

Vocabulary Definitions and Sentences

So you found the words and now you're ready to define them and write sentences for each word. Let me help you so we can make sure it's done right every time.

**First and foremost - Follow these directions.
If you don't...you won't get credit. Period. End of story.**

Remember, it must be turned in ON time, EVERY time or you WON'T get credit.

To help, we are going to use the same example that you will find when you find the actual word list.

1	Week 3		
2	9/10/14		
3	Incandescent	LT	4
	Adagio	MT	
	Ensembles	MT	
	Opera	MT	
	Chief Electrician	TJ	
	Adept	SAT	
	Eulogy	SAT	
	Jocular	SAT	
	Pacifist	SAT	
	Sporadic	SAT	

1. The first thing we need is the VOCABULARY FORM that is found on the website under YOUR class.
 - a. You will need to TYPE the sentences and definitions on this form. Handwritten is NOT accepted.
2. Our first word is *Incandescent* so you need to look that word up.
 - a. First - find the LT definition page. Again, located on the website under YOUR class.
 - b. Second - open that file
 - c. Third – find the word *Incandescent* and type the definition from that file on to the Vocab form.
 - d. Fourth - now write a sentence for that word.

Vocabulary Definitions and Sentences

Sample 1 & 2

1	Definition	Word	Incandescent	Light source consisting of a metal filament (Tungsten) which glows white hot when current is passed through.
	Sentence	Incandescent light bulbs were replaced by the more eco-friendly halogen lights all around the United States.		
2	Definition	Word	Incandescent	Light Bulb
	Sentence	I turned the incandescent light on.		

3. Sample 1

- a. The word is written inside the box.
- b. Notice that the FULL definition is typed out.
- c. Also notice that the sentence is COMPLETE.
 - i. It shows a complete understanding of the word AND is consistent with the ability and intellect of a high school student.

4. Sample 2

- a. The word is written inside the box
 - b. The definition is NOT complete and only gives a partial idea of what the word is or means.
 - c. Is the sentence complete? Yes. Is the word used in the sentence? Yes. Is it consistent with the intellect of a high school student? Absolutely not. That is a sentence I might expect from an elementary student.
5. Simply writing a sentence DOES NOT get you credit.
 6. If you copy and paste your friend's sentence you will BOTH get ZERO credit for the work. Even if the sentences are great, you still plagiarized the work so NEITHER of you will get credit.
 7. This is a very easy assignment. All you have to do is DO IT and do it correctly. That's it.

Stage Management

10 out of 12

(USA) A contractual term for a long all-day actor (or crew) call. A typical contract will have at least one of these days, when the actors may be kept at work for 10 hours out of a maximum of 12. During the 12 hour period covered (e.g. 9am to 9pm) there will be either two 1 hour breaks or one two hour break for food, and a total of 10 hours of work. Whilst the work day is long, the intensity allows a great deal of progress to be made. American Actors's Equity only allows a period of 10 out of 12 rehearsal during the 7 days before a performance opens.

ABOVE

An actor move upstage (e.g. Clive moves above the chair).

ABTT / A.B.T.T.

The Association of British Theatre Technicians.

[ABTT Website](#)

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 can do which makes them different from Techies (!!).

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. Also known as the **playing area**

This term is also used to describe the smaller subdivisions of the main stage area which are lit separately by the lighting designer (e.g. 'The stage is split into 6 acting areas, 3 downstage and 3 upstage').

(Also the name of an early Strand down-lighting floodlight - known as 'Ack Ack').

ACTING EDITION

Published copy of a script containing notes for the actor and technicians, often credited to the design team of the premiere production not necessarily the playwright.

ACTION PROP

A hand-held practical prop used by an actor for combat or for a specific purpose.

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.

AMATEUR

Member of a theatre company which is not professional.

AMDRAM

Short for Amateur Dramatics.

ANTI RAKE

The act of modifying furniture or props by shortening the upstage legs etc. so that they can stand level on a raked stage. Known as COUNTER RAKE in the US. See also Raked Stage.

APPLE BOX

A small wooden box used as a temporary step or to lift an item (or actor) up to make it visible. Named after the standard-sized fruit packing crate. Used in the motion picture industry.

ARENA

Form of stage where the audience are seated on at least two (normally three, or all four) sides of the whole acting area.

See END ON, THRUST, IN THE ROUND.

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.

ASM

Assistant Stage Manager.

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

Usually shortened to ASM, the assistant stage manager is 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. She or he is also a member of the stage 'crew'. See also STAGE MANAGER and DSM.

