



GLOSSARY OF THEATRE TERMS

There's a lot of strange words and terminology that gets used in the theatre, and it's helpful to know what at least some of it means when putting on a production. Here's a (by no means complete) A-Z glossary of theatre terms, borrowed and adapted from TheatreCrafts.com (a lot of these might be slightly different depending on where in the world you're working!):

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A

ACT

- 1) Subdivision between sections of a play. A short play is a 'One-Act-er', a play with one interval has two Acts etc. Acts are subdivided further into Scenes.
- 2) The thing Actors do.

ACT CHANGE

A change of either scenery, lighting, costume, props or other technical elements between acts of a play or musical. Theatres with little backstage space may have to reconfigure scenery stored offstage during the interval so that the next act runs smoothly.

ACTING AREA

That area within the performance space within which the actor may move in full view of the audience. Commonly known as the **playing area** or **playing space**.

This term is also used to describe the smaller subdivisions of the main stage area for various purposes such as lighting or blocking (e.g. 'The stage is split into 6 acting areas, 3 downstage and 3 upstage').

An **Acting Area Rehearsal** (also known as a Blocking Rehearsal) involves the actors running through their moves around the set, and less focus on the quality of the characterisation.

ACTOR

Person whose role is to play a character.

AD LIB

From Latin *Ad libitum* meaning "at one's pleasure".

The presence of mind by an actor to improvise when;

- 1) another actor fails to enter on cue
- 2) the normal progress of the play is disturbed
- 3) lines are forgotten
- 4) It may also be a bad habit developed by some actors whereby unnecessary "gags" are introduced into the dialogue.

ARIA

A solo performance in an opera used to highlight the emotional state of the main character(s).

ASIDE

Lines spoken by an actor to the audience and not supposed to be overheard by other characters on-stage.

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

Usually shortened to ASM, the assistant stage manager is typically the most junior member of the Stage Management team, and is often in charge of sourcing and running Properties during the run of a show. They are also a member of the stage 'crew'.

The ASM is typically responsible for setting props used during the show, as well as carrying out a pre-show check list to ensure all props are in the correct place and that all furniture used on stage is correctly placed for the start of the show.

An ASM may also have a small acting role in some performances (they are then known as an Acting ASM). See also STAGE MANAGER and DSM.

AUDIO DESCRIPTION

A service greatly appreciated by those with impaired vision, Audio Description involves a describer sitting at the rear of the auditorium (in the booth if there is room) providing a narration describing the action on stage. The skill is in not getting in the way of the on stage dialogue, sound effects or other audible movements on stage, but filling in where vision would help with the plot.

AUDITION

Process where the director or casting director of a production asks actors / performers to show them what they can do. Sometimes very nerve-wracking, but auditions can be a fairly painless process if handled properly. Performers are often asked to memorise a monologue from a play they like to perform for the director. Books full of suggested monologues are available. You may be asked to do a 'Cold Reading' which tests your own response to a piece of text you've not prepared. Some audition processes have pages of text available outside the audition room for actors to familiarise themselves with before the audition.

B

BACK WALL

The rear wall of the stage (part of the building which cannot be moved!). Sometimes a blank brick wall (often painted black) is a good backing to a show, where theatrical masking is not part of the design aesthetic. Such 'bare walls' productions may also have completely exposed lighting rigs, and no traditional masking, even exposing the exit doors from the stage.

For technical reasons, some shows have a constructed back wall which looks like it's the back wall of the theatre, but actually isn't (e.g. Billy Elliot).

BAR

The horizontal metal (steel or alloy) tube (usually 48mm in external diameter, but can be up to 60mm) hung from flying lines (or forming part of a grid) from which lighting equipment and scenery etc. may be suspended. When vertical, known as a BOOM.

Many lighting bars are internally wired, featuring cabling inside the bar and sockets mounted at regular intervals along the bar, and a connection box at one end to enable the bar to be plugged into dimmers. Lighting bars nowadays need 'hot power' sockets and DMX outlets, as well as the more usual dimmer output sockets into which traditional theatre lighting equipment is connected.

BASTARD PROMPT CORNER

Used when the Prompt Corner is Stage Right instead of the usual Stage Left. This may be for architectural reasons in a theatre with no wing space Stage Left, or may be because of the layout of set pieces which

obscure a view from Stage Left, or because the band is on Stage Left and the Deputy Stage Manager can't hear themselves cueing!

BASTARD SIDE (B.S.)

Terminology used to describe Stage Right when there is a Bastard Prompt. Stage Left is then known as Opposite Bastard (O.B.)

BEAT

- 1) A deliberate pause for dramatic / comic effect.
- 2) A measure of time when cueing (e.g. "The LX cue needs to go four beats after the door is closed" or "Leave it a beat after the blackout, then play the sound cue").
- 3) A unit of action, as suggested by Stanislavski to help actors determine the through-line of a role.

BEGINNERS

A call given by Stage Management to bring those actors who appear in the first part of a play to the stage. e.g. "Act One Beginners to the stage, please". The actors are then called by name.

A similar call is given after the interval (e.g. "Act Two Beginners to the stage please").

The call is usually given 5 minutes before the advertised performance start time, but this may vary depending on how long the actors take to get into position.

See also HALF, QUARTER.

BELOW

An actor move downstage of an object (or other actor) (e.g. "Clive crosses below the chair and exits downstage left").

BELTPACK

1) Part of the communication ('cans' or 'comms') system in a theatre, the Beltpack contains the controls and circuitry to drive the HEADSET worn by crew members. Each beltpack connects into the main headset station via cabling or wirelessly.

See also CANS.

2) The transmitter component of a wireless headset or lapel microphone that can clip onto a person's belt, or sit within a pocket or specially-designed waistbelt.

BIBLE

Usually refers to the PROMPT BOOK - this document contains the full script of the show and all cues, and is used by the DSM to call the show.

BIO BOX

See 'Control Room'.

BLACK BOX

A kind of flexible small studio theatre where the audience and actors are in the same room, surrounded by black tabs (curtains). Doesn't necessarily describe the audience layout, which can be easily reconfigured. The stage can be defined by a change of flooring (e.g. black dance floor), or a raised platform. If actors leave the stage, they do so through gaps in the curtains.

A black box type of venue is easy to set up in non-theatre spaces, and can be found occupying hundreds of spaces around cities such as Edinburgh during their Fringe Festivals.

BLACKOUT

1) Complete absence of stage lighting. Blue working lights backstage should remain on and are not usually under the control of the board, except during a Dead Blackout (DBO), when there is no onstage light. Exit signs and other emergency lighting must remain on at all times.

2) The act of turning off (or fading out) stage lighting (e.g. "This is where we go to blackout")

3) Blackout Check takes place in some multi-purpose venues to ensure that window curtains or blinds are

closed and that there is no stray light either from adjacent rooms or the outside world, before the audience is admitted.

BLACKS

- 1) Black clothing worn by stage management during productions.
- 2) Any black drapes or tabs, permanently or temporarily rigged. Used for masking offstage and technical areas.

Running Blacks are full stage width black tabs with a split half way, which are usually fitted to a tab track so that they can be opened and closed horizontally AND flown in and out. The tab track control can either be operated from stage level or from a fly floor (when they're flown out).

Hard Blacks are black-covered scenic flats used as masking.

A **Full Stage Black** is a black cloth which can be flown in and is the full width of the stage. This is used to go upstage of a gauze to make transformation scenes work effectively, or can be used as a neutral backing for carefully lit scenes downstage.

Blacks flown vertically at the edge of the stage are known as **LEGS**.

Blacks across the top of the stage are **BORDERS**.

BLOCKING

The process of arranging moves to be made by the actors during the play, recorded by stage management in the prompt script. Positions at the start of scenes are noted, as are all movements around the stage (using terms such as 'Gardener X DSL' meaning the Gardener crosses to downstage left.) It must be described in minute detail, but simple enough to enable anyone to read and understand it. As well as being used to 'run the show' the prompt book is also used for the rehearsal of the understudies.

Stages which are not end-on must often use alternative notation, sometimes based on the clock face or the points of a compass.

BLUES

Blue lights used backstage in a performance situation. See also working lights.

BOARDS

Slang term for the stage floor. (e.g. "How long have you been treading the boards?").

BOOK

- 1) See PROMPT BOOK.
- 2) The script of the show. (e.g. Actors need to be off book in 2 weeks)
- 3) The action of opening or closing a BOOK FLAT.
- 4) The non-sung text of a musical is known as the Book. The sung text is called the Libretto.

BOOK COVER

A member of the stage management team who takes over the duties of the DSM on Book (calling cues, giving calls etc.) in the event that the DSM is not available or is on leave.

BOUNCE

- 1) Diffuse light that has been reflected from the stage, walls, cyclorama etc.
- 2) 'Bounce' is sometimes used for a flat (non-curved) cyclorama. Strictly, a bounce is a white or light blue cloth onto which light is bounced to backlight another cloth. A bounce doesn't need to be seamless, whereas a cyclorama should be.
- 3) Film/TV: A large piece of white material / board which is used to bounce and diffuse light towards actors on a film/tv set.
- 4) Describes the fast in/out movement of 'bouncing' flown house tabs, traditionally used during curtain calls. This can also apply to the fast blackout/lights up cues that happen at curtain calls. When taking curtain calls, the Stage Manager would instruct the head flyman 'On the Bounce Please' for all calls prior to the final call, which was always 'Hand over Hand', i.e. slowly.
- 5) This facility was available on many multitrack tape machines. Describes the mixing down of multiple sounds from different tracks onto one track, hence freeing up the other tracks to be re-used. It allowed many sounds

to be recorded onto one tape. The term now refers to the digital equivalent - taking multiple audio tracks and mixing them together at their set levels onto a single (pair of) tracks.

BRAKE

- 1) Fitted to some castors (wheels) mounted under stage trucks (rolling platforms) to hold them in place.
- 2) A separate item retro-fitted to a wheeled platform or piece of scenery which holds it in place, usually by lifting it off the stage slightly to stop the wheel contacting the stage.

BREAK A LEG

A superstitious and widely accepted alternative to 'Good Luck' (which is considered bad luck).

BREAKAWAY

Prop or item of furniture designed to break/shatter with impact. Breakaway furniture and some props are usually capable of restoration to be 'broken' again.

BREAKING CHARACTER

When an actor comes out of character and addresses the audience directly, or behaves in a way which is not appropriate for their character. This may be as a response to a problem / danger on stage, or due to a mistake by another actor.

BRICOLAGE

A piece of art (or a set design or prop) made from a variety of otherwise unrelated items.

BRIDGE

- 1) A walkway, giving access to technical and service areas above the stage or auditorium, or linking fly-floors. See also CATWALK.

BRIEFING

A meeting to communicate information or instructions about a project. The instructions / information itself is sometimes known as the brief.

BUMP IN

The process of bringing all show-specific items (such as set, equipment, costumes, etc.) into the theatre from storage or transport and beginning setup.

BUMP OUT

Moving an entire production out of the venue, and back into storage or into transport. Usually preceded by the strike (where the set is disassembled back into component parts).

