

Theater Vocabulary

a cappella — to sing without musical accompaniment, origin: Italian

Actor's Equity Association — union for professional stage actors and actresses

audition — to try out for a role in a play

backstage — the part of the stage not visible to the audience

bit — a small non-speaking part, or a routine developed by a performer for his/her character

blocking — arranged movements and positions of an actor on a stage or in a performance space that accompany the progress of a play or scene

"break a leg" — an expression used in theater to wish someone good luck

business — (or stage business) refers to any tasks or activities an actor does within a scene



call — the appointed time when a performer must be present at the theater before a performance

callback — additional auditions for a specific role in a single production

cheat front — when an actor improves his/her projection and sightlines by changing the angle of his/her body to the audience.

choreographer — the individual who develops all dance steps for a production

cue — a sign or line that signals it is time for the actor to enter, exit, or speak during a scene

curtain call — the time following a play or performance when performers take a bow

dark — when a theatre is closed or at the beginning of a scene when the lights are down (off)

dialect — a regional speech pattern (southern, Italian, Irish)

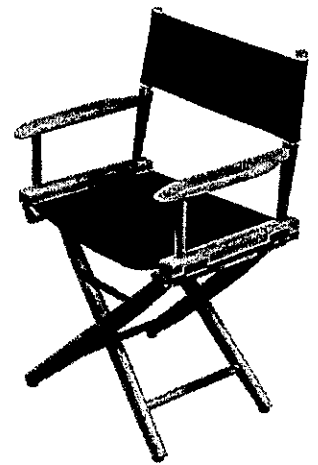
director — the person who is responsible for the overall, cohesive vision of a production and directs the actors towards that goal

dressing rooms — where actors change into and out of costumes

ensemble — a cast or group of performers working together to tell a story

focus — when an actor draws the audience's attention to himself/herself, in a positive way

fourth wall — the term that refers to the imaginary space between the performers on stage and the audience beyond it; it is the imagined fourth side of the setting of the play



gel — the transparent, colored-plastic that is placed in a theatre light to tint the light on the stage, helping to create depth

go up — when a play/performance starts (referring to the curtain "going up"); when an actor forgets his/her lines

green room — where the actors wait to be called for their scenes, ready and in costume, until just before their cue

house — the part of the theater where the audience sits



lights up — refers to when the lights go up at the beginning of the show, the show begins!

mark — a specific space on stage that a performer must stand on, or hit, in the course of executing his/her blocking

masking — drapes that cover the wings of the stage (backstage) where actors exit the stage or wait to enter a scene

monologue — dialog performed by one person, either spoken to another character, him/herself, or directed to the audience

musical director — the director responsible for conducting instrumental and vocal direction during rehearsals and performance

notes — constructive comments that directors give to the cast for the purpose of improving the next performance

off book — when an actor has memorized his/her lines and no longer is using his/her script in rehearsal

pace — the energy and rate of progression throughout a performance

pit — where the orchestra is located

producer(s) — the individual(s) who handles the financial, marketing, and commercial aspects of a production

projection — the method by which the sound of a voice is pushed a distance; the display of a filmed image used for scenic effect

prop — any object carried or used on the stage by an actor during a scene

props mistress/master — the theatre technician in charge of props placement, distribution, preparation, and maintenance

props table — the table backstage where props are organized and maintained by the props mistress/master in preparation for a performance

proscenium — the front edge of the stage, a stage that has a "picture frame" opening onto the audience

read through — the very first rehearsal where the play is read aloud by the cast

royalties — the money a theater must pay the author to produce a play

soliloquy — a lengthy speech by one performer that expresses that character's feelings or views to the audience

stage directions — specific stage-oriented terms used by the director and/or playwright to block the play.

stage manager — the person who notes all blocking, entrances and exits, lighting cues, sound cues, costuming requirements, and props needed to rehearse and to perform a play

strike — the time following the final performance of a show when the set, lights, costumes, props, etc. are dismantled, cleaned, cataloged, and stored, or returned to the rental agency

technical director — the person who manages all technical concerns for a production (lights, sets, costumes, makeup, props, etc.)

warm ups — exercises used to improve physical movement, voice quality, and mental focus and energy for a performance or scene

wings — the areas on the left and right of the stage where a performer enters or exits

