

## THEATRE GLOSSARY

**Aesthetics:** The branch of philosophy that deals with theories of art and beauty.

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

**Audience:** One or more persons who observe actors in a scene or play in a classroom or a theatre. In theatre education, audience is sometimes loosely used to mean the reflective performer as well as classmates, other students, faculty, or the public.

**Black Box:** Adaptable playing space.

**Blocking:** Stage movement including sitting, standing, entering, exiting, and crossing.

**Character:** A person, animal, or entity in a story, scene, or play with specific distinguishing physical, mental, and attitudinal attributes.

**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.

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

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

**Conflict:** The opposition of persons or forces that gives rise to the dramatic action.

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

**Costume:** An actor's stage clothing.

**Costume Plot:** The organizational layout of costumes required for a play.

**Creative Drama:** (see Drama/Theatre and Dramatic Activities).

**Critique:** An evaluation and analysis of a play according to accepted aesthetic principles.

**Cross:** An actor's movement from one part of the stage to another.

**Cue:** A signal from the stage manager to actor, stage crew, props manager, or lighting technician that some predetermined action, such as an entrance, sound effects, scenery change, or lighting change, is required. Also used by actors to mean the line immediately before their own.

In this sense, “to cue” someone means to supply that line so the actor can say his or her own in a rehearsal.

**Curtain Call:** An opportunity for the actors to acknowledge the audience.

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

**Dialogue:** Words spoken by the characters in a play to communicate their thoughts, feelings, and actions.

**Directing:** The process of guidance, both external and internal, incorporating the development of leadership skills; the unification of a production from its basic interpretation through all the acting and technical phases up to the time of performance.

**Drama:** Literature written in dialog form and intended for the theatre. Although plays can be read for enjoyment and instruction, they come most alive when acted on stage. The term drama also refers to any serious, as opposed to humorous, play.

**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 Experiences:** Dramatic play, dramatic activities, movement, and processes involved in personal expression through creative drama as well as attendance at, observation of, and participation in theatrical performances.

**Dramatic Literature:** A story written in dialogue format and intended to be acted on a stage; a play.

**Dramatic Structure:** The sequence of a play including exposition, initial incident, rising action, climax, falling action and resolution.

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

**Emotional Recall (Memory):** Emotional perceptions elicited from past experiences which can be used in understanding, portraying, and reflecting on the human condition and human behavior.

**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.

**Ensemble:** The dynamic interaction and harmonious blending of the efforts of the many artists involved in a dramatic activity or theatrical production.

**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.

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

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

**Genre:** A category of composition.

**Improvisation:** A spontaneous scene or episode created by an actor or actors without a script..

**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 behavior results from these internal conditions and motives.

**Lighting:** The illumination of the stage by means of artificial light.

**Lighting Plot:** A diagram of the location of lighting instruments and their areas of focus.

**Makeup:** Cosmetics used to change the appearance of the face and other exposed surfaces on the body in order to emphasize characteristics appropriate to a role.

**Monologue:** A speech within a play delivered by a single actor alone on stage.

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

**Motivation:** The actor's justification for doing or saying something; answers the question, "Why?"

**Nonverbal Communication:** Communicating without words using facial expression, gestures, and body language.

**Objective:** A character's goal; answers the question, "What does a character want?"

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

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

**Pantomime:** Telling a story through body movement, gesture, and facial expression; action without words.

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

**Playwriting:** The act of creating the plot, theme, characters, dialogue, spectacle, and structure of a play and organizing it into a script form.

**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.

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

**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.

**Projection:** Control of loudness so that even those in the last row can hear and understand every word in the play.

**Prompt Book:** The stage manager's copy of the script in which the blocking and technical cues are noted.

**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.

**Puppetry:** The animation of objects, ranging from hand puppets to marionettes, creating characters in dramatic situations.

**Reaction:** Response to stimulus presented by character, event, or environment.

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

**Rehearsal:** A session in which the director and actors prepare a play for performance.

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

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

**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.

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

**Sensory Recall (Memory):** An actor's device summoning up emotion by recalling a previous real life event.

**Set:** 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.

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

**Staging:** (see **Blocking**).

**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 behavior and subtleties in vocal qualities.

**Tactics:** Strategies a character employs to achieve his/her objectives.

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

**Technical Theatre:** A branch of theatre that includes scenery, costumes, special effects, sound, lighting, and props.

**Theatre:** An art form based on the interpretation of dramatic literature combining playwriting, acting, directing, and stagecraft. A building intended for the presentation of plays or other dramatic performances.

**Theatre Games:** Group acting exercises frequently used for warm-up, motivation, and exploration of character and subtext.

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

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

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

**Vernacular Language:** Using a language or dialect native to a region or country rather than a literary, cultured, or foreign language.

**Warm-up:** An activity in which the student focuses attention on limbering up the body, voice, imagination, or intellect.