C

CABLE

Wiring, temporarily rigged, to carry electrical current. Depending on the size of the cable (current carrying capacity), cables are used to supply individual lanterns, whole dimmer racks, or carry signals from a microphone etc.

CALL

- 1) A notification of a working session (eg a Rehearsal Call, Band Call, Photo Call, Focus Call). A rehearsal call for the next day / week used to be posted on a Call Sheet on the stage door noticeboard, but is now often an online document, updated by the stage management team. A 'Company Call' means the full cast and crew are called for the rehearsal.

- 2) The period of time to which the above call refers. (eg "Your call for tomorrow night's show is 6.55pm")
- 3) A request for an actor to come to the stage because an entrance is imminent (these are courtesy calls and should not be relied on by actors - eg "This is your call for the finale Mr Smith and Miss Jones")
- 4) An acknowledgement of applause (eg Curtain Call)
- 5) The DSM on the book is said to be "calling the cues".
- 7) The Final Call is also known as The Half - 35 minutes before the performance starts, and the latest time when the cast and crew should be in the theatre.

CALL BOARD

A noticeboard backstage in the theatre which is used to post the actor call times for the next rehearsal period.

CALL OUT

A notice sent to a mailing list or posted on social media, looking for cast, crew or helpers for a project.

CALLBACKS

Following an audition, the director may ask to see a shortlist of actors again - they are called back for an additional audition to enable the director to make her/his decision.

CALLING THE SHOW

The process of giving verbal cues to the lighting, sound, fly operators and stage crew during the performance. Usually done from the prompt corner by the DSM on the book or Stage Manager over cans.

Being 'on the book' involves verbally giving the 'GO' cues to all technical departments (lighting, sound, flies, automation, av etc). The cues are written in the prompt script. A 'STANDBY' cue is given first, so that the operators are ready for the actual cue.

CALLS

Often regarded as a courtesy to the Artist, they are given by the Stage Management on a 'count back' from the 'Beginners Call'. Prior to 'Beginners' the stage is the domain of the stage crew for setting up etc. After 'Beginners', the stage is the actors domain. On a musical, the Act 1 call is for 'Overture & Beginners', and the Act 2 call is for 'Entr'acte & Beginners'. On a production with a large orchestra, the first 'Members of the Orchestra' Call is for the 'Strings' sections to tune up together, the second call is for the remainder of the orchestra to join them in the pit. The 'leader' if not seated already is then welcomed into the pit followed by 'The Maestro' or 'MD' (depending on his/her status in the music world). The Cue for the Overture to commence is given from the corner, by means of a cue light.

The Half (hour), the quarter (hour), five minutes as well as (Overture) Beginners, are all given five minutes earlier than the actual call as named.

CAMEO

An appearance in a small role in a play, television programme or film by a well-known performer. Celebrities sometimes take cameo roles in projects for their friends, or as a mark of respect to the creative team.

CANS

1) Headset earpiece, microphone and beltpack used for communication and co-ordination of technical departments during a performance. (e.g. "Electrics on cans", "Going off cans", "Quiet on cans!").

As many of the technical operators are tied to expensive pieces of equipment, headsets are often wired. However, stage management (and any other crew who move around) often wear wireless versions, often known as radio cans. There are interfaces between wired and wireless versions enabling both to be part of the same system.

Many headset systems have multiple channels, enabling different sub-groups to communicate separately. Also called 'Comms' short for Communications - the same phrases can be used (e.g. 'LX Off Comms' when leaving the operating position).

- 2) Any headphones.
- 3) Short for PARCANS.

CAST

The members of the acting company. The Cast List contains the names of the actors and the characters they'll be playing.

Dramatis Personae is a Latin term for a list of the characters in a play.

CATWALK

An access walkway to equipment. Unlike a BRIDGE, not necessarily across a void.

CENTRE CENTRE

The position in the centre of the stage space. Downstage Centre (DSC) is the position at the front of the stage, Upstage Centre (USC), and Centre Stage (CS) or CENTRE CENTRE is the centre. House Centre is the centre line of the auditorium (which is usually the same as that of the stage).

CENTRE LINE

Imaginary line running down the stage through the exact centre of the proscenium opening. Marked as CL on stage plans. Normally marked on the stage floor and used as a reference when marking out or assembling a set. A chalked snap line can be used to mark the line in the rehearsal room and on stage.

House Centre / House Center is the centre line of the auditorium (which is usually the same as that of the stage).

See also SETTING LINE.

CENTRE STAGE

The middle portion of the stage - has good sightlines to all seats of the auditorium.

Also known as MID STAGE.

CHAPERONE

Adult who takes responsibility for a group of young people while they're away from their parents. A legal requirement when working with children (and a relief for the stage management team!)

CHARACTER TRAIT

Each of the aspects of behaviour and personality which make up the character portrayed by an actor.

CHEAT

An actor movement (or lighting change) which happens without the audience being aware of it, or a change to improve the situation even though it may not be totally natural (e.g. "CHEAT OUT").

CHEAT OUT

An actor facing too far upstage (so that he/she is invisible to the audience) may be requested by the director to "cheat out", and turn downstage slightly, to improve audience sightlines. "Out" in this sense means towards the audience, and rather than being a derogatory term, "cheat" simply means to improve the situation (sightline in this case) without anyone realising it's not a totally natural position.

CHOIR

A group of vocal performers who perform songs, and remain relatively static whilst doing so.

The vocal ranges of the performers are categorised in terms of the pitches of their voices:

Soprano [high female or boys voice]

Alto [low female or boys voice]

Tenor [high adult male voice]

Bass [low adult male voice]

CHOOKAS

Australian equivalent to 'Break a Leg'

CLEARANCE

Message passed to Stage Management from the Front of House Manager that the house is ready for the performance to begin. (ie everyone is in their correct seat and there are no coach parties coming through the doors). Announced as 'We have Front of House Clearance'.

CLEAR / GIVING CLEAR

(Stage Management) A crew member (often an ASM) gives a 'clear' to the DSM on the book to let them know a particular flying piece is safe to fly, or a particular item of scenery has passed a danger point.

CLOSED POSITION

An actor who is turned away from the audience is said to be in a 'closed position'. See also OPEN POSITION.

CLOSING NIGHT

The final performance of a show in front of a paying audience.

Although some amateur groups enjoy playing pranks on each other on the last night, this should not happen in professional theatre - audiences that have paid for the performance should be given the same performance each time, and not run the risk of the performance falling apart because the cast are making each other laugh. A tightly rehearsed performance, involving moving scenery, flying items, complex choreography, rehearsed stage combat etc risks hurting or injuring performers (or worse) if the rehearsed sequences are deviated from.

CLOTH

A piece of scenic canvas, painted or plain, that is flown or fixed to hang in a vertical position. It is suspended from a bar or batten above the stage and can usually be flown up or down (out or in, in theatre terminology) to bring it into view of the audience.

A **Backcloth** (or Backdrop) hangs at the rear of a scene.

A **Floorcloth** is a painted canvas sheet placed on the stage floor to mark out the acting area, or to achieve a particular effect.

A **Frontcloth** hangs well downstage, often to hide a scene change taking place behind.

Cut cloths have cut-away open areas and are normally used as a series, painted in perspective.

A **Star Cloth** (also Star Drop or Starcloth) (usually black) has a large number of small low-voltage lamps sewn or pinned through it which gives a magical starry sky effect. (See also FIBRE OPTICS).

CLOVE HITCH

Invaluable hitch that every technician should know

COME DOWN

The time the show finishes (e.g. 'What time does the show come down this evening?') This relates to the curtain coming down at the end of the show. See also GO UP.

COMING IN

Warning used when flying scenery or lighting bars (electrics).

e.g. "First Electric Coming In", "Heads on Stage - LX3 coming in!" etc.

See GOING OUT, FLYING.

COMP

Short for Complimentary ticket. Free of charge ticket issued to company members or special guests. Each venue has their own policy about numbers of comps that cast / crew may be entitled to. There are often House Comps, which are good seats not sold to the public until others are sold out, which are used for VIP guests.

In the past it had to be initialled by the General/House/Company Manager to ensure its authority, and a record kept by the Box Office Manager.

COMPANY

The cast, crew and other staff associated with a show.

CONTACT SHEET

A list of names and contact details (phone numbers, addresses) for cast and crew.

CONTINGENCY

An alternative plan of action if a piece of technology fails to operate. Large-scale productions have to continue wherever possible to avoid having to give the audience refunds. So if a small piece of the set fails to work or gets stuck (particularly automated scenery) the cast and crew will have rehearsed an alternative choreography to work around it while the crew repair it. For example in *The Lord of the Rings The Musical* in London, when the revolving stage with multiple lifts had a safety sensor triggered, the automation went into 'E-Stop' mode, a thunderclap sound effect was triggered, the stage lifts went to a flat floor (once it had been found safe to do so) and the actors for the next scene were rushed into new positions, while the actors on stage immediately adopted a new choreography.

It's vital that contingencies are worked out in advance so that as soon as something goes wrong, the show can continue, and the audience will hopefully be unaware.

CONTROL ROOM

Room at the rear of the auditorium (in a proscenium theatre) where lighting and sometimes sound is operated from. Known in the US as the BOOTH, also known as the BIO BOX. The stage manager calling the cues is very often at the side of the stage (traditionally stage left) but in some venues they may be in the control room also. The control room is usually soundproofed from the auditorium so that communications between operators cannot be heard by the audience. A large viewing window is obviously essential, as is a show relay system so that the performance can be heard by the operators. Obviously if sound is being mixed, the operator should be able to hear the same as the audience, so some control rooms have sliding or removable windows, or a completely separate room for sound mixing. Where possible, the sound desk is moved into the auditorium so that the operator can hear the same as the audience.

Also known as the BIO BOX.

COSTUME PARADE

Review by director/designer/wardrobe staff of all costumes worn by cast and paraded under stage lighting. Any defects, misfits etc. are noted or corrected before the first Dress Rehearsal.

COUNTERWEIGHT

A standard weight (60 or 30 lb.) used in a counterweight flying system.

COUNTERWEIGHT SYSTEM

Method of flying scenery which uses a cradle containing weights to counterbalance the weight of flown scenery.

CRADLE

Metal frame in which counterweights are carried in a flying system.

CREATIVE TEAM

Informal (and disputed) term for the team of production and design staff around the Director (as opposed to CAST and PRODUCTION TEAM). The Creatives list consists of the Director (and Co-Directors), Composer & Author (if it's a new work), Designers (Set, Lighting, Costume, Sound etc.), Stage Manager, Choreographer, Dramaturg etc.

The stage management team, Production Manager, set-building team etc are part of the Production Team. However, Production Team are often creative and Creative Team are often technical!

CREW

House Crew: Team of technicians local to a venue, who are employed to work on a touring show / event when it arrives at their venue.

Stage Crew: Members of the stage management team who are based on the stage and help with scene changes, props and furniture. Stage Crew (also known as Stagehands) are often employed on a casual basis for

a specific production, and may not be part of the theatre's full-time staff. They also may be touring with a particular production.

CROSS

(Blocking) An actor move from one side of the stage to the other (or from one area to another).

