

# Glossary of Theatre Terms

## PEOPLE

- **Assistant Stage Manager (ASM):** Person who is hired to help the Stage Manager and Deputy Stage Manager.
- **Box Office Manager:** The person who is in charge of ticket reservations and ticketing.
- **Cast:** The people who perform in a show.
- **Chaperone:** A person hired to take care of the younger members of a cast.
- **Choreographer:** The person who creates dances in arranges movements.
- **Chorus:** 1) in a musical the company of dancers and singers 2) the dancing, singing or songs performed by that company.
- **Company:** The cast, crew and all staff associated with a show.
- **Costumer:** The person in charge of the costumes for a show.
- **Cover:** A person who understudies a lead role but also has a part in the ensemble or chorus.
- **Crew:** All the people who work together on a show except the cast.
- **Deputy Stage Manager (DSM):** In charge of the running of rehearsals, writes all the cues down, prompts and reads in for actors. During performances, they sit at the prompt desk (side of stage) cueing the show.
- **Director:** The person who provides the vision of how a show should be presented, who works with the actors on their roles, develops the blocking, and is in charge of the rehearsals.
- **Dramatist:** A person who writes plays.
- **Dressers:** People who help the actors get into and out of their costumes.

- **Ensemble:** A group of actors, singers or dancers who perform together on stage.
- **Equity:** Trade union formed to protect those who work in the theatre by helping to regulate pay and working conditions.
- **Front of House:** A term used to describe all of the people in a theatre who deal with the audience including the people who sell tickets and the ushers, and any other people who deal with the public.
- **House:** Term for the audience and the auditorium where they sit.
- **House Manager:** The person in charge of the theatre auditorium and anything to do with the audience.
- **Lighting Designer:** The person who designs the lighting for a show and works with the director to get desired effects.
- **Musical Director (MD):** The person who works with the director, actors and orchestra to get the desired musical effects for a show.
- **Prop Mistress/Master:** The person in charge of all the props and who usually works with them during a show.
- **Set Designer:** The person who designs the sets for a show. In smaller theatres this person also builds the sets.
- **Sound Designer:** The person who designs the sound direction for the show.
- **Stage Manager:** The person who runs the show from opening curtain to closing curtain and is in charge of everything on the stage and back stage.
- **Standby:** A person who understudies a single role but is not part of the chorus or ensemble of a musical or play.
- **Swing:** A performer in a musical who substitutes when chorus members are unable to perform. These performers have to be able to learn a lot of different tracks (parts) and be able to remember them.
- **Troupe:** A group of actors that form a company.
- **Understudy:** A performer who studies the lines and blocking of a role, and is able to take over for the original cast member in a role.

## PLACES

- **Aisle:** A passage through the seating.
- **Apron:** Section of the stage floor which projects towards or into the auditorium.
- **Backstage:** The part of a theatre which is not seen by the audience, including the dressing rooms, wings and the green room.
- **Black Box:** A type of theatre usually surrounded by black curtains where the audience and actors are in the same room.
- **Box Office:** The place that sells tickets to a performance.
- **Broadway:** The largest and most famous theatrical district in New York City.
- **Callboard:** The place backstage where the Stage Manager puts up important information for the cast and crew.
- **Catwalk:** A narrow walkway suspended from the ceiling of a theatre from which sometimes lights and scenery are hung.
- **Control Booth:** The place in a theatre from which all the sound and lights are controlled.
- **Downstage:** The part of the stage which is closest to the audience.
- **Dressing Rooms:** Rooms in a theatre provided for the actors in which they change costumes and apply make-up.
- **Front of House (FOH):** The part of the theatre known as the auditorium where the audience is seated, the lobby and the box office.
- **Green Room:** A place for the performers to relax while waiting to go on stage.
- **House:** Used to describe the audience or as a short way of saying “Front of House”.
- **Offstage:** The area of the stage which the audience cannot see.

- **Orchestra Pit:** An area at the front of house, usually sunken, where the musicians and conductor work during a show.
- **Proscenium:** The arch that frames the front of a stage.
- **Prompt Desk:** The centre of control in a show where the Deputy Stage Manager runs the show from.
- **Public Address System:** The sound system of an auditorium. The “P.A.”.
- **Rear of House (ROH):** The areas in the back of the stage and those places used for storage.
- **Repertory Theatre:** A theatre group that prepares several plays that they can perform over time... not just one.
- **Riser:** A platform placed on the stage to create different levels.
- **Set:** The setting of the stage for each act and all the physical things that are used to change the stage for the performance.
- **Stage Left:** (these left/right directions are seen from the ACTORS point of view on the stage) this is when the actor standing in the centre of the stage moves to his left (This even stumps some pros so it is best to learn it now)
- **Stage Right:** (these left/right directions are seen from the ACTORS point of view on the stage) this is when the actor standing in the centre of the stage moves to his right (This even stumps some pros so it is best to learn it now).
- **Summer Stock:** A type of repertory theatre which produces its shows during the summer season.
- **Trap:** An opening in the floor of a stage where a performer or prop can disappear (trap doors in the floor).
- **Upstage:** The area of the stage that is the farthest away from the audience.
- **Upstaging:** When an actor draws attention to himself and away from the main action of a play.
- **West End:** The largest and most famous theatrical district in London.
- **Wings:** The areas of the stage that are to the sides of the acting area and are out of view. These areas are usually masked by curtains.

