

THEATRE TERMS GLOSSARY

beat: 1) A small moment of action within a scene. 2) A moment of silence and stillness during which a character reacts to something that has been said or done.

blocking: The actors' movements around the stage in a play or musical, not including the choreography. The director usually assigns blocking during rehearsals.

body mics: Portable mics that are strapped to the actors' bodies. Also called lavaliers.

call time: The time at which the company is asked to arrive at the theater before a performance or rehearsal. It is very important that everyone sticks to their call time!

calling a show: During each performance, the stage manager follows along in the script and cues lights, sounds, and other technical components of the show at the appropriate time.

center stage: The middle of the stage

cheating out: Turning yourself slightly toward the house when performing so the audience may better see your face and hear your lines.

choreography: The dances in a musical that are often used to help tell the story.

chorus: 1) The ensemble; all the cast members other than the principals. 2) A refrain in a song.

cold reading: Reading a script aloud without having read it before.

company: All of the people who make a show happen: actors, musicians, creative team, crew, producers, etc.

counter: When an actor fills the space on the stage left by another actor when she crosses to a new location.

crescendo: A dynamic marking that indicates the song should get gradually louder. A crescendo is represented in the score by the symbol "<."

crew: A team of people who move the set, handle props, or work backstage during a production.

cross: An actor's movement to a new position onstage.

cue: A signal that tells the cast or crew what to do next.

curtain call: The entrance of the company at the end of the show to bow and acknowledge the audience's applause.

curtain time: The time at which the show is scheduled to begin.

decrescendo: A dynamic marking that indicates the song should get gradually softer. A decrescendo is represented in the score by the symbol ">"

delivery: The way in which an actor says her lines.

dialogue: A conversation between two or more characters.

diction: The articulation, or clearness of speech, while delivering one's lines. Also known as "enunciation".

double casting: When two or more actors are cast in the same role and then alternate performances.

downstage: The portion of the stage closest to the audience; the opposite of upstage.

dress rehearsal: One of the final run-throughs of a show that usually includes full costumes, props, and technical elements.

ensemble: 1) A group of people who work together to create a production. 2) The chorus, or members of the cast other than the principals.

entrance: When a character steps onto the stage from the wings or other offstage area.

exit: When a character leaves the stage.

final dress: The last dress rehearsal before the show that is performed for an audience.

flat: A large canvas or board that stands on the stage and is painted to become part of the scenery.

fly space: The area above the stage where set pieces and backdrops are often stored and can be lowered onto the stage. Not all theaters have a fly space.

focus: 1) The part of the stage where the audience is meant to look at any given time. The director manipulates the focus using lighting, sound, sets, and blocking. 2) Concentration used by an actor when rehearsing and performing.

follow spot: Large, movable light at the back of the house that follows an actor as they cross the stage. Also called a spotlight.

monologue: A large block of lines spoken by a single character. When spoken alone onstage or directly to an audience, a monologue reveals the inner thoughts of a character.

off-book (*off-script*): An actor's ability to perform her memorized lines without holding the script.

onstage: Anything on the stage and within view of the audience is said to be onstage.

pantomime: To act something out without words.

projection: 1) Speaking and singing loudly enough to be understood by the audience. 2) An image that is projected onto a surface, which can be part of the set for a show.

prop: Anything an actor holds or carries during a performance. Short for "property."

sheet music: Printed song, including lyrics and musical notes, that gives instructions for singing or playing live.

speed-through: To perform the dialogue of a scene as quickly as possible. A speed-through rehearsal helps actors memorize their lines and infuses energy into the pacing of a scene.

spike: A tape-mark on the stage that shows where an actor is supposed to stand or where a set piece should be placed.

stage business: Small actions performed by actors that make a play more realistic and believable.

stage directions: Words in the script that describe the actions for the characters that are not part of the dialogue.

stage left: The left side of the stage, from the actor's perspective. The same side of the theater as house right.

stage manager: A person responsible for keeping all rehearsals and performances organized and on schedule, and for calling sound and light cues during the show.

stage right: The right side of the stage, from the actor's perspective. The same side of the theater as house left.

strike: 1) To remove a prop or set piece from the stage. 2) To clean up the stage and theater after closing.

stumble-through: The first complete run-through of the show after staging and choreography is complete. This rehearsal has plenty of stops and starts as the actors discover the flow of the show

traveler curtain: A curtain that hangs on a track upstage of the proscenium. The curtain opens in the center and can be pulled offstage into the wings. Traveler curtains are often closed to hide scene changes.

upstage: The part of the stage furthest from the audience; the opposite of downstage

wings: The area to the side of the stage just out of the audience's view.