A Counter-Cross is a move made by another actor to even out the stage picture.

A Straight Cross is a move directly across the stage in a straight line.

CROSS FADE / CROSSFADE

Bringing a new lighting state up whilst bringing the previous one down, so that the new one completely replaces the old one. Also applies to sound effects / music. Sometimes abbreviated to Xfade or XF.

A DIPLESS CROSSFADE occurs when the lighting doesn't dip significantly between states, which results in a more subtle transition.

CROSSOVER

1) A route leading from one side of the stage to the other, out of the audiences view.

2) An electronic filter in a sound system that routes sound of the correct frequency to the correct part of the speaker system. Different speakers handle high frequencies (tweeters) and low frequencies (woofers).

Sometimes known as a crossover network.

An active crossover splits the signal from the mixing desk into high, mid and low frequencies which are then sent to three separate amplifiers.

CUE

1) The command given to technical departments to carry out a particular operation. E.g. Lighting Cue, Fly Cue or Sound Cue. Normally given by stage management, but may be taken directly from the action (i.e. a Visual Cue).

Departments are often abbreviated: Lighting is LX, Sound is SD (or sometimes SX, but this is too similar to LX, so SD should be used).

2) Any signal (spoken line, action or count) that indicates another action should follow (i.e. the actors' cue to enter is when the Maid says "I hear someone coming! Quick - Hide!" - this is known as a **Cue Line**.

Cues given verbally may be known as 'audible cues', although as this is the normal type of cues, they're usually just called 'Cues'. Cues that technical operators take themselves, without an audible cue, are known as Visual Cues.

CUE LIGHT

System for giving technical staff and actors silent cues by light. Cue lights ensure greater precision when visibility or audibility of actors is limited. Sometimes used for cueing actors onto the set. For technical cues, lights are normally now used just as a backup to cues given over the headset system. In the UK, a flashing Red light means stand-by or warn, green light means go.

CUE LIST

A list of sound, lighting, automation, scene change, video, followspot (etc) cues in order of their appearance in the show. Each cue is given a unique number, and the list includes a brief description of what it does (e.g. for Lighting: Blackout, Dim Downstage Wash, Red Spot Upstage; for Sound: Preshow Music, Fade Out, Snap Music to Quiet etc.)

Cue is often abbreviated to 'Q'.

CUE SHEET

Also known as a Plot Sheet.

A tabulated list of actions that must be taken by a technical department at a particular point in the show. Cues are numbered and called by the DSM on the book from the prompt script.

CUE TO CUE

(also known as 'Topping and Tailing')

Cutting out action and dialogue between cues during a technical rehearsal, to save time. (e.g. "OK, can I stop

you there - we'll now jump to the end of this scene. We'll pick it up from Simon's line "And from then on it was all downhill" in a moment. OK - we're all set - when you're ready please.")

CUEING

There is a standard sequence for giving verbal cues:

Stand-by 'Sound Cue 19' (Stand-by first)

'Sound Cue 19 **Go**' (Go last).

CURTAIN CALL

At the end of a performance, the acknowledgement of applause by actors - the bows.

CURTAIN DOWN

An announcement by stage management that the performance has ended (or there is an interval).

For example 'Curtain Down on Act One'.

Equivalent to LIGHTS DOWN.

See also CURTAIN UP / LIGHTS UP.

CURTAIN LINE

1) Imaginary line across the performance space marking the point where the front tabs / curtain is flown. See also SETTING LINE, CENTRE LINE.

2) The final spoken line of the play, just before the curtain falls.

CURTAIN SPEECH

Introduction given by director or theatre owner (etc.) from the stage just before the performance starts. Often replaced with a recorded announcement 'Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen and welcome to the (insert name) Theatre. May I remind you to please switch off mobile phones and pagers as they can prove distracting to other members of the audience and the performers. Flash photography is also not permitted. We hope you enjoy the show!'.

CURTAIN UP

Call made by Stage Management to the rear of house PA system to say that the performance has started. (e.g. "Curtain Up on Act One"). An alternative call is "Lights Up on Act One".

CUT CLOTH

See CLOTH.

CUT-OUT

See PROFILE.

CYCLORAMA

Usually shortened to just **cyc** (pronounced sike). The Cyclorama is a plain cloth or plastered wall filling the rear of the stage or TV studio. Often used as a sky backing to a traditional set, or as the main backing for a dance piece etc. The term is often loosely applied to a white cloth, or any flattage at the rear of the stage.

D

DE-RIG

The process of removing lanterns & cabling from flying bars or grid - returning the venue to it's normal state, or as preparation for the next production.

See also STRIKE and GET-OUT.

DEAD

- 1) A pre-plotted height for a piece of scenery or lighting bar - 'that bar's on its dead'. The positional indicators on the rope (either PVC tape, or more traditionally cotton tape passed through the strands of the rope) are called DEADS. Sometimes flying pieces are given a number of extra deads, that may be colour coded, in addition to the 'in dead' (lower) and 'out dead' (higher - out of view).
- 2) Scenery or equipment not needed for current production - 'that table's dead'.
- 3) An electric circuit that has been switched off or has failed - 'the circuit's dead, you can change the lamp now'

DEAD MAN

Also known as DEAD MAN'S SWITCH (DMS). This is a handle that has to be squeezed by a person in order for a piece of machinery or equipment to operate to take place. If for any reason the relevant person is not in position, the system does not allow the machinery or equipment to run.

DEATH BY CUES

A colloquial phrase when the speaker believes that there are a lot of unnecessary cues going on. It's the job of the lighting or sound designers to ensure the show can be run reliably every night, in discussion with stage management. If there are lots of cues running in a short period of time, it may be better to simplify them, or make them timed auto-follows, or run them from timecode, to avoid 'death by cues'.

DECK

- 1) Stage/Rostrum Floor (e.g. "Fly that flat in to the deck")
- 2) Tape deck/Record deck.
- 3) A steel-framed platform with a wooden top used with replaceable scaffold legs

DEPUTY STAGE MANAGER (DSM)

Usually shortened to DSM, this is a member of the Stage Management team. The DSM is often "on book" - that is, they are in charge of calling all of the technical and actor cues during the show, usually using a headset communications system and/or a system of cue lights. The DSM is often also in rehearsal working with the director to prepare the prompt book.

See also PROMPT BOOK, STAGE MANAGER.

DOLLY

- 1) A small wheeled platform used to move heavy items. (E.g. a piano dolly).

DOUBLE

A member of the cast or crew who appears on stage in place of the leading actor for a particular moment or sequence, either because the lead actor is doing a costume-change, or is in a different part of the venue at the time. A double is also used for some illusion sequences where the lead actor 'magically' appears to have moved an impossible distance in a short space of time.

See also Stunt Performer.

DOUBLE HANDLING

Moving scenery and other equipment more than necessary because it wasn't properly sorted or positioned in the first place.

DOWNSTAGE

- 1) The part of the stage nearest to the audience. It's called Downstage because it's the lowest part of a raked stage. Downstage Left (DSL), Downstage Centre (DSC) and Downstage Right (DSR) are commonly used for the areas towards the front of the stage. [See Diagram]
- 2) A movement towards the audience (in a proscenium theatre).

DOWNSTAGE TURN

A deliberate movement downstage (towards the audience) by one actor in conversation with others. This brings them closer to the audience and directs the audience to pay more attention to them.

DRAMATIC PAUSE

A brief pause (a few beats) in an actors' delivery of a line to emphasise a moment or to heighten anticipation. It's important that the DSM does not shout out the next line, while the lead actor is pausing dramatically.

DRAMATIC TIME

This refers to the compressed timescale that occurs within a play, when compared to the actual running time of the show. A 2 to 3 hour timeslot can cover the same amount of dramatic time (when the action of the play occurs in 2 to 3 hours) or it can cover a hundred years (or anywhere in between).

DRAPES

Stage Curtains. See also TABS.

DRESS REHEARSAL

A full rehearsal, with all technical and creative elements brought together. The performance as it will be 'on the night'.

DRESSING (the set)

Decorative props (some practical) and furnishings added to a stage setting are known as Set Dressing.

DROP

1) See CLOTH.

2) A mechanism for dropping items from the fly tower onto the stage (e.g. Petal Drop, Leaf Drop etc.) Normally consists of a bag or box with a lid / section which can be released either by removing a pin via a control line (piece of string) or electrically using a solenoid (electromagnet).

DROP BAG / DROP BOX

Drop Box: A wooden box with a lid which can be opened remotely, which is used to drop (lightweight) objects (e.g. paper) onto the stage on a specific cue. The lid usually opens downwards, and can be secured by a hinge pin. The pin can be pulled out with a piece of string through a small loop or eye, which stops the pin being lost. An electric release can also be used, involving an electromagnetic device called a solenoid to either pull out the pin.

Drop Bag: A cloth bag made from an open-ended flap of cloth, with one side held by a pin hinge or solenoid, which can contain lightweight scraps of cloth, petals, leaves etc. which can be released and dropped on cue.

DRY RUN

A practice run, usually a Technical run without actors. Also known as a Dry Tech.

DRY TECH

See TECHNICAL REHEARSAL.

DS

Abbreviation for DOWNSTAGE.

DSC or DC

Short for DOWNSTAGE CENTRE - the prime location in the middle of the stage, nearest the audience.

DSOP

Abbreviation for **Downstage Opposite Prompt**. Refers to the area nearest the audience on stage right. (Prompt side or PS is stage left).

E

ENCORE

An extension of the performance due to audience demand. This usually applies to music concerts or stand-up comedy shows, where the performer will have an extra song or routine ready if there is a lot of applause. From the French which means "again" or "more".

END ON

Traditional audience seating layout where the audience is looking at the stage from the same direction. This seating layout is that of a Proscenium Arch theatre.

Also known as **Proscenium Staging**.

The end-on stage can be split into 9 areas: upstage right, upstage centre, upstage left, centre stage right, centre stage, centre stage left, downstage right, downstage centre, downstage left.

See also THRUST, IN THE ROUND, TRAVERSE.

ENTERTAINMENT TECHNOLOGY

Any technical or practical craft used in the creation of live events or experiences. As the definition of 'live events or experiences' includes music concerts, theatre, theme parks, visitor attractions, museums and sports events, the skills needed are very broad. It's not necessary for anyone to be highly skilled in all of the crafts, but an understanding of the whole picture is very helpful, and knowing when to call in a specialist (and where to find them) is vital.

The crafts involved in entertainment technology include, but are not limited to:

Lighting (stage lighting and architectural lighting)

Sound (live and recorded)

Video and Media (projection or display)

Scenic Construction and Automation

Show Control

Animatronics

Costume

Props and Masks

Make-Up and Prosthetics

ENTRACTE / ENTR'ACTE

An 'overture' to begin the second part or act of a performance. Often used now to describe any interval music.

ENTRANCE

1) A part of the set through which actors can walk onto the stage.

2) The act of an actor walking onto the stage (e.g. The entrance of the ghost is upstage left, The bishop enters downstage right).

EXEUNT

(Latin) Stage direction meaning 'they leave'. Used to indicate that more than one person leaves the stage. The direction for a single person is simply **Exit**.

