

THEATRE VOCABULARY

Actor/Actress	A male or female person who performs a role in a play, work of theatre, or movie.
Antagonist	A person or a situation that opposes another character's goals or desires.
Articulation	The clear and precise pronunciation of words.
Blocking	The planning and working out of the movements of actors on stage.
Catharsis	The purification or purgation of the emotions (such as pity, fear, grief, etc.) affected in a work of tragedy.
Concentration	The ability of the actor/actress to be "in" character - that is, to be like the character s/he is portraying – in dialog, attitude, carriage, gait, etc.
Center stage	The center of the area defined as the stage.
Character	A personality or role an actor/actress re-creates.
Characterization	The development and portrayal of a personality through thought, action, dialogue, costuming, and makeup.
Climax	The point of greatest dramatic tension or transition in a theatrical work.
Cold reading	A reading of a script done by actors who have not previously reviewed the play.
Collaboration	Two or more people working together in a joint intellectual effort.
Commedia dell'arte	A professional form of theatrical improvisation, developed in Italy in the 1500's, featuring stock characters and standardized plots.
Comedy	A theatrical work that is intentionally humorous.
Conflict	Opposition of persons or forces giving rise to dramatic action.
Context	Interrelated conditions in which a play exists or occurs.
Costume	Clothing worn by an actor on stage during a performance.
Creative drama	An improvisational, process-centered form of theatre in which participants are guided by a leader to imagine, enact, and reflect on human experiences.

Crisis	A decisive point in the plot of a play on which the outcome of the remaining action depends.
Critique	Opinions and comments based on predetermined criteria that may be used for self- evaluation or the evaluation of the actors or the production itself.
Cue	A signal, either verbal or physical, that indicates something else, such as a line of dialogue or an entrance, is to happen.
Denouement	The final resolution of the conflict in a plot.
Design	The creative process of developing and executing aesthetic or functional designs in a production, such as costumes, lighting, sets, and makeup.
Dialogue	The conversation between actors on stage.
Diction	The pronunciation of words, the choice of words, and the manner in which a person expresses himself or herself.
Directing	The art and technique of bringing the elements of theatre together to make a play.
Director	The person who oversees the entire process of staging a production.
Downstage	The stage area toward the audience.
Dramatic play	Children's creation of scenes when they play "pretend".
Dramatic structure	The particular literary structure and style in which plays are written.
Dramaturg	A person who provides specific in-depth knowledge and literary resources to a director, producer, theatre company, or even the audience.
Dress rehearsals	The final few rehearsals just prior to opening night in which the show is run with full technical elements. Full costumes and makeup are worn.
Electronic media	Means of communication characterized by the use of technology (e.g., radio, television, and the Internet).
Elizabethan theatre	The theatre of England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I and often extended to the close of the theatres in 1640.
Emotional memory	The technique of calling upon your own memories to understand a character's emotions.
Ensemble	A group of theatrical artists working together to create a theatrical production.
Epic theatre	Theatrical movement of the early 1920's and 1930 characterized by the use of such artificial devices as cartoons, posters, and film sequences distancing

the audience from theatrical illusion and following focus on the play's message.

Exposition	Detailed information revealing the facts of a plot.
Farce	A comedy with exaggerated characterizations, abundant physical or visual humor, and, often, an improbable plot.
Form	The overall structure or shape of a work that frequently follows an established design. Forms may refer to a literary type (e.g., narrative form, short-story form, dramatic form) or to pattern of meter, line, and rhymes (e.g., stanza form, verse form).
Formal theatre	Theatre that focuses on public performance in the front of an audience and in which the final production is most important.
Genre	In literary and dramatic studies, genre refers to the main types of literary form, principally tragedy and comedy. The term can also refer to forms that are more specific to a given historical era, such as the revenge tragedy, or to more specific sub-genres of tragedy and comedy, such as the comedy of manners.
Gesture	An expressive movement of the body or limbs.
Greek theatre	Theatrical events in honor of the god Dionysus in Ancient Greece and included play competitions and a chorus of masked actors.
Improvisation	A spontaneous style of theatre through which scenes are created without advance rehearsal or a script.
Informal theatre	A theatrical performance that focuses on small presentations, such as one taking place in a classroom setting. Usually, it is not intended for public view.
Kabuki	One of the traditional forms of Japanese theatre, originating in the 1600's and combining stylized acting, costumes, makeup, and musical accompaniment.
Level	The height of an actor's head as determined by his or her body position (e.g., sitting, lying, standing, or elevated by an artificial means).
Make-up	Cosmetics and sometimes hairstyles that an actor wears on stage to emphasize facial features, historical periods, characterizations, and so forth.
Masks	Coverings worn over the face or part of the face of an actor to emphasize or neutralize facial characteristics.
Melodrama	A dramatic form popular in the 1800s and characterized by an emphasis on plot and physical action (versus characterization), cliff-hanging events, heart-

tugging emotional appeals, the celebration of virtue, and a strongly moralistic tone.

