

Common Theater Terms

Auditions: Readings before a director to determine casting of a play.

Call Backs: An additional audition for the final actors being considered for roles.

Places: The direction for all actors, musicians and technicians to go to their proper position and be ready for the beginning of a play or scene.

Strike: The instruction to remove costumes, props, sets.

Run Through: An uninterrupted rehearsal of a scene, act, or the entire play.

Pantomime: A story or action performed w/o words relying on body language.

Stage Business: Small actions such as smoking or using a fan are known on the stage as business. Used to fill time and create character.

Given Circumstances: The who, what, when, where, why of the play or scene or character.

Focus:

- a. Where the director wants the audience to look.
- b. The actor's point of concentration.

Diction: The actor's ability to be understood by the audience.

Volume: The actor's ability to be heard by the audience.

Cue: The last words or actions indicating the time for another actor to speak or move.

Ad lib: Lines supplied by the actors to fill in where there would otherwise be an undesirable pause.

Aside: Lines said to the audience that other actors onstage are not supposed to be hearing.

Pick up Cues: A direction for the actor to begin responding immediately without allowing any lapse of time.

Cheating/Open Up: Using a movement or position that may not be realistic but allows the audience to see the action more clearly. Facing as much towards the audience as possible.

Mapping The Stage

Wings: The areas to the left and right of the stage out of view of the audience; part of the backstage area.

Proscenium: An arched opening through which the audience sees the stage. Also, a style of theater with the audience seated in front of the stage.

Apron: The usually curved area of the stage closest to the audience.

Backstage/Offstage: Usually the entire stage area not visible to the audience.

House: The audience area.

Backdrop: The drop farthest upstage in any setting. Also a large curtain, sometimes with a picture or design.

Fly Loft: The area above the stage where curtains and set pieces are stored during the production.

Grand Drape: The front curtain of a stage.

Legs: Narrow curtains in the wings to mask the backstage areas.

Cyclorama: A large, usually white, curtain that is lit to create setting and masks behind the set.

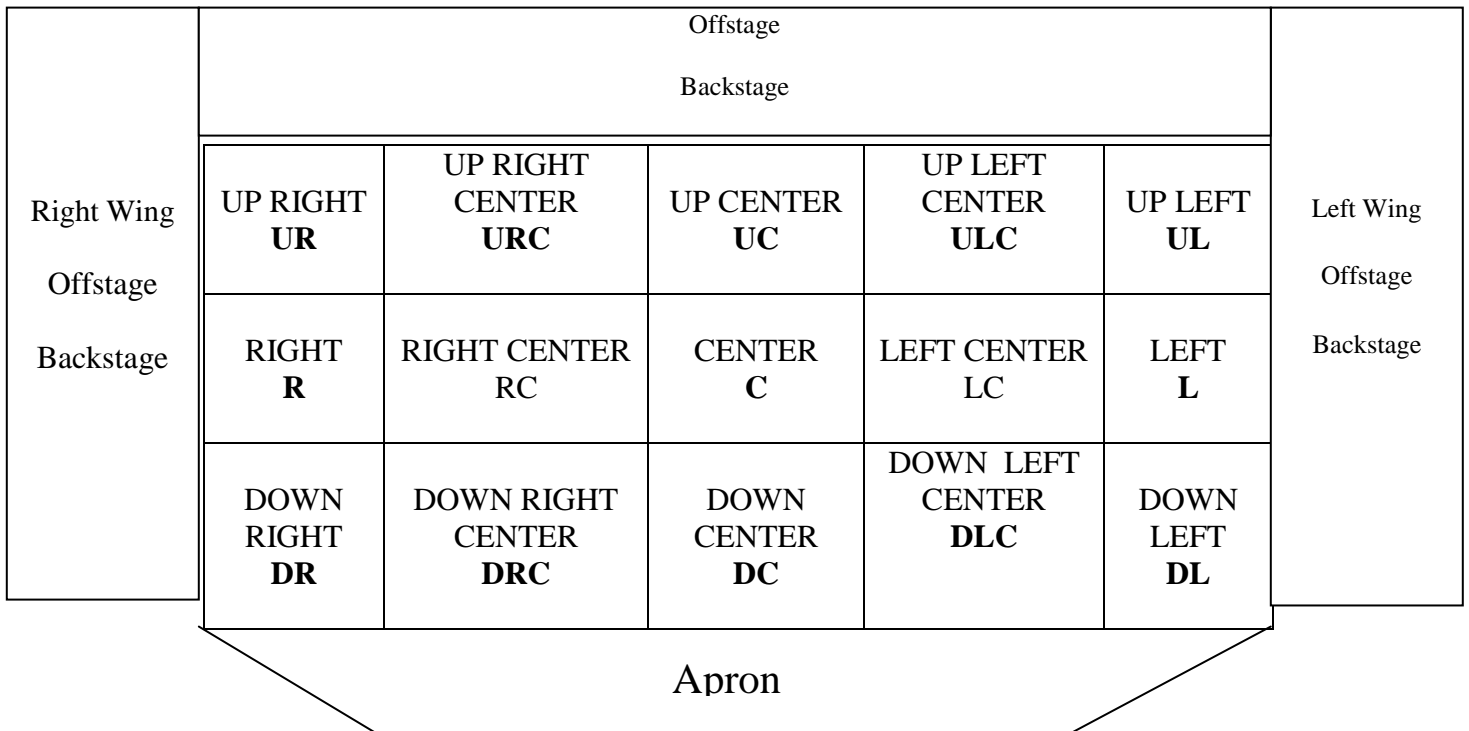
Trap: An opening in the stage floor for actors to pass through to make entrances or exits.