EXIT

1) A part of the set through which actors can leave the stage.

2) The act of an actor walking off the stage (e.g. The fireman exits downstage right).

3) A stage direction making it clear when a character should leave the scene. One of the most memorable is from Shakespeare's *A Winter's Tale* '**Exit, pursued by a bear**'. The character being pursued is Antigonus, a lord of Sicilia, who has been ordered to abandon the baby Princess Perdita.

4) A route from the auditorium to the outside, for use during an emergency by the audience. Marked by an

illuminated EXIT SIGN. Exit signs must remain visible to the audience at all times, and local venue licencing laws will cover whether it must be illuminated at all times, and the size of the sign etc.

EXTRA

A member of the cast with no speaking role who provides background interest in a crowd scene. Term originally derived from the film industry.

F

FALSE PROSCENIUM

A temporary frame formed by scenic canvas or vertical flattage within the proscenium arch. Used to reduce the size of the opening when putting a small set onto a large stage. See PROSCENIUM ARCH.

FIGHT CALL

A warm-up and rehearsal of fight choreography held before each performance.

FIGHT DIRECTOR

Choreographer of fight scenes on stage. Works intensively with actors training them how to avoid hitting (and hurting) each other, how to use weapons safely etc. Fight directors are highly skilled and trained and should not be substituted for someone 'who once saw Gladiator' and thinks they can repeat it!!

FINALE

The last section of a variety / pantomime / musical performance, where spectacular effects, music or revelations are used to end the show 'with a bang' and make the audience applaud wildly. In a musical, this often involves a reprise of earlier music / songs.

FINDING YOUR LIGHT

Important skill for an actor - being able to feel the light on your face, to know when you are correctly standing in a spotlight or lit area, and when you are standing just out of it.

FIRE PROOFING

Treatment given to fabric, timber, drapes etc. to retard flammability. Many scenic materials require regular re-application of fire proofing treatment.

FLAME-RETARDANT

A treatment which can make props, costumes, drapes and any other porous materials suitable for use on stage by reducing the fire risk. An item treated with a flame retardant will limit or inhibit the spread of fire by not supporting combustion.

FLAT

A lightweight timber frame covered with scenic canvas, or plywood. Flats are used to provide a lightweight and easy to move and re-configure backdrop to a stage set. Flats sometimes have windows or doors built into them to provide extra flexibility, for use in realistic settings. Masking flats are used to hide areas the designer does not want the audience to see, or to provide actors with an exit, or somewhere to store props. A **soft flat** is covered with canvas, and a **hard flat** is covered with plywood.

FLOORPLAN

A scaled plan (overhead) view of the theatre stage area or of a set design, to enable all technical departments to ensure that everything will fit correctly into the space available. The floorplan shows all items standing on the stage floor and any permanent items which will affect the production, and the position of any flown

pieces. The set design floorplan enables the lighting designer to be clear about exact location of all items, and will have the walls of the stage drawn on it so that the stage management team and production manager can plan furniture and set moves offstage.

Venues often have a base plan showing proscenium, walls, seating etc on which individual set and lighting plans can be drawn.

FLYS

The flying system above the stage of the theatre, consisting of the FLY TOWER, FLY FLOORS, COUNTERWEIGHT systems, PULLEYS, LINES etc.

See FLY TOWER.

FLUFF

To hesitate - to nearly forget or fumble one's lines.

FLY

Verb - the action of lifting an item up (out) or down (in) when attached to the Flying system.

A FLY CUE is given by stage management to a flyman or fly operator to fly an item in or out. In the US this is known as a RAIL CUE.

A flying piece of scenery can be flown in (down) or out (up) on a particular cue given by the DSM to the fly operator on the fly floor above the stage.

FLY GALLERY

See FLY FLOOR.

FLY LINE

The cables and ropes which form part of the flying system.

FOLLOW-ON CUE / FOLLOW CUE

A cue that happens so soon after a previous cue, that it doesn't need to be cued separately.

The follow-on can be taken by the operator once a previous cue is complete, or a lighting or sound cue can be programmed to happen a specific time after a previous cue.

Fly follow-on cues are often taken as soon as the operator has completed a previous cue. Often abbreviated to F/O.

FOOT

1) The action of bracing the bottom of a ladder while a colleague climbs it (e.g. 'Can you foot this for me please? I'll only be a couple of minutes').

2) Holding the bottom edge of a flat with your foot while a colleague raises the top of it to a vertical position (known as 'footing a flat').

FOURTH WALL

The imaginary wall of a box set through which the audience see the stage. The fourth wall convention is an established convention of modern realistic theatre, where the actors carry out their actions unaware of the audience.

Where the cast addresses the audience directly, this is said to be 'Breaking the Fourth Wall'. See also ASIDE.

FRONT OF HOUSE CALLS

Announcements made by stage management or FOH staff calling the audience into the auditorium, or informing them when the performance begins. Calls are normally made at the Half (35 mins. before curtain up), the Quarter (20 mins before), the Five (10 mins), and calls normally accompanied by bar bells at 3, 2 and 1 minutes before the performance begins.

Good evening. Welcome to the ___ theatre. This evenings (afternoons) performance of ____ will begin at 7.30pm (2.30pm). There will be one interval of 15 minutes, and drinks can be ordered at the bar prior to the performance."

G

GAFFER TAPE / GAFFA TAPE

Ubiquitous sticky cloth tape. Most common widths are .5 inch for marking out areas and 2 inch (usually black) for everything else. Used for temporarily securing almost anything. Should not be used on coiled cables or equipment. Originally known as Gaffer's Tape, from the Gaffer (Master Electrician) on a film set.

GET-OFF TREADS

Sometimes shortened to GET-OFFS. A means for an actor to get off a rostrum, high level etc. out of view of the audience. Usually treads. Also known as ESCAPE STAIRS

GHOST LIGHT

A light left burning overnight on stage to keep friendly spirits illuminated and unfriendly spirits at bay. Also believed to keep the theatrical muse in a 'dark' theatre, and to stop people tripping over bits of scenery when they come into the theatre in the morning.

The ghost light consists of a vertical pole with a bare light bulb on it, and is placed on stage. Care should be taken that the cable doesn't create a trip hazard, and that the light bulb is protected with a metal cage.

The type of bulb is not critical - it should be chosen so that enough light is emitted to enable people on stage to see furniture / other items to stop them tripping over. Where possible an energy-saving lamp should be used.

GLOW TAPE

Luminous yellow self-adhesive tape used to mark floors so that positions can be found in blackouts. A staple is often used to secure the tape to a floor where it might move.

GO

The action word used by stage managers to cue other technical departments. The word GO shouldn't be spoken by others on headsets (especially when the crew is on STANDBY) as they may assume it's the stage manager speaking.

GO BUTTON

- 1) A button on a lighting or automation control console that executes a cue. The button is usually labelled GO.
- 2) A remote control for a computer running QLab software.

GO UP

- 1) The time the show starts (e.g. 'What time does the show go up this afternoon?') This relates to the curtain going up at the start of the show (even if the theatre doesn't have a curtain). See also COME DOWN, LIGHTS UP.
- 2) Some actors call forgetting lines 'going up' - they are said to 'go up on lines'.

GOD MIC

A PA system setup for a director to use in a large venue to talk to everyone on stage without shouting, during rehearsals and technical periods. Also used in some small or experimental spaces for tech crew to talk to actors or other crew, if no headset comms system or radios are available.

GOING DARK

Warning to people on stage that the lights are about to be switched off. Normally said during lighting plotting sessions or technical rehearsals. Obviously should not be done if there is any risky work on stage, or if anyone is up a ladder / using power tools / working on platforms / rehearsing choreography etc.

GOING OUT

Warning that a flying bar is about to be lifted.

e.g. "LX3 Going Out".

See also COMING IN, FLYING

GPO

General Power Outlet – a power point with a switch.

GRID

1) The support structure close to the top of the fly tower on which the pulleys of the flying system are supported. Constructed from metal or wooden beams.

2) Arrangement of scaffolding from which lanterns are hung in a performance space with no flying facilities.

Grid is short for GRIDIRON.

GRIDDED

Any flying piece raised as high as possible into the fly, i.e. to the limit of travel of the flying lines, is said to have been gridded.

H

HALF

1) The Half is a call given to the actors half an hour before they will be called to the stage for the beginning of a performance. It is given 35 minutes before the advertised time of commencement.

Subsequent calls given are the 'quarter' at 20 minutes, 'the five' at 10 minutes and 'beginners to the stage' at 5 minutes before curtain up. See also FRONT OF HOUSE CALLS, QUARTER.

Also known as Final Call.

See also BEGINNERS.

2) Lighting - half of full intensity, or 50% (e.g. 'Can I have channel 12 at half?'). This dates from a time when lighting was manually controlled, and accurate percentage-point levels were not achievable (or at least, not repeatable accurately). Nowadays, designers are more likely to ask for 'channel 12 at 50%' and then 'up a point' or 'down a point', meaning +/- 10%.

HEAD FLY

The head of the fly crew who are responsible for lifting scenery or other objects above the stage.

HEAD SOUND

The head of the sound department, which deals with any recorded music, sound effects, vocal reinforcement and music amplification required in the production.

HEADS ON STAGE!

A shouted warning (often just 'Heads!') for staff to be aware of activity above them. Also used when an object is being dropped from above.

HEADSET

1) General term for theatre communication equipment.

2) A headphone and microphone combination used in such communications systems with a beltpack.

See also CANS.

HERO PROP

The main, most detailed version of a prop, usually specially made for a film, TV or stage production. The hero will look best on camera, and will be able to carry out most of the specific mechanical functions required of it. There may be other versions of the prop, which could be designed to be thrown around safely, or used to hit

an actor (a stunt prop) or may be destroyed as part of the action. There will be multiple versions of the alternate props, but possibly only one hero prop.

HIT YOUR MARK

When an actor stands in the correct position (usually with regard to lighting) she/he is said to have **Hit the Mark**.

HOUSE

- 1) The audience (eg 'How big is the house tonight?')
- 2) The auditorium (eg 'The house is now open, please do not cross the stage')

HOUSE IS OPEN

Announcement made over backstage communication system to let cast and crew know that the auditorium is open to the audience and that if there is no curtain, they should stay off the stage.

It is good practice for no-one (crew, cast or management) to walk onto or off the stage while the house is open (unless it's part of the show of course!).

HOUSE LIGHTS

The auditorium lighting which is commonly faded out when the performance starts, and raised again at the end of the show, and during intervals. The House Lights need to be bright enough for the audience to find their seat, to read their programme, and find their ice-cream spoon, but should still set an atmosphere. As well as the functional house lights, if there's no house curtain, there may be a preset on stage, which helps to set the tone of the show, and to reveal part of the set that looks interesting. If there is a curtain, it will usually be cross-lit in a colour to make it look interesting.

I

IN THE ROUND

Theatre in the Round is a form of audience seating layout where the acting area is surrounded on all sides by seating. There are often a number of entrances through the seating. Special consideration needs to be given to onstage furniture and scenery as audience sightlines can easily be blocked.

