.

**One-Act:** A short play with a beginning, middle and end, usually with no change of scenery or intermission.

**Opening situation:** The first event in a play from which the rest of the plot develops.

**Orchestra pit:** The area between the stage and the audience where the orchestra plays.

**Outside-in acting:** A technique that uses physical action and observable traits to initiate the development of the character's internal conditions and motives.

**Pace:** Speed of speech or movement.

**Pacing** (*temporytmus*): The tempo of an entire theatrical performance.

**Pause:** A break in speaking: period of silence.

**Performance:** Presentation of a drama to an audience. An artistic or dramatic production (e.g. last night's performance was terrible).

**Period Play:** A play from an earlier time played in the style, costumes, and sets representing the period it depicts.

**Pitch:** The highness or lowness of voice.

**Play:** Another word for a drama.

**Plot:** The structure of the action of the play; it is the arrangement of incidents that take place on the stage as revealed through the action and dialogue of the characters. Plot structure usually includes a beginning, a middle, and an ending with a problem, complications, and a resolution.

**Posture/stance:** Position of the body - how it is held.

**Presentational:** A style of performance in which the actors recognize and address the audience.

**Production:** A staging or presentation of a theatrical work (e.g. a new Broadway production of a musical).

**Production concept:** A vision which the director develops about the meaning and significance of a play that is realized in all aspects of the production, including scenery, properties, lighting, sound, and costumes.

**Project:** Throw the voice to the farthest person in the audience.

**Promenade:** Audience follows the action on foot, moving from one location to another.

**Position:** The orientation of the actor to the audience (e.g., full front, right profile, left profile).

**Props (properties):** objects used by actors on stage (e.g., fan, wallet) or objects necessary to complete the set (e.g., furniture, plants, books).

**Proscenium:** A stage in which the audience sits in front as if looking in a picture frame; also called a proscenium arch. The archway is in a sense the frame for stage as defined by the boundaries of the stage beyond which a viewer cannot see (see Black Box).

**Protagonist:** The main character of a play and the character with whom the audience identifies most strongly.

**Raked stage:** Stage floor tilted toward the audience.

**Rate:** Speed or tempo.

**Reader's Theatre:** A performance in which a play is read aloud with expression rather than memorized off book.

**Register:** Appropriate speech for the person being spoken to, or for the situation.

**Representational:** A style of performance in which the convention of a fourth wall is maintained and actors do not address the audience.

**Resolution:** Ending, happy or sad; conclusion to a story.

**Revolving stage:** Stage which turns in a circle.

**Rhythm:** Movements which follow a pattern or beat.

**Rising action:** The part of a plot consisting of complications and discoveries that create conflict.

**Role:** A part in a play; the character played by an actor in a play.

**Rostra (elevance):** Blocks or platforms used to create levels.

**Run-through:** A rehearsal moving from start to finish without stopping for corrections or notes.

**Satire:** The type of comedy that uses wit, irony, and exaggeration to expose individual or institution folly, vice, or stupidity.

**Scene:** The division of an act or of the play itself; the division may be dictated by a change of time or place in the play.

**Scenery (*kulisy*):** Hangings, structures, etc. that represent a location or decorate the stage; set.

**Script:** The written dialogue, description, and directions provided by the playwright.

**Set ("*scénografie*"):** All the scenery, backdrops, set pieces, and props used to create a stage environment for a dramatic performance; the performing area created by those elements.

**Setting:** The time and place in which the dramatic action occurs.

**Slow motion:** Movement performed at a slowed down pace.

**Soliloquy:** A single lengthy speech when a character speaks to himself or herself.

**Spotlight:** Beam of light created by a lantern for a person or place on the acting area.

**Stage business:** Movements made to strengthen the personality of a character the actor is portraying including props and/or costumes.

**Stage crew:** The backstage technical crew responsible for running the show.

**Stage directions:** Script instructions for movement, business, lighting, sound, etc.

**Stage fright:** Nervous feeling about performing.

**Stage manager (*inspicient/ka*):** The director's liaison backstage during rehearsal and performance. The stage manager is responsible for the running of each performance.

**Stage whisper:** A loud whisper intended to be heard by the audience.

**Staging:** a) Also called 'blocking': planned movement on stage. b) The position of the acting area relative to the audience.

**Stereotype:** An exaggerated portrayal of a type of person.

**Stock characters:** Established characters, such as young lovers, neighbourhood busybodies, sneaky villains, and overprotective fathers, who are immediately recognizable by an audience.

**Style:** The characteristic manner of speaking, writing, designing, performing, or directing. Style encompasses literary movements (e.g., romanticism, realism, naturalism), the method of individual playwrights, or anything that displays unique, definable properties in

construction or execution. **Stylized** usually means anything which deviates from whatever is considered realistic at a given time. It is possible to have a dramatic style (provided by the playwright) and a theatrical style (provided by the director and collaborators).

**Subtext:** The unspoken meaning or intention behind the actions and dialogue of a text or performance, which is implied largely by nonverbal behaviour and subtleties in vocal qualities.

**Tableau/frozen picture:** A silent and motionless depiction of a scene created by actors, often from a picture (plural *tableaux*).

**Target audience:** A specific group of people at whom the drama is aimed.

**Technical elements:** The aspects of theatre involved in the creation of scenery, properties, lighting, sound, costumes, and makeup.

**Tension:** Build up of excitement.

**Text:** Printed words, including dialogue and the stage directions for a script.

**TheatER:** The structure within which theatrical performances are given. Usually includes an orchestra or seating area, and a stage.

**TheatRE:** A collaborative art form including the composition, enactment, and interpretation of dramatic presentations for an audience.

**Theatre management:** The administrative aspects of theatre (e.g., stage management, budgeting, public relations, box office, house management).

**Theatrical conventions:** The established techniques, practices, and devices unique to theatrical productions.

**Theme:** The central thought or idea of a play.

**Through line** ("*hlavní téma*"): The major action of a play and one of two elements (conflict being the other) out of which most scripts grow.

**Thrust:** A stage surrounded on three sides by an audience.

**Timing** ("*tajming*"): Speaking, moving or pausing at exactly the right moment.

**Tongue twister:** Difficult to pronounce phrases or sentences used as articulation exercises.

**Tone:** Change of voice to express emotion.

**Top:** Lines begin before the previous line is finished.

**Trapdoor, trap:** An opening in the stage floor that permits actors to enter from and exit to an area beneath the stage.

**Troupe:** Group of actors, especially those that tour from place to place.



**Understudy/stand-in:** Should the regular actor or actress be unable to appear on stage because of illness or emergencies, the understudy takes over the part.

**Up/upstage:** Portion of the stage farthest from the audience; away from the audience.

**Venue:** Place where a performance is presented.

**Vocal quality:** The characteristics of a voice, such as shrill, nasal, raspy, breathy, booming, and so forth.

**Vocal variety:** Changes in rate, pitch, volume and intensity that help a listener stay interested in a vocal performance.

**Voice-over:** Recorded speech played during a performance.

**Volume:** The degree of loudness or intensity of a voice.

**Wagon:** Any piece of scenery on a wheeled platform designed to be moved on and off stage.

**Wings:** Backstage area on either side of the stage.