AUTOMATION

1) Facility available on larger sound mixing desks allowing channel muting or even fader moves to be taken under the control of a computer to ensure accurate and repeatable mixing.

2) Describes the method used instead of stage crew for moving bits of set around shows with a big budget. See MOUSE, SPADE.

AVISTA / A VISTA

A change of setting / scenery unhidden from the audience. This technique is increasingly popular due to modern advances in scenic automation, where entire set changes can be accomplished in seconds.

BALANCE CALL

Session with opera performers in a new venue (or on a new set) to check the balance of voices and orchestra is correct, and that the performers can hear the orchestra enough. Foldback can be used to increase the volume of certain key instruments (e.g. piano / keyboard) on stage for the performers.

BAPAM

British Association for Performing Arts Medicine. Specialist health and safety support for performers and technicians.

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. Also known as a BARREL. When vertical, known as a BOOM. Sometimes known as a PIPE in the US, although many curse that usage, and demand the use of Batten ; 'A pipe is what you smoke; a batten is what you hang your instruments from.'

Language, especially in theatre, is rarely universal! In German, ZUGSTANGE.

BAR BELLS

Bar Bells are rung in public areas of the theatre to warn the audience that the performance is about to start/continue. Usually operated from the prompt corner and sometimes followed by Front of House Calls. The bells are also used as a warning to FOH and bar staff that the interval is about to commence or that the show is about to end.

BARREL

See BAR.

BASTARD PROMPT

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 Stage Manager can't hear him/herself 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.)

BAUPROBE

(German) A rehearsal on the stage where a show is to be performed, with a basic set laid out, so the director and designer can work on any staging issues to do with the size of the scenery, before it is built.

BEAT

1) In acoustics, a periodic variation in amplitude which results from the addition of two sound waves with nearly the same frequency. Also affects radio reception.

- 2) A deliberate pause for dramatic / comic effect.
- 3) A measure of time when cueing (e.g. "the LX cue needs to go four beats after the door is closed").
- 4) 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/actresses are then called by name. A similar call is given after the interval (e.g. "Act Two Beginners to the stage please"). See also HALF, QUARTER.

BELL BOARD

A live sound effects board on which are mounted a number of different types of doorbells / phone bells etc. Usually operated by stage management. The switch or bell push to operate the doorbell (or even the whole bell board) can easily be mounted on the set if the director wants the actors to operate it themselves.

BELOW

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

BELTPACK

Part of the communication ('cans') system in a theatre, the Beltpack contains the controls and circuitry to drive the HEADSET worn by crew members. Each beltpack connects into the headset ring and back to a PSU (Power Supply Unit) which is powered from the mains. See also CANS.

BIT PART

A small role for an actor.

BLACK BOX

A kind of flexible 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.

BLACK COMEDY

A comedy play with a distinctly disturbing quality. It may have a macabre theme, or relate to the more unpleasant side of life. Also a play by Peter Shaffer with unusual lighting requirements.

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")

BLACKS

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

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.)

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

Blocking Notation

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 action of opening or closing a BOOK FLAT.

3) The non-sung text of a musical is known as the Book. The sung text is called the Libretto.

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) Describes the fast in/out movement of 'bouncing' flown house tabs, used during curtain calls. This can also apply to the fast blackout/lights up cues that happen at curtain calls.

4) This facility is 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. Allows many sounds to be recorded onto one tape.

BRAIL

A horizontal rope, wire or chain attached at either end of a piece of scenery or lighting bar pulling it upstage or downstage of its naturally hanging position to allow another flying item to pass, or to improve its position. See also BREAST LINE.

BREAK A LEG

A superstitious and widely accepted alternative to 'Good Luck' (which is considered bad luck). More available at the link below.

More on Break A Leg

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.

BREAST LINE

A form of brail running horizontally across the width of the stage, passed across the fly bars suspension lines and attached at the fly floors to brail the scenery up or down stage.

BRIDGE

- 1) A walkway, giving access to technical and service areas above the stage or auditorium, or linking fly-floors. See also CATWALK.
- 2) A lighting position above the auditorium, commonly with a catwalk above it to access lighting equipment and electrical systems is known in Dutch as a *Zaalbrug*.

BUMP IN

See GET-IN.

BUSINESS

A piece of unscripted or improvised action, often comic in intention, used to establish a character, fill a pause in dialogue, or to establish a scene. An author may simply suggest 'business' to indicate the need for some action at that point in the play.