Stage managers and directors often use the idea of a clock face to describe actor positions on stage (e.g. the aisle nearest the technical point is described as the 12 O'clock position, with other aisles described as 3, 6 and 9 O'clock.)

See also ARENA, THRUST, END ON, TRAVERSE.

INTERMISSION

See INTERVAL.

J

JULIET BALCONY

A high level platform in a theatre or on a stage set that would work for the balcony scene in Romeo and Juliet.

K

KILL

To switch off (a light/sound effect); to strike/remove (a prop).
(e.g. Kill channel 6 please)

L

LADDER

- 1) Climbable piece of access equipment to reach a working platform or for short light-duty work at height. See ZARGES.
- 2) Non-climbable structure in the shape of a ladder from which lanterns can be hung in a vertical 'stack'.

LEAD

- 1) The leading actor (regardless of gender) plays the main character in a play or musical. The term is sometimes genderised (the 'leading man' is the male actor and the 'leading lady' is the female actor).
- 2) Another word for a cable, usually a short connection between pieces of equipment.

LEGS

Vertical drape set as masking piece at the side of an end-on acting area. Usually set up in pairs across the stage and used in conjunction with borders to frame the audiences view.

Legs are hung from flying bars, and are usually fairly narrow in width (1.5m - 3m).

Soft legs are cloth, hard legs are flats.

One of many possible origins of the phrase 'Break a Leg', meaning to take an extra encore from the legs after a successful performance.

LEVEL

- 1) The setting of a light or sound control channel. On a lighting desk, levels range from 0% to 100% (also known as FULL). On a sound desk, the bottom of the fader is ∞ (infinity) and the top may be +20. The fader is designed to be operated at it's optimal position which is labelled 0dB. The decibel (dB) scale is a measure of sound intensity.
- 2) A platform used to change the height of an actor. Interesting dynamics between different characters in the play can be explored using various levels.

LIBRETTO

Text of an opera, or other long musical vocal composition. The script of a musical.
The writer of the Libretto is the Librettist.

LIFT CALL

An additional rehearsal session, often before a performance, to go over tricky choreography which includes lifts (where one performer lifts another). See also Fight Call.

LIGHTING PLOT

- 1) The process of recording information about each lighting state either onto paper or into the memory of a computerised lighting board for subsequent playback.

LINE

- 1) A rope length, once cut to length or installed for a specific function. (To cut a line from a coil of rope).

2) A request from an actor for a prompt when they have forgotten their next line.

LINES

Scripted words to be spoken by actors.

Example phrases: "Do you know your lines for Scene 2 yet?", "You missed a few lines at the end of the scene", "What's my next line".

See also SIDES.

LOAD IN

See BUMP IN.

LOADING BAY

Access into the theatre for scenery and other equipment. Also called the Loading Dock.

LX

Short for Electrics ('Elec's'). The department in the theatre responsible for stage lighting and sometimes sound and maintenance of the building's electrical equipment. Lighting cues in the prompt book are referred to as LX cues (abbreviated to LXQ).

LYRICS

The words of a song. A piece of musical theatre will credit writers of 'Book' and 'Lyrics'. The author of the book writes the script (unsung) and the lyricist writes the lyrics in the songs.

See also LIBRETTO, SCORE.

M

MARKING UP

Sticking tapes to the floor of the rehearsal space to indicate the floorplan of the scenery. Also for marking position of furniture etc. within a set. Always be aware that some tapes may damage or mark some wooden floor surfaces!

The floor plan has lines on it, which correspond to easily-found locations in the theatre - most commonly, the centre line and the setting line (which is the proscenium line, or the edge of the stage).

Measurements on the plan can easily be scaled up to the real-life measurements, and the position can be marked on the stage floor by measuring from the real-world centre line and setting line in the theatre.

MASKING

Neutral material or designed scenery which defines the performance area and conceals the technical areas. (e.g. a masking flat is designed to block the audiences view of backstage).

MASKING FLAT

A piece of solid scenery used to prevent audiences seeing backstage (or unwanted) areas. See also BORDER, MASKING.

MATINÉE / MATINEE

Afternoon performance of a show.

MAXIMUM OCCUPANCY

The number of people that can be in a given room at any time. This is determined by the fire department, or a fire officer, making use of local regulations about the amount of space required for each person, and by the number of fire exits (and the size of exit walkways) and the number of toilets etc available.

Obviously, the number must not be exceeded, as if there is an incident or accident, the insurance cover for the event / building may not be valid.

MODEL

A scale model provided by the set designer to help all the technical departments to co-ordinate and plan a production. Used as a reference when building, painting, dressing and lighting the set. The first stage of model-making is the WHITE CARD model which shows the form of the set, but not the detail of painting / texture / colour. When that's been approved by the director, and has been roughly budgeted, the final model is produced which should look identical to the finished set on stage. This is used as a reference by scenic artists and lighting designer etc.

MT

Abbreviation for Musical Theatre.

N

NARRATOR

The Narrator of a piece of theatre is a performer who speaks directly to the audience to tell them part of the story, to give additional information, or to comment on the scene or the behaviour of characters. The Narrator may be a single actor throughout, or there may be a number of narrators who share the role during the performance, whilst also playing other parts.

NOTES

Following a rehearsal (or an early performance in a run) the director will give notes to the cast and crew about where to make changes, improvements, cuts etc.

O

O.P.

Opposite Prompt side of the stage. Stage Right. (ie Actors right when facing audience).

OFF BOOK

An actor who no longer needs to refer to their script during a rehearsal is said to be 'off book'. Directors and stage managers will often set a deadline for performers to be off book, and actors are expected to learn their lines in good time.

OFFSTAGE

- 1) A movement towards the nearest side of the stage from the centre. (e.g. 'Focus that spot offstage a bit please')
- 2) The area out of sight of the audience (e.g. 'Get that donkey offstage !')

ON BOOK

- 1) An actor who needs to refer to the script during a scene is said to be "on book". The ideal situation is for the actor to be "off book" as quickly as possible!.
- 2) See PROMPT BOOK.

ONSTAGE

- 1) A movement towards the centre of the stage from the sides. The opposite of OFFSTAGE. There is no abbreviation for onstage (as it is too easily confused with offstage).
- 2) The act of being on the stage (e.g. 'he joined her onstage for the finale')

OPEN

The start of the run of a show in a venue. (e.g. 'When does the new musical open at the Variety Theatre?' or 'The show opened a few weeks ago - it's had some great reviews'.)

OPEN POSITION

An actor position where she/he is facing towards the audience, or mostly facing the audience. See also CLOSED POSITION.

OPEN THE HOUSE

Clearance given to FOH staff by stage management that the stage is set and the audience can begin to take their seats. When this clearance is given, the backstage call 'The House is now open, please do not cross the stage' is made.

OPENING NIGHT

The first performance of a show in front of a paying audience.

Some new complex shows may have lower priced Preview performances before an official opening night, to allow the show to get up to speed and deal with any technical issues. The press is not allowed to review a show during previews, and are invited to the first official performance, which is then known as Press Night.

OUT

In flying, means up (out of sight).

OVERHAUL

1) An error when flying a cloth or piece of scenery, where it's flown in too far. This will result in the cloth bunching up on the stage deck, or the piece of scenery potentially tilting and damaging other nearby equipment. When flying items always make sure the 'in dead' is clearly marked, and always slow down when approaching it to ensure it does not get passed, resulting in an overhaul.

2) To give something (or somewhere) a major makeover by effectively taking it apart, repairing the bits, and putting it back together again.

OVERTURE

Introductory musical piece played before a musical which contains many of the musical motifs and themes of the score.

P

PACE

The speed at which actors deliver their lines and perform their actions. A speed run can be useful to warm-up actors and to really make sure everyone is on form. The pacing of the show can have a real effect on how the audience react to it - it's a very tricky thing to maintain, especially as everyone gets more familiar with the show.

A fast-paced scene takes energy and concentration, and can slow down as familiarity sets in, and a slow-paced scene may speed up. Directors often wish to cut down on unnecessary pauses and delays, but also to maintain the moments of silence between speeches when needed.

PAGING

The act of holding a tab etc. back to allow large items or actors offstage. Also preventing microphone etc cables from getting entangled by pulling / releasing them from offstage as performer walks around.

PERSONAL PROPS

See PROPS.

PIANO DRESS

Rehearsal in costume and with all technical facilities but using a piano as a substitute for orchestra, so that the director can concentrate on technical problems rather than musical ones (and not pay the orchestra !). Also known as a PIANO REHEARSAL.

PIANO-VOCAL

A vocal score, or piano-vocal score, is used by singers in a musical or opera (or operetta). The vocal parts are written out in full, but the detail of the accompaniment is reduced and adapted for piano, so it can be used in rehearsals, and easily followed.

PIT NET

Protective net across the orchestra pit to prevent any objects falling from the stage and injuring musicians.

PLACES

Call by Stage Management for actors to take their places for the start of a scene / show. 'Places please everybody'.

PLAYING SPACE

The amount of physical stage-space available for performers. This excludes the offstage areas. See also ACTING AREA.

PLEXIGLASS

Transparent acrylic plastic sheet, used to replace glass in situations (e.g. on stage) where real glass is a safety risk.

Plexiglass is made by cell-casting acrylic, rather than the cheaper extrusion method used for many acrylic products.

PLOT

1) List of preparations and actions required of technical crews during the performance (eg Sound Plot = list of sound cues and levels in running order.) In the US, the term plot refers to a plan. (eg Light Plot = scale plan showing lighting instruments). See also RUNNING PLOT, STATE PLOT.

2) The basic story thread running through a performance / play which gives the reason for the character's actions.

PLOTTING SESSION

Time during which the plot for each department is prepared (eg Lighting Plotting session)

PM

Short for PRODUCTION MANAGER.

PODGER

A ratchet spanner with a long bar to use as a lever to tighten the bolt.

POINT CUE

A cue inserted during / after plotting between two existing cues. (eg 8.5 is inserted between cues 8 and 9). Most computer lighting desks have the ability to either insert an additional cue in a sequence, or to link to another cue out of the sequence, and then link back again. Inserting cues into a plotted sequence on a manual lighting desk is more awkward, because it is a running plot (where only the changes between cues are noted down). Sound cues which relate to an already-running cue within a sequence should have lettered cues (e.g. 8A is a fade up of Cue 8 and 8B is the fade out).

POST-SHOW DISCUSSION

An occasional chance for the audience to stay in the auditorium after a performance to hear the director or actors talk about the performance, and to answer questions from the audience.

PPE

Abbreviation of **Personal Protective Equipment**. The equipment that's needed depends on the task and risk assessment but could include: steel toe-capped boots / shoes, protective headgear, gloves etc.

PRACTICAL

Any object which appears to do onstage the same job it would do in life, or any working apparatus (eg light switch or tap).

A window within the set which has to open is a practical window.

Light fittings which have to light up on the set are called Practicals, and if they're suspended from the rig, they're Hanging Practicals.

PREPRODUCTION

Planning phase of production before actors rehearse (or sometimes have even been cast) and before sets are built. Brings together the production team in discussions about style, possibilities and budgets.