Upstage: The area of the stage that is the furthest from the audience

Downstage: The area of the stage that is the closest to the audience

Cross: Movement from one area of the stage to another.

Blocking: The set movement of all the actors onstage throughout the play.



Technical Elements

Flats: Canvas or wood covered frames used to build the walls of a stage setting.

Props : Small hand held items used by actors to create the period, character, or setting.

Platforms: Wooden units joined together to build the floors of the stage setting.

Costumes: The clothing worn by the actors that helps determine character, time, theme, and mood.

Mask: A term meaning to hide

Dark: A term meaning the theater is closed.

Stage Manager: Person responsible for the physical set up and the play as it is performed.

Elements of a Play

Dialogue: Written conversation.

Script: A complete scene or play in a format to be produced by actors and directors.

Exposition: The explanation of the who, what, when, where, why of a play.

Setting: Where the play occurs in terms of time and place.

Preliminary Situation: The story of the play as the curtain rises.

Initial Incident: The first most important event in a play from which the rest of the play develops.

Rising Action: The series of events following the initial incident. How the story builds towards its climax.

Climax: The major event in a play, the turning point of the story.

Falling Action: The series of events following the climax.

Conclusion: Final outcome of the play.

Protagonist: The play revolves around this character; often the “good guy” but not always.

Antagonist: A character who forces change /creates conflict for the protagonist; often the bad guy, not always.

Theme/Message/Moral: What the play, as a work of art, is trying to say to the audience.

Monologue/Soliloquy: A long story or comments said by a single actor to the audience, themselves, or another character onstage.

Act: An organizational division in scripts.

Scene: An organizational division in scripts. Often several scenes make up an act.

Edited out:

Curtain Line: The imaginary line across the stage floor following the line of the front curtain.

Take The Stage: What an actor does when they take control of the scene or take the focus of the audience.

Curtain Call/Bows: The choreographed appearance of actors on stage to acknowledge applause.

Heads Up!: A term of warning used to acknowledge overhead danger.

Full Front: Facing the audience.

Full Back: Facing away from the audience.

Build: To increase the tempo or volume or both of a scene to reach a climax.