C.C.T.V. / CCTV

Closed Circuit television. A video relay system, used in the theatre to give a view of the stage to remote technical operators (especially stage managers). Also used to give musical performers a view of the conductor (and vice versa) to help in keeping time. It's called Closed Circuit because the signal is not being broadcast anywhere - there's a direct link between camera and monitor.

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.

CAD

Computer-Aided Design. Using a computer to help with 2D plans and drawings, or increasingly for 3D visualisation of how a set will look, and how lighting will affect it. See also WYSIWYG.

CALL

- 1) A notification of a working session (eg a Rehearsal Call, Band Call, Photo Call)
- 2) The period of time to which the above call refers. (eg "Your call for tomorrow nights 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".
- 6) The Colour Call is a list of lighting gel required for the lighting rig.

CALL BOARD

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

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 or Stage Manager over cans.

CANS

1) Headset earpiece, microphone and belt-pack used for communication and co-ordination of technical departments during a performance. (e.g. "Electrics on cans", "Going off cans", "Quiet on cans!"). A commonly used system in the UK is produced by Canford Audio under the TechPro brand. In the USA, ClearCom is commonly used.
2) Any headphones.
3) Short for PARCANS.

CANVAS

Used to cover flats as a less heavy alternative to plywood.

CAST

The members of the acting company.

CASUALS

Part-time temporary technicians (paid by the hour).

CATTLE CALL

Old term for an open audition for chorus roles in a musical or large entertainment spectacular. The performers tend to be treated as cattle and kept together in a large room and called in groups to audition. The Broadway musical "A Chorus Line" depicts such an audition.

CATWALK

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

CENTRE CENTRE

(CENTER CENTER in the USA) - 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.

Blocking Notation

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. Known in the US as CENTER LINE.
See also SETTING LINE.

CENTRE STAGE

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

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!)

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.

CHEWING THE SCENERY

An actor who gives a completely hammy and over-the-top performance is said to be Chewing the Scenery. See the link below for more.

[More about Chewing the Scenery](#)

CLAQUE

A claque is an organized body of professional applauders in French theatres and opera houses. Members of a claque are called claqueurs.

CLEANERS

Auditorium working lights. Used for cleaning and setting up the auditorium before the house lights (usually more atmospheric) are switched on.

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'.

CLEARING STICK

A long, often bamboo, rod used to rescue flying objects or to prevent them from becoming entangled.

CLEARs / GIVING CLEARs

(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.

CLEAT

Piece of timber or metal for tying off a rope line by taking a turn around it, followed by a series of figure eight turns and a locking tuck(s) made in the final turn. Used when flying or for holding scenic pieces together with a cleat line.

Submitted by Chris Higgs

CLEAT LINE

Rope passed through cleats on two adjacent flats alternately to hold the flats together.

CLEW

A ring of metal which is used to join several flying lines or wires to a single pulling wire.

CLOTH

A piece of scenic canvas, painted or plain, that is flown or fixed to hang in a vertical position.

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).

In the US, a cloth is known as a **Drop** (from backdrop).

CLOVE HITCH

Invaluable hitch that every technician should know.

[Video](#)

COD PANTO

Nowadays believed to be an acronym of Crew On Display, but in fact dating back to Victorian times, when it meant a 'spoof' of something, the Cod Panto is a tradition in many British theatres that have pantomimes over Christmas. Including performances by (sometimes) all of the technical staff and (usually) none of the actual cast, the panto is written and rehearsed towards the end of the run and is performed in the last few days of the panto, and is often followed by a party. It's performed for the actors and any remaining crew and sometimes friends and family, but usually has an 18+ rating. Jokes refer to any incidents during the run of the show, and send everything up with no holds barred.

COLOUR-BLIND CASTING

Usually known as **NON-TRADITIONAL CASTING**, this is the casting of ethnic minority and female actors in roles where race, ethnicity, or sex is not specified, or against that specification. (e.g. an adult plays a child, a black actor plays a part previously played by caucasian actors, a woman plays a previously male role).

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.

COMEDY

TO BE DEFINED

COMIC RELIEF

A comic scene (or line) included in an otherwise straight-faced play to provide a relief from tension for the

audience.

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.

COMPANY

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

COMPANY MANAGER

In a touring theatre company, the Company Manager is responsible for the well-being of the cast and crew of the show; ensuring their arrival at the venue, dealing with their payments, dealing with any disputes, and generally ensuring all is well and happy. The CM is also the representative of the producers in that he/she is responsible for collecting payments from the venue management.