PRESET

1) Anything in position before the beginning of a scene or act (eg Props placed on stage before the performance, lighting state on stage as the audience are entering.)

2) The process of putting any part of the production into its' starting position / setting. A Preset Checklist is used by stage management and all other technical teams, to ensure that everything is correctly set to start the show.

PRESHOW

The period before the performance begins, when the audience may be in the front-of-house areas, or even in the auditorium.

The preset (pre show lighting state) is shown on stage, and can be used to set the mood for the performance. Pre show music or a soundscape is also used for the same reason.

PRODUCTION DESK

Table in the auditorium at which director/designer etc sit during rehearsals (especially technical rehearsals). Usually has its own lighting and communications facilities.

For small venues the desk is used by the lighting designer and her/his team so that they can see the lighting from the audiences' point of view. The lighting control desk may be moved to the production desk, or the desk and programmer may remain in the control room, and have a remote interface on the production desk, which may have a display screen showing the cue list etc, which the designer can configure.

Larger shows (including Broadway and West End) will often remove large sections of audience seating in the stalls and install a number of production desks for all technical areas including lighting, projection, sound, scenic automation etc.

PRODUCTION MEETING

A gathering of key production staff during the months leading up to a performance or event. The aim of the meeting is to come to an agreement about any questions raised during rehearsals or the construction phase, to deal with any budget problems, confirm detailed schedules and to keep the process moving forward successfully. Decisions should be written down and circulated to those present and anyone that couldn't make the meeting.

PROMENADE

Form of staging where the audience moves around the performance space and sees the play at a variety of different locations. See also IMMERSIVE THEATRE.

PROMPT BOOK

Master copy of the script or score, containing all the actor moves and technical cues, used by stage management to control the performance. Sometimes known as the 'book', Prompt Copy or Prompt Script. The member of stage management (often the DSM) cueing the show is said to be 'On the Book'. (e.g. 'Clare's on the book for the next show').

As well as the script and/or score of the show, the prompt book also contains contact lists for all concerned with the production, information about the venue(s), show reports, local amenities, emergency procedures and any other information that may be needed during the run of the show. It's rightly known as the production 'bible'.

See the link below for details of how to construct a prompt book.

PROMPT COPY

See PROMPT BOOK.

PROMPT CORNER

Area, traditionally on the stage left side of the stage, from which the stage manager (or DSM) controls ('prompts') the performance, from the prompt desk.

PROMPT DESK

The control centre of the show. The desk should contain most of the following: a clock, low level lighting, a flat surface for the prompt script, communication facility to other technical departments, a phone for emergency, rear and front of house calls system and cue light controls.

PROMPT SCRIPT

See PROMPT BOOK.

PROMPT SIDE (PS)

Usually stage left side of the stage, containing the prompt corner.

PROMPTER

Person whose role is to follow the text of a play, and be ready to remind the actors of their lines if they forget them. In many older theatres, there is a prompt box downstage centre sunk into the stage, so that only the prompter's head is above stage where they can see the actors.

PROP ROOM

Either a room in which the theatres' collection of props is stored, or an offstage room where props for the show are kept, ready for the actors to pick them up.

PROPERTIES

See PROPS.

PROPERTY MASTER / PROP MASTER

Member of the creative team who has responsibility for all of the PROPS used in the production.

PROPS

(Properties) Furnishings, set dressings, and all items large and small which cannot be classified as scenery, electrics or wardrobe. Props handled by actors are known as hand props, props which are kept in an actors costume are known as PERSONAL PROPS.

PROPS TABLE

Table in convenient offstage area on which properties are prepared prior to a performance and to which they should be returned after use.

The table is usually marked out with a grid around each item, so it's easy to see when something is missing, and to do preshow checks that everything is ready to use.

The preparation and checking of the props tables is typically the responsibility of the ASM (Assistant Stage Manager).

Q

Q

A possible shorthand for 'Cue'.

R

READ THROUGH

A meeting with all cast and (sometimes all) creative team members to read through the script. Usually happens at the start of the rehearsal process, to orient the cast and help them get to know each other and the text.

REHEARSAL

A session when actors are called to work through some scenes from the play in private.

Types of Rehearsal:

The initial phase consists of a **Readthrough**, when the entire company and technical staff hear the play read by the actors straight-through, as written in the script.

Blocking Rehearsals follow the readthrough(s) and involve working through the play scene-by-scene with the actors and director looking at movements and on-stage positions / physical relationships of the actors. They also may involve character analysis and discussions about the emotional development of the characters as the plot progresses. The set should be marked out on the rehearsal room floor, and stand-in furniture (either generic tables & chairs, or rehearsal blocks) is used where relevant. This is sometimes known as an **Acting Area Rehearsal**.

Once the blocking is worked out, and the actors know what they're doing, the performance is said to be 'Up on its feet' - it is able to be run through, and the technical team and designers can watch rehearsals knowing they're seeing the bare bones of what will become the finished performance.

A **Line Run** (also known as Line Bash) is a speed run of just the actors' lines, to enable them to feel confident that the text is correct (and remembered).

Polishing Rehearsals follow, once the actors are secure with their movements through the play, and look at the nuances of character and how lines are delivered in more detail, along with any physical sequences. The Director works with the actors in small groups, rather than having the entire company called to each session.

A series of **Technical Rehearsals** (often shortened to Tech Rehearsal) are the first time when technical elements (lighting, set etc.) are combined with actors. The actors should be secure in their character, blocking, physical actions etc by this point, and the technical crew work on integrating all of the technical and physical aspects of the show.

Dress Rehearsals (or Dress Runs) are performances of the show as it will be on opening night, with all technical elements up-to-speed and working correctly, including full costume and make-up. The stage management team use these rehearsals to ensure any scene changes and technical aspects work reliably, repeatably and safely, and the actors ensure they can perform as required at full speed, and that none of the technical elements cause them any problems.

RELAXED PERFORMANCE

A Relaxed Performance is one specifically modified to help audience members with special needs to feel at home in the theatre, and to enable them to feel able to make noise and comment on the performance when they wish to. They are designed for audience members with sensory or communication needs. The sound level is often reduced, complex lighting changes are simplified, and the cast and company warn families when unexpected noises will occur. Often the house lights are left on, and the audience is given a pre-show tour of

the theatre so that they are familiar with the environment. The performances sit alongside special measures for audio-description and signed performances for those with sight or hearing impairments.

REPETITEUR

Repetiteur is an accompanist, tutor or coach of ballet dancers or opera singers.

REPRISE

In a musical, a repeat of a song or dance number (sometimes with variations in lyrics to reflect what's happened since the last time it was sung) later in the show.

RESET

- 1) To go back to a particular point ready to run part of a scene again, during a technical rehearsal (e.g. 'OK that scene change went really well - can we please reset to the end of the previous scene ready to try it again?')
- 2) After a performance, the Reset involves all on-stage crew in moving scenery and props back into position for the top of the show, ready for the next performance.

REVOLVE

A mechanised portion of a theatre stage that is capable of turning, or revolving, often at varying speeds. Useful in achieving advanced quick scene changes.

RESTORE

A cue to resume or return to any previous state, setting or function. (e.g. 'at the end of the dance number we restore to a warm general cover').

ROSTRA

A flat platform of varying size and shape for use creating levels on a stage. See also DECK.

RUN

- 1) A sequence of performances of the same production. (e.g. 'How long is the run of this show?' or 'This show runs for two weeks')
 - 2) A rehearsal of the whole show or a section of it (e.g. 'This afternoon's rehearsal will be a run of Act II followed by notes'). Run-throughs early in the rehearsal schedule are sometimes known as STAGGERS as actors are unsure of their lines.
- A SPEED RUN is a rehearsal at faster than normal pace, concentrating on actor moves and entrances / exits rather than the quality of performance. This can only take place in the rehearsal room - once technical elements are included, a CUE TO CUE run is used, which jumps over long sequences with no technical elements to concentrate on polishing the cues.

RUN-THROUGH

A rehearsal of the show (or a section of it). Often shortened to just RUN. See also TECHNICAL RUN, DRESS RUN. The first run-through is often known as a STAGGER-THROUGH as there are usually many errors and delays.

RUNNERS

- 1) A pair of curtains parting in the centre and moving horizontally, particularly those used in a downstage position in variety and revue productions.
- 2) Persons employed as production assistants to do odd jobs and errands during a production period.
- 3) Strips of carpet used backstage to silence actors' shoes during performance.

RUNNING A FLAT

Process to move a lightweight (but large) scenic canvas flat across the stage.

Two people support the flat in a vertical position, lift it slightly off the ground, and walk fast across the stage, keeping the flat vertical, with one hand high and one hand low. The flat must remain vertical, or it will become top-heavy and unstable. Actually 'running' is not required (or encouraged) but moving fast makes the task easier as the air movement helps to keep the flat upright.

RUNNING PLOT

A plot sheet giving details of the changes between cues, as distinct from a state plot which gives the whole state of the system at any time. For example, a lighting plot on a manual board is normally a running plot. It is difficult to start a running plot half way through; often the operator has to go back to the beginning and work through until the required point is reached. However, it contains the minimum information necessary to perform the cues, and is therefore more efficient on a manual lighting desk or complex sound setup.

Also used by the stage management team to keep track of prop moves and changes during the show. A preset sheet contains the status of everything at the start of the show, then the running sheet / running plot lists everything that has to happen during the show, in order.

S

SCENE CHANGE

1) A break between scenes in a play script.

2) A pause during a theatrical performance during which the layout of scenery, furniture or props on stage is changed. This is used to indicate a change of location, or a change in time. As automated scenery becomes more common, scene changes are rarely as painful and jarring as they once were. Even without automated scenery, a well-choreographed crew can execute complex scene changes in seconds. There may not need to be a pause in the action as the actors can continue to deliver lines while the change happens beside / behind them. A scene change is often accompanied by a piece of music. More traditional performances may use a front cloth downstage, in front of which a more straight-forward scene is played out, while the scene change happens upstage. Or there may be an interval scene change, where the crew transform the stage scenery for a completely different look after the interval.

Also known as a SET CHANGE.

SCENE-BY-SCENE BREAKDOWN

A listing of the scenes (or even pages) in the script, stating what events happen in them. This can be a useful exercise to get to know the play, but is also useful to be able to remember when in the play a particular event happens, and is a useful rehearsal room reference.

Example:

Act 1 Scene 1: We meet the family, Claire states her wish to leave the company.

Act 1 Scene 2: We meet Claire's boss and it becomes clear how much she is depended on.

SCENERY

The flattage on the stage and any flown scenery or cloths that have been assembled by the set team, under the direction of the set designer for a particular performance. The arrangement of scenery for a particular scene or part of the performance is known as the 'set'.

SCONCE

A mountable light fixture, such as that positioned on a music stand to illuminate a score.

SCORE

1) The score is the written notation of a musical work. An arrangement of a piece of music for piano is called the Piano Score. An arrangement for a singer is the Vocal Score.

See also LIBRETTO.

2) A series of directions for a physical theatre / dance performance is sometimes called a 'score'.

