

Scottish Rite Theatre Workshop

Glossary of Terms

Acting Areas: those areas of the stage on which specific scenes, or parts of scenes, are played.

Apron: the flat extension of the stage floor that projects from the proscenium arch toward the audience.

Area Lighting: the main visibility lighting for an acting area.

Auditorium: the seating area from which the audience observes the action of the play.

Backing: flats, drops, or draperies placed on the offstage side of doors and openings to prevent the audience from seeing backstage.

Balance: the arrangement of parts of a composition to create harmony and a sense of restfulness; also, to adjust the loudness and equalization levels of individual signals while mixing, to achieve a proper blend.

Batten: a metal pipe attached to the on-stage lines from a rope set or counter-weight system. Scenery is attached to the batten.

Blackout: the fast shutdown of all lighting on stage.

Black Box Theater: a theater space characterized by no defined stage area and flexible seating arrangement; usually painted black to create undefined size and shape.

Blocking: the actors' movement on the stage.

Board Operator: the electricians who run the lighting control board during rehearsals and performances.

Book: to fold hinged flats together so that they resemble a book.

Boom: a vertical pipe mounted in a base used for hanging lighting instruments.

Borders: wide, short, framed or unframed cloth drops suspended over the stage to prevent the audience from seeing above the stage; frequently made of black, unpainted velour.

Box Set: a set that encloses the acting area on three sides, often a room with the fourth

Center Line: an imaginary line that runs up and downstage at the center of the proscenium arch; used to position set pieces and props on stage.

Center Stage: that portion of the stage that is equal distance from furthest upstage and furthest downstage and from furthest stage right and furthest stage left; also can be defined as down stage center or upstage center.

Composition: an arrangement of parts to create a whole.

Contrast: the relationship of dissimilar elements.

Control Board: a remote electronic device used to adjust dimmers.

Costume Designer: person responsible for the design, visual appearance, and function of costumes, accessories, and makeup.

Costume-running-crew: those crew members such as dressers and wardrobe-repair personnel who work during the dress rehearsal and performances.

Counterweight Arbor: a metal cradle that holds counterbalancing weights used in flying.

Crossfade: to use a fader to change from one scene to another without dimming to darkness.

Cue: a directive for action, for example, a change in the lighting.

Cue Sheet: a sheet used by the board operator on which all the lighting cues and states in a production are recorded.

Cue-to-Cue: a rehearsal that jumps from one cue to the next to check the effects.

Cyclorama: a large drop used to surround the upstage portion of the stage; also called a cyc.

Theatre Glossary of Terms

Dead Hang: to suspend without the means of raising or lowering.

Decking: the covering surface of a structure on which people will walk.

Dim: to lower the amount of voltage to a lighting instrument, thereby decreasing light output.

Dimmer: an electrical device that controls the intensity of a light source connected to it.

Director: person responsible for interpreting the script, creating a viable production, and directing the actors.

Distress: to create a worn or aged appearance as with fabric, wood, or metal.

Downstage: that portion of the acting area closest to the audience.

Drape: a vertical element of heavy fabric that frames the sides of a window or archway.

Dress Rehearsal: a run-through with all technical elements, including costumes and makeup.

Drop: a large cloth, usually muslin or scenic canvas, on which something (a landscape, sky, street, room) is usually painted.

Electric: any pipe that is used to hold lighting instruments.

First Electric: the on-stage pipe for lighting instruments that is the closest, from the on-stage side, to the proscenium arch.

Flat: a framework, normally made of wood or metal, usually covered with fabric, but made be covered with other materials, such as, wood or plastic.

Flood Lights: Lighting instruments that give a wide beam of light.

Fly: to raise an object or person above the stage floor with ropes of cables.

Fly Loft: the open space above the stage where the scenery and equipment are flown.

Focusing: directing light from the lighting instruments to a specific area.

Followspot: a lighting instrument with a high-intensity, narrow beam; mounted in a

stand that allows it to tilt and swivel so that the beam can “follow” an actor.

Footlights: lighting instruments set at the front of the stage on or in the floor.

Front Light: a light coming from downstage of the subject, generally brought in from 45 degrees off full front.

Front-of-house: the area in an auditorium that is close to the stage.

Front-of-house Lights: lighting instruments suspended in the auditorium and directed toward the stage.

Gaffer Tape: a cloth-backed tape with adhesive on one side that is tearable, but strong and easily removed. An invaluable asset it comes in many colors, black being most useful as it does not show up in general lighting.

Gel: to put a color filter into a color frame and insert it in the color-frame holder of a lighting instrument.

Gobo: a thin metal template inserted into an ellipsoidal reflector spotlight to create a shadow pattern of light.

Grand Drape: the curtain that covers the opening of the proscenium arch.

Grid: a network of steel beams near the roof of the stage that support the elements of a counterweight system.

Ground Plan: a scale mechanical drawing in the form of a horizontal section view required to produce the most descriptive view of the set.

Hand Prop: a small item that is handled or carried by an actor.

Hanging: the process of placing lighting instruments in their specified locations.

Hanging Positions: the various locations around the stage where lighting instruments are placed as defined by the lighting designer.

House: synonym for Auditorium.

House Lights: those lighting fixtures that light the auditorium for audience safety.

Masking: to hide from the view of the audience.

Theatre Glossary of Terms

Master Electrician: person responsible for ensuring that the lighting equipment is hung, focused and run according to the direction of the lighting designer.

Mood: the feeling of the play; comic, tragic, happy, etc.

Offstage: any portion of the stage that cannot be seen by the audience.