In a building-based theatre company, the role is more administrative, dealing with payroll and other matters connected with the cast and crew of the current production(s).

CONCESSION

- 1) (UK) A reduction in ticket price given to some eligible patrons (e.g. unemployed, students)
- 2) (US) A merchandising stand in the foyer of the theatre. ('The concession stand').

CONDUIT

Metal or plastic pipe used to carry electrical conductors as part of a permanent electrical installation. See also Trunking.

Also used to add weight to the bottom of a flown cloth.

CONTACT SHEET

- 1) A list of names and contact details (phone numbers, addresses) for cast and crew.
- 2) A sheet showing all of the frames from a roll of film to enable a choice to be made about which to enlarge properly.

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. The stage manager calling the cues is very often at the side of the stage (traditionally stage left) but in some venues he/she 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 BOX.

CORNER PLATE

A triangle of plywood used to strengthen the corners of a flat.

CORPSING

An actor who collapses into uncontrollable laughter during a rehearsal or performance is said to be Corpsing. There are numerous ways of covering the laughter, mostly involving the actor turning away from the audience and covering his mouth with his hand.

Some British pantomimes have an outbreak of rehearsed corpsing, when something appears to go wrong, but is in fact carefully planned. This helps to lift the audience's spirits and make the show seem more alive.

COUNT

A measure of time used to add space between cues (for example, LX cue 12 goes on a count of 3 after the actor sits down).

COUNTER RAKE

See ANTI RAKE.

COUNTERWEIGHT

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

COUNTERWEIGHT SYSTEM

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

See Double Purchase, Single Purchase, Flying.

COUR

From the French *coté cour* meaning Stage Left.

Derivation of Court & Garden

CRADLE

Metal frame in which counterweights are carried in a flying system. Known in the US as an Arbor. See also SINGLE PURCHASE and DOUBLE PURCHASE. In German, GEWICHTSSCHLITTEN.

CRASH BOX

Sealed metal box filled with broken crockery which can be dropped or thrown offstage to simulate breaking glass / damage etc.

CROSBYS

US for saddle and 'U' cable clamps (from the manufacturers name).

Crosby Group website

CROSS FADE

Bringing another lighting state up to completely replace the current lighting state. Also applies to sound effects / music. Sometimes abbreviated to Xfade or XF.

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.

CSM

Company Stage Manager

CUE

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

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!")

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. The actor / technician can acknowledge the standby by pressing a button which makes the light go steady. In the US, a red light means warn, and when the light goes off, it means GO. The UK system seems to be more secure, but it depends what you're used to.

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 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.

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 curved 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 blue skycloth, or any flattage at the rear of the stage. Although strictly a cyc should be curved, most cycs are flat with curved wraparound ends. A more effective backing can be obtained by hanging a sharkstooth gauze just in front of the plain white cyc which gives a hazy effect of distance. From Greek *Cyclos* (circle) and *Horama* (view or vision).

See also BOUNCE, ISORA. The German equivalent term is *operafolie*.

DANCE FLOOR

1) A vinyl floor covering, usually kept on a plastic or cardboard tube, which is rolled out and taped to the stage floor to create a surface suitable for dance. Dance floor should be left to adjust to room temperature before being taped otherwise it will not lay flat. Many different types of floor are available, including different colours and degrees of cushioning, and the product may be known by it's manufacturer's name (e.g. Marley Floor, Harlequin Floor).

2) A wooden floor which is either naturally springy or has been constructed with rubber pads under it which absorb impact, and create a surface which performers are able to jump on without damaging knees or other joints, as the floor absorbs the impact.

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.

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). In the US, TRIM has the same meaning.

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'

Submitted by Chris Higgs

DEAD MAN'S CONTROL

Also known as DEADMAN'S BUTTON (DMB). This is a handle that has to be squeezed by a technician in order for a pre-programmed automation sequence to take place. If for any reason the relevant technician is not in position, the system does not allow the sequence to run.

DECK

- 1) Stage/Rostrum Floor (e.g. "Fly that flat in to the deck") [known in German as *bühnenboden*]
- 2) Tape deck/Record deck.
- 3) A steel-framed platform with a wooden top used with replaceable scaffold legs (Trade names include Steeldeck, Metrodeck (made by Maltbury), ProDeck).

DEPUTY STAGE MANAGER

Usually shortened to DSM, this is a member of the Stage Management team. In the UK, the DSM is often "on the 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. Known in some places as a Stage Director. See also PROMPT BOOK, STAGE MANAGER.