3) A soundtrack running underneath a performance is called UNDERSCORE.

4) The music / sound tracks running during a performance is sometimes called the score.

SCRATCH PERFORMANCE

A performance early in the development of a production (play / musical) which is very rough around the edges, and may not have some (or all) of the technical elements, and is usually done on a very small budget.

It enables the show creator(s) to try out ideas on an audience without investing large amounts of money. The scratch is often followed by a request for feedback from the audience or a question & answer session with the creative team.

SCRIPT

The text of a play, containing the words spoken by the actors. Also contains stage directions and other notes. The script of a piece of musical theatre is called the Libretto. The script for a piece of physical (or non-verbal) theatre is called the Score.

SET

- 1) To prepare the stage for action. (verb) - e.g. 'Have you set the chairs for Act 1?'
- 2) The complete stage setting for a scene or act. (noun) - e.g. 'What's the set for the finale?'

SET BACK

To reset technical systems to a particular point in the show in order to repeat a sequence or scene during rehearsals. (e.g. 'Can we set back to the entrance of Lady Bracknell').

SHOT BAG

A heavy-duty canvas bag filled traditionally with lead shot, used as a weight to hold scenery in place on stage. Sometimes referred to as a sand bag.

SHOW ELEMENT

Term for an item of scenery or prop required for a production.

SHOW REPORT

A written report by stage management giving problems, running times, show staff and audience numbers for the previous days' performance(s). Copies are circulated to the technical departments and management staff and a copy is filed in the prompt book. Also known as a Performance Report.

SHOW STOP

When an emergency situation means the performance cannot continue, a SHOW STOP is announced. The stop would be called most often because of a safety issue (e.g. a piece of scenic automation is stuck in a dangerous position, or is blocking the stage or flytower in such a way that the show cannot continue. Or a performer has been injured). The audience may be asked to leave the theatre (and be issued refunds) or be asked to remain in their seats while the situation is corrected. For example, if a trapdoor is stuck open, the show must be stopped until it can be closed and made safe.

A heavily automated show should have a pre-recorded announcement, but it may be more human / theatrical to have a member of the stage management team or the company manager to walk on stage with the houselights up and make an announcement along these lines: 'Everybody, sorry to interrupt the performance, but we've had to pause the show here for a few moments while we reset some technical equipment to enable us to continue safely. Please remain in your seats - the performance will continue shortly'. Obviously if there's a major failure and it's unlikely the performance will be able to continue, the procedure should be to apologise to the audience, to give them information about how to obtain a refund or another ticket, and then to ask them to leave the auditorium.

SHOWCALLER

The member of the stage management team who is calling the cues. Typically the DSM or SM.

SHOWING

A less-formal performance, used as part of the development process of a piece of theatre, for an audience connected to the developers in some way rather than being a full public performance. A SHARING is similar, but is for a more defined audience - usually the group that is working on the piece, and other members of a creative team.

SIDES

Printed pages of lines given to actors on a film or TV show. Lines are often changed / refined at the last minute, so a script printed at the start of the project will be out-of-date very quickly.

Sides are also given out at auditions for actors to work with, without needing to give them the whole script. See also LINES.

SIGHTLINES

A series of lines drawn on plan and section to show how much of the stage can be seen by the extreme seating positions in the auditorium. Often also marked in the wings as a guide to the actors and crew to stay out of view.

SITZPROBE

(German for *seated rehearsal*). The first rehearsal between Opera singers and the orchestra. No attempt is made to act or move the production at this rehearsal.

SPIKE

1) (vb.) To mark the position of an item of set/furniture on stage or in the rehearsal room.

2) (n.) A mark on stage (e.g. 'put the chair on the spike')

Spike Tape is normally thin gaffa tape, although other weaker tape (e.g. electrical tape) is used on precious floors. Sometimes, any securing of cable etc to floor is known as 'Spiking'.

Where precision is required during blackouts, GLOW TAPE is often used to spike positions.

On large productions with show decks installed above the main theatre stage, small embedded LED bulbs can be used to mark specific positions. These can be switched on and off as required.

See also SPIKE MATRIX.

SPIKE MATRIX

A document listing positions of spike marks needed for a show, to aid in the transferring of marks from rehearsal room to stage. Especially useful when touring. The positions are defined by a distance from the centre line and from the setting line (usually the proscenium arch line / front of the stage). The table should also include the colour of tape to be used, what the mark is representing, and which scene it appears in.

SPIKE TAPE

See SPIKE.

SPRUNG FLOOR

Usually, a permanently installed wooden floor which has rubber pads underneath it to enable the floor surface to absorb the shock of a performer dancing or jumping on it. This kind of floor is common in rehearsal studios and sports venues (it's also known as a Sports Floor, and is termed 'semi-sprung' if it has rubber pads). Sections of the floor are locked together to ensure the floor surface moves without opening up gaps or creating trip hazards.

A fully sprung floor is common in many theatres, and is an entirely wooden structure where the floor is supported by long joist beams across the stage, so the floor naturally flexes. These floors are especially loved by dance companies, however, there sometimes needs to be additional structural support under the floor to enable it to carry a heavy set.

Padded dance floor rolls are available to provide some shock absorption if it's not possible to work on a sprung floor.

Dance work on non-sprung floors is not recommended for long periods.

SQ

One possible abbreviation for Sound Cue, used by stage management in the prompt book. The equivalent for lighting cues is LX. Avoid using abbreviations such as SX or FX for sound effect cues, as they sound similar to LX. When cueing the show, the member of stage management on the prompt book should say 'Sound Cue 12' rather than 'S. Cue 12', for clarity.

STAGE CREW

Member of the company who is responsible for moving props and/or scenery during the show, and for ensuring that items under their responsibility are working correctly and properly maintained. Stage Crew (also known as **Stagehands**) are often employed on a casual basis for a specific production, and may not be part of the theatre's full-time staff. They also may be touring with a particular production.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

Instructions given by the author about how a play should be staged, when actors should make their entrances and exits and how lines should be delivered. Some well-known stage directions include "Exit, pursued by a bear", from Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*. Some stage directions are notes on one possible staging, others are essential to the integrity of the playwright's vision, such as those written by Samuel Beckett - these **MUST** be followed as a condition of being allowed to stage the play.

STAGE HAND

See STAGE CREW.

STAGE LEFT / RIGHT

Left/ Right as seen from the Actor's point of view on stage. (ie Stage Left is the right side of the stage when looking from the auditorium.)

Stage Right = OP (Opposite Prompt) French: Cote Jardin, Netherlands: Toneel Links (translates to Stage Left!)

Stage Left = PS (Prompt Side) French: Cote Cour, Netherlands: Toneel Rechts (translates to Stage Right!).

STAGE MANAGER

The Head of the Stage Management team which may comprise the deputy stage manager (DSM) and assistant stage manager (ASM). The DSM is normally "on book" calling the cues from the prompt corner. The ASM supervises props. Depending on the needs of the production, there may be a team of stagehands, usually casual employees. On smaller productions, the SM, DSM and ASM are often one person.

STAGE MANAGER PHRASES

"Get on your cues" - actors and crew members must concentrate so that they react as soon as they get a cue, not once they notice others reacting.

"Quiet Backstage" - there should be no talking backstage or in the wings unless essential, and then only at a whisper.

"Quiet On Cans" - the headset system (for communicating between crew members) must only be used for giving and receiving cues. There should be no unnecessary chatter.

STAGE SCREW

A large screw which is screwed through the 'foot' of a stage brace to secure it to a strong wooden floor. Only suitable for use in theatres with non-precious wooden floors!

STAGE WHISPER

A loud whisper uttered by an actor on stage, intended to be heard by the audience but supposedly unheard by other characters in the scene. See also ASIDE.

STAGECRAFT

Stagecraft refers to any technical aspect of theatre production (and also sometimes refers to film / TV production). It includes working in technical areas such as lighting, sound, scenic construction, costume & prop construction, stage management and makeup. It usually does NOT refer to the creative / design aspects of those technical areas.

STAGGER-THROUGH

The first tentative attempt to run through the whole show. Very rarely runs smoothly, hence the name.

STALLS

The lowest audience seating area, usually just below the level of the stage, in a proscenium theatre.

STANCE

(Acting) The way a performer stands / holds themselves when in character.

STAND-BY / STANDBY

1) A warning given to technical staff by stage management that a cue is imminent. The member of the stage management team calling the cues will say "Standby Sound Cue 12". Technicians acknowledge by saying "Sound Standing By", "LX Standing By", etc.

2) A member of the cast of a musical or play who understudies one (sometimes more) of the principal roles but is NOT also in the chorus. A standby often will not even be required to be at the venue at each performance unless they are called in to perform in the role for which they are an understudy.

See also SWING, UNDERSTUDY.

STANDING OVATION

(from the Latin 'ovo' - I rejoice) Seated audience members stand while applauding to congratulate the cast and crew of a particularly excellent performance, usually during the curtain call at the end of the performance.

STRIKE

1) To disassemble a stage set ("strike the set") (e.g. "How many crew do you need for the strike?") In amateur theatre, the strike at the end of a run of shows is sometimes followed by a strike party.

2) To remove props from the stage. ("Strike the armchair after scene 1", "Make sure the mushroom prop is struck after the forest scene" etc.).

STUNT PERFORMER

A performer who is not part of the main cast, who appears on stage only to perform a particular physical sequence (or stunt) in place of the lead actor. The term originates in film production, however, stunt performers are used in some demanding shows such as Spider-Man Turn off the Dark.

See also DOUBLE.

SUGAR GLASS

Transparent glass-like product which has been formed into either panes or bottles / glasses. Sugar Glass is made from sugar, water and glucose or corn syrup, and is heated until it forms a mouldable material which goes hard on cooling.

It breaks in a safer way than real glass, and is far less dangerous to those nearby.

SUPERNUMERARY

An actor who appears on stage but does not speak, typically used to make up crowds.

SWING

A member of the cast or crew of a musical (or a play with a large cast) who understudies multiple roles in the production. When a member of the cast or crew is not well, has a day off or, in some cases, is performing in a principal role for which they are the understudy, a swing performs in their place. Swings are members of the cast or crew who are in addition to those called for by the script, so in a performance where all of the chorus members and all the actors playing principal roles are present, the swings will not be performing in that particular performance -- although in most cases they will be waiting backstage to be available in the event they are needed.

The actions required of a performer throughout a particular performance is known as the Track.

See also ALTERNATE, TRACK, STANDBY, UNDERSTUDY.

SWL

Safe Working Load. Typically the maximum amount of weight that can be safely distributed on a rigging point or bar.

SX

Used by some as a shorthand for SOUND, in the same way LX is a shorthand for Lighting. However, when calling cues, stage management should always say 'Sound Cue 12 GO' rather than 'SX Cue 12 GO'. 'Sound' has one less syllable to say, and SX sounds too similar (no pun intended) to LX.

SXOP can be shorthand for Sound Operator. Many venues use FX in the same way, but this can also refer to Stage effects like smoke, pyro etc.

SYNOPSIS

A brief summary of the plot of a play, film, opera etc.

