

Glossary of Theatrical Terms

Backstage In proscenium theatres, the area behind the proscenium arch. The term also refers to such areas in non-proscenium theatres and to any part of the stage not in the acting area during a performance.

Blackout A total, sometimes sudden, extinguishing of the stage lights, often at the end of a scene or act.

Blocking The process of roughing out the moves to be made by the actors. Also Grouping.

Board Lighting or audio control panel. (UK) Also Desk.

Book 1) Noun - Alternative term for the scripts.

Call 1) A notification of a working session e.g. rehearsal call. (UK) 2) A request for an actor to come to the stage as his entrance is imminent, formerly by call boy, now by loudspeaker system in the dressing rooms. (UK) 3) An acknowledgment of applause .e.g. Curtain Call. (UK)

Choreographer Designs and creates the dance elements and arrangements for a show.

Chorus Set of performers who speak, sing and/or dance as a group rather than individually.

Crew Loose term covering all those who work on a show backstage.

Crossover 1) The device on a sound system that routes the sound of the correct pitch to the correct part of the loudspeaker. 2) The space behind the stage setting or below the stage through which actors can get from one side of the stage to the other out of view of the audience.

Curtain 1) The drapery which hides the stage from the audience. See House Curtain. 2) The action of the House Curtain coming down at the end of an Act or the play. 3) The last piece of action on the stage before the House Curtain comes down.

Downstage The part of the stage closest to the audience. Abbrev. D/S.

Dress (Costume) Parade Prior to the first stage dress rehearsal the actors put on each of their costumes in sequence so that the director and designer can check the state of preparedness of the wardrobe. (US)

Dress Rehearsal Also known simply as the 'dress', the final rehearsal before the performance. The actors are in costume and all technical problems should have been sorted out.

Ensemble Acting Actors working as a group on stage rather than individual characters.

Entrance 1) Place on a set through which the actor may appear. 2) Point in the script at which an actor appears on stage.

Exit 1) The process of leaving the stage. 2) Point in the script at which an actor leaves the stage.

Forestage The area in front of the house curtain in a proscenium arch theatre.

Green Room Room adjacent to the stage (.i.e. the Green) for the actors to meet and relax. One explanation for 'green' is that in medieval days, when strolling players gave performances on the village green (hence 'Green'), a tent would be set-up for them to change costumes in (hence 'Green Room'). Perhaps the best known Green Room is at Drury Lane Theatre in London, and it is possible that it was once draped or painted in green, and this is the origin. Another possible theory is because of the Green Baize as described above. Green, the colour, is also known to be psychologically soothing.

Libretto The part of a musical score containing the sung and spoken words.

Marking 1) Indicating the position of scenery or props on the stage floor, usually with different colour tapes to avoid confusion. Also spiking. 2) In singing, a means of using the voice with reduced volume and without vocalising extremes of register.

Offstage Backstage area outside the performance area.

Onstage 1) Inside the acting area. 2) Towards the centre line.

Orchestra Pit The sunken area in front of the stage where the orchestra play during a performance. Also The Pit.

Overture The music which begins a performance.

Piano Rehearsal Rehearsal for a musical show where the music is provided only by a pianist, to save calling the orchestra and incurring the additional cost.

Preset 1) Used to describe any article placed in its working area before the performance. 2) A basic lighting state that the audience sees before the action starts.

Principals The actors in a show with the lead or speaking roles.

Rehearsal The learning of the show by the cast and crew before public performance.

Run 1) A sequence of performances of the same show. 2) Horizontal width of a step. 3) See Run Through.

Run Through A rehearsal at which all the elements of the production are put together in their correct sequence. Sometimes shortened to 'Run'.

Scene 1) A stage setting. 2) The blocks or parts into which a play is divided. 3) A particular setting of stage lighting that can be reproduced on demand. Also State.

Script The text of the show, also containing information about settings, characters, costumes etc. to aid the cast and crew.

Set Dressing 1) The process of putting all sets, props and so on in their correct positions on the stage. 2) Props used to create atmosphere rather than having a function.

Set Piece A piece of scenery which stands alone.

Stage 1) The part of the theatre on which the actor performs. 2) The acting profession - an actor is said to be 'On The Stage'.

Stage Directions Directions in the script about how the playwright intends actions or arrangements to be carried out.

Stage Left Abbrev. to SL. The left side of the stage as viewed by the cast facing the audience. Also Prompt Side, Camera Right.

Stage Right Abbrev. to SR. The right hand stage as viewed by the cast facing the audience. Also Opposite Prompt, Camera Left.

Technical Rehearsal Abbrev. to Tech. A rehearsal at which all of the technical elements are rehearsed and integrated into the show.

Upstage Abbrev. to US. The part of the stage furthest away from the audience.

Walk Through Rehearsals at which the actors go through entrances, moves and exits to make clear any changes or alterations that made be necessary.

Wings The sides of the stage concealed from the audiences' view.