DEUS EX MACHINA

Latin for God in the Machine. A mechanical device used in Greek classical and medieval drama to lower an actor playing God from the flies above the stage to resolve the conflict in a play. The mechanical crane that carried the DEUS EX MACHINA was known as MECHANE. The term sometimes refers to a character which has a similar function in a more modern drama.

DIGS

Colloquial term for short-term accommodation for actors during the run of a show. Originally short for diggings, the term appeared in the UK publication *The Stage* in 1893.

DIM OUT

Reduction of lighting level for a scene change, that isn't quite a BLACKOUT.

DOCK

See SCENE DOCK.

DOLLY

A small wheeled platform used to move heavy items. (E.g. a piano dolly). Also refers to a wheeled camera trolley running on tracks used in the film industry.

DOOR SLAM

A small wooden box with a heavy door and various bolts and locks used to simulate slamming and other door sound effects offstage.

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 (the lowest part of a raked stage). [See Diagram]
- 2) A movement towards the audience (in a proscenium theatre).

DRAPES

Stage Curtains. See also TABS.

DRENCHER

System of pipes arranged at the top of a safety curtain to drench it with water in the event of fire.

DRESS CIRCLE

See CIRCLE.

DRESS 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.

Also known as a **Costume Parade**.

DRESS REHEARSAL

A full rehearsal, with all technical 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. See also TAB DRESSING.

DRIFT

1) The effective travelling distance of a suspension barrel between the lowest it can reach with the scenic piece attached and the underside of the grid. The drift will be variable depending on the depth of a scenic piece suspended beneath the barrel. ie the comment 'there isn't enough drift' will usually mean that a piece cannot be flown out sufficiently high to mask.

2) The wire that is used to achieve the drift (e.g. 'pass me a 2 metre drift, please').

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 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. See also DROP BAG.

DRUGGET

Canvas or cloth used to mask and/or protect a floor.

DRY

- 1) An actor forgetting the words of his script.
- 2) To record a sound without using any effect or other processing is to record it 'dry'. Recording with an effect is recording 'wet'.

DRY RUN

A practice run, usually a Technical run without actors.

DRY TECH

See TECHNICAL REHEARSAL.

DS

Abbreviation for DOWNSTAGE.

DUTCHMAN

Tape or material used to cover the seams between flats or to cover hinges, prior to painting.

ELEVATION

A working drawing usually drawn to scale, showing the side view of a set or lighting rig. See PLAN.
In the US, the term "elevation" refers to a Front elevation. A Rear elevation shows backs of scenic elements. A side view of a set is known as a "section".
See also PAINTERS' ELEVATION.

ELEVATOR STAGE

A type of mechanised stage which has sections that can be raised or lowered.

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. See also THRUST, IN THE ROUND, TRAVERSE.

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 ghosts entrance is from upstage left).

EQUITY

Short for British Actors' Equity (or American Actor's Equity Association, founded in 1913, is the labor union representing actors and stage managers in the legitimate theatre in the United States). The trade union of actors,

directors, designers and stage managers.

EQUITY LIGHT

See GHOST LIGHT.

More on Ghost Light

ESCAPE STAIRS

American equivalent of Get-Off treads.

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).

EXIT SIGN

Usually illuminated sign, of standard size, which should always be visible, showing an audience member and the company the nearest exit. New legislation in Europe means that the word 'EXIT' has been removed from these signs to be replaced by 'Running Man', known more politically correctly as 'Person moving purposefully'.

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.

FALSE PROSCENIUM

A 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.

FALSE STAGE

A special stage floor laid for a production. For example to allow trucks guided by tracks cut into this false floor, to be moved by steel wires running in the shallow (2 or 3 inch) void between the false floor and the original stage floor. A false stage is also required for putting a revolve onto a stage.

FESTOON

1) See Swag

2) Describes tabs which adopt a sculpted shape.

3) A length of cable incorporating a number of lamp holders used for outdoor party lighting etc. Available in multi-circuit form so that the lamps can be 'chased'.

FEV

Short for French Enamel Varnish, a stain which is a mixture of shellac and dye, diluted in methylated spirit.

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!!

Society of American Fight Directors

Fightdirector.com

FIRE CURTAIN

See SAFETY CURTAIN.

FIRE EXIT

Particular exit(s) from a building designated by local authority fire officer to be the correct means of escape from a part of the building in case of fire. It is the responsibility of all staff and performers to ensure that all fire exits are kept clear, unlocked and accessible at all times.