Mime	An incident art form based on pantomime in which conventionalized gestures are used to express ideas rather than represent actions; also, a performer of mime.
Monologue	A long speech by a single character.
Motivation	A character's reason for doing or saying things in a play.
Musical theatre	A type of entertainment containing music, songs, and, usually, dance.
Noh	One of the traditional forms of Japanese theatre in which masked male actors use highly stylized dance and poetry to tell stories.
Objective	A character's goal or intention
Pacing	The tempo of an entire theatrical performance.
Pantomime	Acting without words through facial expression, gesture, and movement.
Pitch	The highness or lowness of voice
Play	The stage representation of an action or a story; a dramatic composition.
Playwright	A person who writes plays.
Position	The orientation of the actor to the audience (e.g., full front, right profile, left profile).
Projection	The placement and delivery of volume, clarity, and distinctness of voice for communicating to an audience.
Props (properties)	Items carried on stage by an actor; small items on the set used by the actors.
Proscenium	The view of the stage for the audience; also called a proscenium arch. The archway is in a sense the frame for stage as defined by the boundaries of the stage beyond which a viewer cannot see.
Protagonist	The main character of a play and the character with whom the audience identifies most strongly.
Puppetry	Almost anything brought to life by human hands to create a performance. Types of puppets include rod, hand, and marionette.
Rehearsal	Practice sessions in which the actors and technicians prepare for public performance through repetition.

Rising action	The part of a plot consisting of complications and discoveries that create conflict.
Run-through	A rehearsal moving from start to finish without stopping for corrections or notes.
Script	The written text of a play.
Sense memory	Memories of sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and textures. It is used to help define a character in a certain situation.
Stage	The area where actors perform.
Stage crew	The backstage technical crew responsible for running the show. In small theatre companies the same persons build the set and handle the load-in. Then, during performances, they change the scenery and handle the curtain.
Stage direction	(See <i>center stage</i> , <i>downstage</i> , <i>stage left</i> , <i>stage right</i> , and <i>upstage</i> .)
Stage manager	The director's liaison backstage during rehearsal and performance. The stage manager is responsible for the running of each performance.
Stage left	The left side of the stage from the perspective of an actor facing the audience.
Stage right	The right side of the stage from the perspective of an actor facing the audience.
Stock characters	Established characters, such as young lovers, neighborhood busybodies, sneaky villains, and overprotective fathers, who are immediately recognizable by an audience.
Style	The distinctive and unique manner in which a writer arranges words to achieve particular effects. Style essentially combines the idea to be expressed with the individuality of the author. These arrangements include individual word choices as well as such matters as the length and structure of sentences, tone, and use of irony.
Subtext	Information that is implied by a character but not stated by a character in dialogue, including actions and thoughts.
Tableau	A silent and motionless depiction of a scene created by actors, often from a picture (plural <i>tableaux</i>).
Text	Printed words, including dialogue and the stage directions for a script.
Theatre	To imitate or represent life in performance for other people; the performance of dramatic literature; drama, the milieu of actors, technicians, and playwrights; the place where dramatic performances take place.

Theatre of the absurd	Theatrical movement beginning in the 1950s in which playwrights created works representing the universe as unknowable and humankind's existence as meaningless.
Theatrical conventions	The established techniques, practices, and devices unique to theatrical productions.
Theatrical experiences	Events, activities, and productions associated with theatre, film/video, and electronic media.
Theatre games	Noncompetitive games designed to develop acting skills and popularized by Viola Spolin.
Tragedy	Used as a noun, the stage area away from the audience; used as a verb, to steal the focus of a scene.
Vocal quality	The characteristics of a voice, such as shrill, nasal, raspy, breathy, booming, and so forth.
Volume	The degree of loudness or intensity of a voice.