T

TAB TRACK

A high-quality durable metal track system to carry stage curtains (known as Tabs) or scenery.

TABLE READ

An initial read-through of the script of a show, with actors and creative team sitting around a table. It allows the whole team to become familiar with the script, and each other in a non-threatening environment.

TABLEAU

A static arrangement of the cast of a show, revealed by the raising or opening of the main curtains, which are known as Tabs for this reason. The creation of a tableau is a useful exercise for school drama classes, concentrating on facial expressions, posture, physical relationships between characters etc.

The plural of tableau is tableaux.

TECH

1) Short for Technical Rehearsal. (e.g. 'The Tech took 14 hours')

2) A member of crew ('I'm the lighting tech for this show')

TECH WEEK

The week leading up to the first performance when the technical elements are put into place, alongside the actors. Involves lighting focus, lighting plot, sound plot, scene change rehearsals, full technical rehearsals and finally dress rehearsals.

TECHNICAL REHEARSAL

(also known as the TECH RUN, or just TECH). Usually the first time the show is rehearsed in the venue, with lighting, scenery and sound. Costumes are sometimes used where they may cause technical problems (eg Quick changes). Often a very lengthy process. Often abbreviated to the Tech.

A **DRY TECH** is without actors to rehearse the integration of lighting, scenic changes etc. It follows that a **WET TECH** is a full technical rehearsal with actors and all technical elements, although this term isn't used as often as DRY TECH.

A **PAPER TECH** is a session without the set or actors when the technical and design team talk through the show ensuring everything's going to work as planned. Stage Managers can use this session to ensure all is written correctly in the Prompt Book.

TOOLBOX MEETING

A short meeting at the start of each day during tech week where production heads and crew get together to discuss the plan for the day, and any changes to existing schedules.

TOP AND TAIL

Rehearsal where dialogue without technical cues is cut, and only run where there are cues or scene changes

etc.

Also known as CUE TO CUE.

TORMENTORS

Narrow masking flats adjacent and usually at right angles to the proscenium arch. So named because they stop people in the boxes being able to peep beyond, into the secrets of the wings, where there may be dancers (for example) warming up or actors doing costume changes. Used in addition to a teaser, the first border behind the proscenium arch.

A lighting instrument in this position (just upstage of the proscenium arch) is known as a Torm Light.

TRAP

An opening through the stage floor.

A **grave trap** is a lowered rectangular section used in *Hamlet* etc.

A **cauldron trap** is a simple opening through which items can be passed into a cauldron on stage.

A **star trap** is a set of triangular sprung flaps in the stage floor through which an actor can be propelled from a lift below stage.

A **diaphragm trap** can close around an object allowing it to penetrate a previously solid wall with no visible gap around it. .

A **pivot trap** is a doorway or opening with a central pivot which enables it to rotate (like a revolving door).

The **Vampire Trap** was invented for James Planché's 1820 adaption of Polidori's *The Vampyr*. It involved two spring leaves that parted under pressure and immediately reclosed. Placed in the floor or stage wall, it could give the impression a figure was passing through solid matter.

The **Corsican Trap**, made for Dion Boucicault's 1852 adaption of Alexandre Dumas' *The Corsican Brothers*, involved an ascending track, on which a wheeled cart could be run, rising up out of the stage through a 'bristle' trap - a trapdoor covered with bristles painted to match the scenery. Once on the stage and in view, the track was covered by a sliding arrangement reminiscent of that of a roll-top desk; to wit, nothing was seen except the ghost rising up through the floor and gliding across the stage. This trap is also sometimes called a Ghost Glide. (Vampire Trap and Corsican Trap definition)

TRAP ROOM

The area directly below the trapped part of the stage. Used for accessing the traps.

TRAVELLERS

Curtains or scenic pieces moving across the stage on horizontal tracks.

TRAVERSE

Form of staging where the audience is on either side of the acting area.

Also known as ALLEY or AVENUE staging.

See also IN THE ROUND, END ON, THRUST.

TREADS

General name for any stage staircase or set of steps used on stage. The step of the staircase is called the **tread**, and the height of the staircase depends on the number of **risers**. The length of the staircase is called the **going**. Treads can be either open or closed string - meaning whether the riser is solid or not. The carriage provides the structural support for the treads, and can be either closed carriage or open carriage. Open carriage treads have nothing above / enclosing the top surface of each riser. Closed carriage treads may have a continuous structural piece enclosing the edges of the tread unit.

TRICK LINE

A nearly invisible piece of dark-coloured cotton or fishing line which is used to make a prop move, a door close etc without any (apparent) human intervention. Used in comedies based in haunted houses or other ghostly stories.

TRIGGER WARNINGS

Some audience members may be upset by particular themes that may be featured in some plays.

It's important that the creative team are aware of these themes, and how they may affect audience members,

and if necessary consult with local support groups or charities that can provide advice on how to deal with the issues sensitively.

Although some venues may list the themes in advance publicity, others (such as The Old Vic in London) prefer to keep the trigger warnings unseen unless audience members ring the theatre in advance.

TRIPLE THREAT

Term used to describe a performer who excels at the three skills; acting, dancing and singing. They are a threat to other performers who may only be excellent at one or two of those skills.

TRUCK

1) Wheeled platform on which a scene or part of a scene is built to facilitate scene changing. (e.g. "This scene happens on the balcony truck"). Also known as WAGON.

2) (TV/film - verb) To move a wheeled camera sideways.

3) (Theatre - verb) To move a wheeled platform onto or off stage. (e.g. 'Let's truck the cottage scene in at the end of the second verse')

TURN

1) When an actor turns on stage, they have two options - a closed turn (away from the audience, turning back to the audience) or an open turn (towards the audience). The open turn is preferred for many types of performance. A slight turn to face the audience more directly is called 'opening up'.

TURNAROUND

The changeover between one show and the next. It's important that the administration team scheduling the performances takes into account the time it will take to reset the stage back to 'clear' and then set up for the next show, ideally not involving overnight work!

U

UC

Short for UPSTAGE CENTRE - the middle of the stage furthest away from the audience.

UPSTAGE

1) The part of the stage furthest from the audience. It's called Upstage because on a raked stage the stage slopes down towards the audience to improve sightlines. The furthest from the audience is literally higher due to the slope of the stage, so moving from close to the audience involves walking up the raked stage, towards 'Upstage'.

US = Upstage, USC = Upstage Centre. USL = Upstage Left. USR = Upstage Right (see diagram)

See also DOWNSTAGE, ONSTAGE.

2) When an actor moves upstage of another and causes the victim to turn away from the audience s/he is 'upstaging'. Also, an actor drawing attention to themselves away from the main action (by moving around, or over-reacting to onstage events) is upstaging.

V

VAMP

Musical term. A vamp is a repeating musical section played until ready. A vamp may consist of a single chord or a sequence of chords played in a repeated rhythm. The term frequently appeared in the instruction "Vamp till ready" on sheet music for popular songs in the 1930s and 1940s, indicating that the accompanist should

repeat the musical phrase until the vocalist was ready. An elongated vamp section is used to cover an action on stage of variable length, or to accompany ad-libbed action or vocals.

VISUAL CUE

A cue taken by a technician from the action on stage rather than being cued by the stage manager. Often abbreviated to "Viz" or "Vis".

W

WAGON

(also known as TRUCK). A large wheeled platform which can be moved around the stage either manually by crew or by a scenic automation system. See also WAGON STAGE.

WAGON STAGE

Mechanised stage where the scenery is moved into position on large sliding trucks (wagons) as wide as the proscenium opening, from storage in large areas to the side and rear of the main stage. This system enables incredibly complex and otherwise time-consuming scene changes to occur almost instantly.

The Royal Opera House in London contains a massive series of lifts and platforms which enable the complex programme of multiple performances in the repertoire to be interchanged seamlessly.

WALK THROUGH

Session on stage just after the set has been built (or reassembled) when actors and crew can go through moves to ensure all is as it should be, and to identify any problems before the performance. Particularly applies to opera performances in rep when sets are reassembled and struck daily.

WARDROBE

The general name for the costume department, its staff and the accommodation they occupy.

WARM-UP

The Warm-Up prepares the actor's body for the performance by exercising (literally warming up) muscles, stretching limbs, and getting the cast to focus on the performance and to forget about anything outside the walls of the theatre.

WET TECH

See TECHNICAL REHEARSAL.

WING AND DROP SET

A set consisting of painted backdrop and accompanying painted wing curtains. When the location changes, both the backdrop and set of wings are flown out and replaced with another set. This is common in opera, ballet and (UK) pantomime performances.

WING SPACE

The distance between the edge of the performance space that the audience can see, and the wall of the theatre. A lot can be achieved with very narrow wing space, with careful planning and well choreographed stage management team.

WINGS

- 1) The out of view areas to the sides of the acting area. The wings are best identified by their position on stage (e.g. "Clive exits through the downstage left wing") but they can be identified by number if there are too many exits, with the downstage wing starting as 1, with stage left and right added to identify the side (e.g. "Sarah exits 2L").
- 2) Scenery standing where the acting area joins these technical areas.

WORKING LIGHTS

1) High-brightness efficient non-dimmable lights used in a venue when the stage / auditorium lighting is not on. Used for rehearsals, fit-up, strike and resetting. The working lights are often controllable from a number of locations around the stage, including at prompt corner. As the working lights are on during rehearsals, set sessions, and during the day, they should be efficient light sources (e.g. LED or discharge lamps) rather than older types of lamp which are high-wattage. An instruction to 'Kill the Workers' solely means to turn the working lights off, rather than something more sinister.

Some venues have an additional type of light source on stage solely for rehearsals, which may be less bright / intense, and more directed towards stage level rather than up the walls - these are sometimes known as Rehearsal Lights

2) Low wattage blue lights used to illuminate offstage obstacles and props tables etc. Known as 'Wing Workers', 'Blues' or 'Running Lights'.

WORKING REHEARSAL

1) A rehearsal where the performance is worked on by the actors on stage and the director in the auditorium, giving very occasional direction and notes and solving issues as it progresses. There may not be any technical elements on stage - this is a rehearsal for the actors - they know their lines, they know the blocking, they are running the performance to find nuances of character, or to problem-solve.

2) A rehearsal which has a small audience watching it. While on tour, a group of supporters or sponsors may be invited to a rehearsal as a way of giving them exclusive access. Some dance companies (e.g. American Ballet Theatre) have a programme of working rehearsals where anyone can buy a ticket to watch part of a performance (not usually a dress rehearsal, but a rehearsal for the dancers rather than the technicians). These are sometimes accompanied by a narration on headsets where a guide explains the process, talks about the history of the art-form, choreography and dancers.

X

X

Stage management abbreviation for 'crosses to'. (e.g. Simon X armchair) Many such abbreviations are used when writing the Prompt Book.

XDSL

Stage management abbreviation for 'Crosses Downstage Left' (i.e. the actor moves to that location).

Y

YOKE

Bracket that holds onto each side of a lighting fixture allowing it to be hung from a bar.

Z

ZOOMSPOT

A type of lighting fixture: a zoomable profile light, or 'spot' light, which allows the size of the beam produced to be adjusted.