FIRE EXTINGUISHER

Essential tools of the pyrotechnician's trade ! In the UK, they used to be colour-coded according to content (Carbon Dioxide (Black), Water (Red), Foam (Cream), Halon Gas (Green) Powder (Blue)) but now, they're all red with a small label saying what they are. Another great leap forward !.

FIRE PROOFING

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

FIT-UP

Initial assembly on stage of a production's hardware, including hanging scenery, building trucks etc.

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.

FLAMECHECK is a commonly used treatment, suitable for a wide range of materials.

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.

(UK) A flat is supported by a stage brace and brace weight, connected to the flat using a screw eye.

Hardboard is sometimes used, but is unnecessarily heavy and will lose its shape in time. Most theatres have a range of stock flattage made to a standard size, and re-used many times.

A **Rail** is a horizontal batten within a flat.

A **Stile** is a side or vertical piece within a flat.

A **Sill** is the bottom rail of a flat.

See also BOOK FLAT, HOLLYWOOD.

FLIES

See FLY TOWER.

FLOAT FLATS

A technique to get a set of flats to a horizontal position on the stage floor by removing weights and braces, ensuring the area is clear and that people are wearing safety goggles if there's danger of flying dust, then footing the flats, and pushing them over so they are cushioned by air pressure and land safely on the deck. Known as *Deixar caure* in Catalan, *souffler un decor* in French, *Op de wind* in Dutch.

FLOGGER

Strips of canvas attached to a handle for dusting flats or scenic pieces prior to painting.

FLOOR PLAN

See Plan.

FLOORCLOTH

See Cloth.

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.

FLY GALLERY

See FLY FLOOR.

FLY LINE

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

FLY RAIL / FLYRAIL

Originally, this was the structure where the flying lines / ropes were tied off to hold scenery and other flown equipment in position. With the advent of counterweighted systems, this refers to the area where the flying system is operated. Also known as PIN RAIL or, in the UK, FLY FLOOR.

FLYING

See FLYMAN, FLYING HARNESS, KIRBY WIRE, HEMP SET, COUNTERWEIGHT SYSTEM, SPOTTER, DOUBLE PURCHASE, SINGLE PURCHASE.

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.

FORELOOK

Term not used in UK theatre - currently searching for a definition.

FOUND SPACE

A performance space that wasn't designed to be one. Performances that take place outside the theatre (e.g. in historic buildings, factories, public areas) are said to be using found spaces.

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.

FRENCH SCENE

A scene division within a play marked (as in French drama) by the entrance / exit of an actor. These divisions can be useful in splitting up rehearsal schedules, and for marking lighting changes etc.

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.

FULL BLACKS

A set of black tabs (curtains) that cover the entire width of the stage (or set).

FULL FRONT

Actor position - facing the audience.

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. Also known as Duct Tape. See PVC Tape.

GENIE

(Trade Name) A range of mobile access platforms or lifting devices with either hand-cranked or compressed air lifting mechanisms.

[*Genie Industries website*](#)

GET-IN

The process of moving set, props and other hardware into a theatre prior to the fit-up. (aka LOAD IN (US) and BUMP IN (Aus.) and PACK IN (NZ.))

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

GET-OUT

Moving an entire production out of the venue, and into either a large waste-disposal skip, or into transport. Usually preceded by the strike. (aka Load out (USA) or Bump out (AUS.) or Pack Out (NZ).)

GHOSTLIGHT / GHOST LIGHT

(US) 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.

Also known as the 'Equity Light'. See link below for more information.

Could also refer to the light emitted by a lantern when a dimmer has not been 'trimmed' correctly, and is leaking.

[More information about Ghost Light](#)

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 UP

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.

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.

GOFER

Colloquial name sometimes given to a junior member of the crew, who is given instructions to fetch and carry equipment / tools etc.

GOING DARK

1) See DARK.

2) Warning to people on stage that the lights are about to be switched off. Normally said during lighting plotting

sessions or technical rehearsals.

GRAND DRAPE

See GRAND CURTAIN.

GRAPEVINE

The theatre community is very close, and news/rumours often spread via unofficial routes. This so-called GRAPEVINE means that people are often well-informed about latest news. It is also very important to make a good impression on everyone you meet in the business, as bad impressions will be spread around the grapevine very quickly. Modern tools such as Twitter have made the grapevine even more widely spread, and great care must be taken to not publish anything on Twitter that you wouldn't say to someones face.