On-stage: any portion of the acting area; also, any portion of the stage area.

Orchestra Pit: the space between the stage and the auditorium, usually below stage level, that holds the orchestra.

Pan: to rotate an object about its vertical axis.

Patching: to connect a stage circuit to a dimmer circuit.

Pin Spot: an instrument providing a narrow beam of light.

Pipe: a counterweighted batten or fixed metal pipe that holds lighting instruments.

Plaster Line: in drafting, a line extending across the rear of the opening of the proscenium arch.

Position: the relative placement of objects within a composition.

Practical: a working light mounted on a set piece, such as a working sconce. May be control from the control board or by an actor.

Producer: person who selects the script, finds financial backing, and hires all production personnel.

Production Concept: the creative interpretation of the script, which will unify the artistic vision of the production design team.

Production-design Team: the producer, director, and scenic, costume, lighting, and sound designers who, working together, develop the visual/aural concept for the production.

Production Manager: coordinator of production scheduling and administrative/logistic details of a multi-show theatrical season.

Production Meeting: a conference of appropriate production personnel to share information and status.

Production Style: a recognizable pattern of elements, both visual and intellectual, based on social and political history, used to create the environment for the production of a particular play.

Production Team: everyone working, in any capacity, on the production of a play.

Properties (Props): such elements as furniture, lamps, pictures, table linens, bric-a-brac and window draperies that provide the finished set with visual character.

Property Crew: those who construct or acquire all props and run (organize, shift, store) props during rehearsals and performances.

Prop Table: a table, normally located in the wings, on which hand props are stored between on-stage use.

Proscenium Arch: a stage configuration in which the spectators watch the action through a rectangular opening (the proscenium arch) that resembles a picture frame.

Raked Stage: a stage that is higher in the back than in the front.

Read Through: a reading of the play without any of the action.

Return: an element of scenery that returns the downstage edge of the setting offstage to the left or right.

Revolve: large, circular platform that pivots on its center; also called a turntable.

Rigging: fixing of lighting instruments and scenery elements into the appropriate places for flying. Generally, takes place in the last week of the production period.

Running: controlling or operating some aspect of the production.

Running Crew: those responsible for operating lighting equipment and shifting scenery during rehearsals and performances.

Scenic Designer: person responsible for the design and function of the scenery and properties.

Theatre Glossary of Terms

Scrim: a drop made from translucent or transparent material.

Set: the elements of scenery assembled for a production.

Set Prop: a large, moveable item, not built into the set, that is used in some way by an actor, such as a sofa, floor lamp, table, etc.

Shift: to change the position of the scenery, props, or stage equipment.

Sight Line: a sighting extending from any seat in the house to any position on stage.

Sky Drop: a large drop made to be hung flat, without fullness; used to simulate the sky.

Sound Crew: those who record and edit sound and who set up and run any sound equipment during a production.

Sound Designer: person responsible for the design, recording, and playback of all music and sound effects used in a production.

Special: a lighting instrument used for one specific object or effect.

Spike: a mark on the floor to locate the working positions of properties or scenery.

Spirit: the manner and style in which a play is presented to the audience.

Spotlight: a lighting instrument with a lens that throws an intense light on a defined area.

Stage: the area where the action of the play takes place.

Stage Business: a specific action, also known as a "bit," performed by an actor during a play.

Stage Crew: those who shift the sets and, sometimes, props during rehearsals and performances.

Stage Directions: those movements on stage as indicated by the director which will take an actor from one area to another; such as, upstage, downstage, stage left, stage right, center stage.

Stage Left: that portion of the acting area to the actor's left; audience right.

Stage Manager: person who assists the director during rehearsals and manages all backstage activity once the play has opened.

Stage Right: that portion of the acting area to the actor's right; audience left.

Strike: to take down the scenery; to remove properties or lights.

Style: specific compositional characteristics that distinguish the appearance of one type of design from another; e.g., realism, expressionism, surrealism, etc.

Stylization: the use of specific compositional elements characteristic of a particular style or period that create the sense of that style or period.

Teaser: a short horizontal drape used for masking the fly loft; synonym for border.

Technical Director: person responsible for supervising the construction, mounting, rigging, and shifting of the scenery and properties.

Technical Rehearsal: run-throughs in which the sets, lights, props, and sound are integrated into the action of the play.

Thrust Stage: a stage projecting into, and surround on three sides, by the audience.

Tormentor: the vertical flats that form the side elements of the false proscenium.

Trap: a covered hole in the stage that allows access from below.

Traveler: any drapery that moves or opens horizontally; generally, travelers are composed of two sections of stage drapes covering the full width of the proscenium; the sections split in the middle, and each section retracts in an off-stage direction.

Truss: an engineered beam in which a downward force at any point on its top will be distributed over its full width by a series of interlocking triangles that change the downward force into a horizontal force.

Unit Set: a single set in which all of the play's locations are always visible and the audience's attention is usually shifted by alternately lighting various parts of the set.

Upstage: that portion of the acting area furthest from the audience.

Theatre Glossary of Terms

Valance: a horizontal arrangement at the top of a drapery arrangement that covers the curtain rod.

Void: an unfilled, empty space.

Wagon: a low platform on casters.

Walk Through: a rehearsal where the cast will go through all of the moves, entrances and exits in a production.

Wings: (1) the off stage space adjacent to the stage in a proscenium arch theater. (2) tall cloth-covered frames or narrow unframed drops that are placed on either side of the stage, parallel to the proscenium arch, to prevent the audience from seeing back stage.

Work Light: a lighting fixture hung over the stage to facilitate work.

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