## OTHERS

- **Acoustics:** How sound moves in a room depends on its size and shape and the amount and position of sound-absorbing and reflecting material.
- **Act:** 1) The different sections or halves of a musical/play/performance. E.g. Act I and Act II 2) The thing which actors do, like pretending to be another person/character.
- **Ad Lib:** To make up as you go along without preparation.
- **Aside:** A quick remark made by a character in a play which is said to the audience.
- **Audition:** A time when a performer goes before a panel of people who are casting a show and they perform a piece so those people can see what that performer can do and see if they are suitable for the part. Like a job interview.
- **Belt:** In Musical Theatre, a style of singing which uses a loud, full tone.
- **Black Out:** The quick shutting off of all the stage lights.
- **Blocking:** Arranging moves to be made by the performers. The instructions that performers use to know exactly where they are supposed to be on stage at all times.
- **Book:** The script of a play...libretto of a musical.
- **Break A Leg:** Something people tell performers to wish them “Good Luck” before a performance or audition.
- **Call:** The time that an actor must report to the theatre for either a performance or rehearsal.
- **Casting:** When the director chooses performers to be characters in a play or musical.
- **Cold Reading:** When an actor is asked to read from a script he hasn't rehearsed.
- **Colour Mixing:** Combining two or more lighting gels.
- **Cue:** Signals that are given to the performers, the crew, the musicians and any others working on a show so they know when to start.

- **Curtain:** The screen usually of cloth which separates the stage from the audience.
- **Curtain Call:** The bows at the end of a performance.
- **Dialogue:** The words which are spoken in a play/musical.
- **Downstage:** A movement towards the audience.
- **Dress Rehearsal:** A rehearsal, usually just before a show opens, to practice the show just how it will be on opening night, including costumes and make-up. A rehearsal for both cast and crew.
- **Drop:** A piece of fabric which is hung on stage and usually used in the scenery of a show.
- **Exit:** A stage direction telling a performer to leave the stage.
- **Footlights:** Lights that are sometimes recessed into the front edge of the stage, used to stop shadows made by overhead lighting.
- **Gain:** The level of volume given to a signal or of a system.
- **Hand Props:** Those objects used to tell the story which are handled by actors in a production.
- **“Heads on Stage”:** A shouted warning (often just “Heads!”) for cast and crew to be aware of actions above them.
- **House Lights:** The lights that are used to light up the auditorium where the audience sits.
- **Libretto:** The term that describes the book or script of a musical or opera.
- **Marking Out:** When the rehearsal room or stage is marked with tape to show where furniture and props should be placed during the performance.
- **Matinee:** An afternoon performance of a show.
- **Microphone:** An instrument that is used to change voice waves into electrical pulses and on to an amplifier.
- **Monologue:** A speech given by one actor, like a solo.

- **Notes:** The meeting a director usually has after a rehearsal or performance to tell the cast and crew how he felt about their performance and to make any changes he may think are necessary.
- **Off Book:** When the director tells the cast (usually by a certain date) that they must memorise their lines and can no longer use their scripts in rehearsal.
- **Overture:** The beginning piece of music in musical theatre and opera which usually gives the audience an idea of the music to come and gets them into the feeling of the show.
- **Personal Props:** Props that are carried by an actor in his costume during a performance.
- **Programme:** A booklet that contains information about a production, like a cast list, crew list, thanks, advertisements etc.
- **Preset:** When a prop, costume or something else used in a production is placed in or around the stage before the start of a performance.
- **Prompt Copy/Book:** The main copy of a script or score, containing every one actor's move and technical cues. Used by stage management.
- **Prompt:** As actors move from using the script to no script (see off book), the prompter follows the play in a book and gives a portion of a line to an actor, if needed, to help them remember the line.
- **Props:** All the items used in a play to tell the story not including the scenery or costumes, the short forms of "Properties".
- **Re-Call:** When an actor who has auditioned for a show is asked to come back for the next round of auditions.
- **Rehearsal:** The period of practice before the beginning of a show in which the performers and director work on the development of the show.
- **Reprise:** In musical theatre or opera, when either a whole song or part of a song is repeated.
- **Run:** The number of times a show is performed.
- **Run-through:** A rehearsal in which the actors perform the show from the very beginning to the very end... "Run the show" is another way of saying the same thing.

- **Running-Time:** The amount of time the performance lasts from beginning to end not including any intermissions...as theatre is live performance, this can vary slightly for each performance.
- **Scrim:** A drop made of a special weaved material that is used for setting the scene of a play.
- **Sound Check:** Testing the sound system before a show, checking each speaker and checking vocal levels.
- **Sound Effects:** The noises which are produced to accompany a scene in a show...these noises are mostly produced by a machine or pre-recorded but can be produced by performers off stage.
- **Spotlight:** A light that shines down on a stage that shines on a group of people or one person that looks like a spot on the floor.
- **Stage Directions:** When a script contains information for the performers giving them specific entrances and exits or things do to.
- **Strike:** To take the set apart when a show ends.
- **Subtext:** The feelings behind the words a character speaks.
- **Technical Rehearsal:** Usually the first time a play is rehearsed in the place where it is going to be seen by the audience and in which the scenery, sound and lighting are used... this rehearsal can be done with or without costumes... “Tech” is the slang for this process.
- **Timing:** When an actor has the ability to say or do something at the best moment for the most effect.
- **Track:** The journey that a performer takes through a show.
- **Upstage:** When one actor moves to the back of the stage and causes another actor to turn away from the audience.
- **Wardrobe:** The stock of costumes and accessories which are owned by a theatre group.