GREASEPAINT

Name refers to make up supplied in stick form, for application to the face or body. Needs special removing cream.

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. (Italian: *gratticia / graticciata / graticcio*)
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 flies, i.e. to the limit of travel of the flying lines, is said to have been gridded.

GRIP

(US) Member of stage crew responsible for moving items of scenery during the show. Usually wears black. A group of grips is a GRIP CREW. This term is borrowed from the film/tv industry, where a grip handles and sets up camera equipment and lighting.

GROUNDLING

Poorer members of the audience in an Elizabethan theatre who occupied the open-air sections of the theatre at ground level, just in front of the performance space.

GROUNDPLAN

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 groundplan 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 groundplan 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.

Typical scales are 1:24 (.5' to 1 foot) or, metrically 1:25 (1cm to .25m). Venues have a base plan showing proscenium, walls, seating etc on which individual set and lighting plans can be drawn.

HALF

Call given to the actors half an hour before they will be called to the stage for the beginning of a performance.

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.

HAND

(US) Short for Stage Hand (member of Stage Crew).

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.

See also NO.1 SOUND.

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 belt-pack.

See also CANS.

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 LIGHTS

The auditorium lighting which is commonly faded out when the performance starts.

IATSE / I.A.T.S.E.

International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (USA) Stage employees union.

[IATSE website](#)

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 THRUST, END ON, TRAVERSE.

INSET

A small scene set inside a larger one.

INTERMISSION

See INTERVAL.

INVENTORY

A numbered packing list which itemises all single pieces travelling on a tour; all cartons, flightcases, crates, baskets together with quantities and descriptions of contents. Extremely important if touring abroad to satisfy customs. Dimensions/weight/value may also require recording.

JARDIN

French for Garden. See STAGE RIGHT.

Derivation of Court & Garden

JUKEBOX MUSICAL

A stage musical show that has been constructed from pre-released existing songs, usually from one artist or genre. Examples are The Buddy Holly Story, Mamma Mia and We Will Rock You.

JUVENILE LEAD

The most significant role in a play or film that is performed by a young actor / actress.

JUVES

Short for 'Juveniles' - child members of the company.

KENSINGTON GORE

A brand of fake blood used on stage and in movies, named after a London street. It was manufactured by a retired British pharmacist, John Tynegate, during the 1960s and 1970s, in the village of Abbotsbury, Dorset. Many varieties of blood, having various degrees of viscosity, shades and textures were available. Since Tynegate's death, the name "Kensington Gore" has become a generic term for stage blood. Kensington Gore was used in the film *The Shining*. Director Stanley Kubrick had several thousand gallons of it gushing out of an opening elevator during the elevator door scene.

KILL

To switch off (a light/sound effect); to strike/remove (a prop).

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'.

LEGS

Drape set as masking piece at the side of the acting area. Usually set up in pairs across the stage and used in conjunction with borders to frame the audiences view. One of many possible origins of the phrase 'Break a Leg', meaning to take an extra encore from the legs after a successful performance.

[More information on Break A Leg](#)

LIBRETTO

Text of an opera, or other long musical vocal composition. The script of a musical.

LIGHTING PLOT

The process of recording information about each lighting state either onto paper or into the memory of a computerised lighting board for subsequent playback. (in USA, this term is used for a lighting plan and a lights session is when lighting states are set up.)

LIMITED ENGAGEMENT

A run of performances in a particular venue with a definite end date.

LOAD IN

See GET IN.

LOADING BAY

Access into the theatre for scenery and other equipment. Also called the Get In.

LOADING GALLERY

(also known as **LOADING PLATFORM**) this is a high level platform above the fly floor at the side of the stage where the fly lines are operated, where weights can be loaded into the cradles of the counterweight system. It is at high level so that weights can be loaded when the bar is at the lowest point (usually a few feet above stage level).

LOCK RAIL

The part of the flying system in the theatre where the brakes and rope locks are applied to the ropes to ensure that a fly bar cannot move once set.

LORT

(US) **League Of Resident Theatres**. It is an agreement with Actor's Equity regarding payment/treatment of actors. Prior to this agreement, Equity basically dealt with Broadway type productions and nothing else.

LX

Short for Electrics. 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).

M.U. / MU

M.U. is short for Musicians Union (UK).

[Musicians Union website](#)

MACBETH

See Superstition.

MARKING OUT

Sticking tapes to the floor of the rehearsal space to indicate the groundplan 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!

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).

German Masking consists of 3 sets of flats or drapes lining the edges of the performance space (ie the 2 sides at 90° to the proscenium arch, and the rear of the space masked parallel to the pros. opening.) This type of masking is sometimes known as "Up and Down Masking" as it runs up- and down-stage. This term seems to be rarely used now.

Italian Masking consists of a set of legs and borders which are set up in a configuration similar to forced perspective. The downstage legs are furthest apart, and each set of legs moving upstage is moved onstage, with the upstage set narrowest. The exact distances involved vary according to the size of the space, and the acting area required. The same applies to the borders.

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. (From the Latin for 'of the morning', but who does theatre in the morning?)

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.

MR SANDS

Often used as a code word for fire over a public address system (e.g. 'Mr Sands is in the foyer' means there's a fire in the foyer). Many theatres have their own code words.

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.

NUMBER ONE TOUR

A tour (of a show) that is booked into the best venues available in each area.

O.P.

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

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 THE 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

A movement towards the centre of the stage from the sides. The opposite of OFFSTAGE.

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 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.

OUT

In flying, means up (out of sight).

OVERTURE

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

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.

PAPER TECH

See TECHNICAL REHEARSAL.

PARODOS

Parodos (also parode and parodus, plural parodoi, Ancient Greek) is a term used in the theater of ancient Greece, referring either to a side-entrance, or to the first song sung by the chorus after its entrance from the side wings.

PD's

(Abbreviation for *Per Diem*, Latin for Daily) A daily payment by an employer to touring technicians to cover daily

living expenses. This is additional to the monthly / weekly wage.

PEACOCK

See SUPERSTITION.

PER DIEMS

See PDs.

PERFORMER FLYING

A manual or electrically driven system for lifting performers off the stage and allowing spectacular stunts and aerial sequences to be performed.

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.

PIT NET

Protective net across the orchestra pit to prevent any objects (or actors) 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'. See also BEGINNERS.

PLAYING SPACE

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

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.

PNEUMATIC

A system using pressurised gas to create mechanical motion. In theater, pneumatic systems are used to move heavy objects such as seating platforms or permanent scenic features on **air castors**. Older theaters may have pipe organs which operate pneumatically, or inflatable structures for specific productions. Pneumatic tools such as paint sprayers and nailguns are also used.

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). Stage Management may prefer to call 8A instead of 8.5, but this is down to personal preference. 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).

PPE / P.P.E.*

(UK - Health & Safety) Abbreviation of Personal Protective Equipment. More information coming soon.

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). Light fittings which have to light up on the set are called Practicals.

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) An independently controllable section of a manual lighting board which allows the setting up of a lighting state before it is needed. Each preset has a master fader which selects the maximum level of dimmers controlled by that preset.

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.

PROMENADE

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

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'.

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 she/he can see the actors.

PROPERTIES

See PROPS.

PROPERTY MASTER / PROP MASTER

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

PROPPING

The task, often performed by stage management in the UK, or by the scenic designer in a small company, of going around finding / borrowing / buying props for the production.

It's essential that a clear record is kept of the source of the props so that they can be efficiently returned at the end of the show. Reference books are used to ensure the items are correct for the time period of 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.

[More about Props Tables](#)

PROXEMICS

Proxemics means the distances between character/actors in a play. It shows their relationships and feelings. e.g. if two characters stood far apart from each other you could assume that they either did not know each other at all, or had fallen out and were no longer speaking to each other.

PUSH AND PULL

Actors who have to move scenery / furniture around the stage, earning them extra money. Slang term is Pickfords, after the UK Furniture removals company.

R&R

British Army term, short for Rest and Recuperation - time away from the front line to "recharge" with family and home life.

RAG ROLLING

A painting technique used by scenic artists to quickly get a complex textured paint effect over a large area. A base coat is applied first, which is allowed to dry, then a contrasting colour is applied, and while still wet, a scrunched up piece of rag is dabbed at the area to remove the still-wet top coat in a random pattern. Alternatively, an unevenly tied rag around a paint roller can be run over the wall to achieve the same effect.

RAIN BOX

A box or tray containing dried peas etc which produces a rain sound effect when inclined.

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.

RECIT CALL

Session with the musical director for opera performers, to rehearse the sung dialogue for the coming performance.

RECITATIVE

Musical terminology for a sung dialogue passage, in the rhythm of ordinary speech, during an opera, operetta or oratorio. Often shortened to RECIT.

REHEARSAL

(from Latin hirpex - 'large rake used as a harrow'. Rehearse means 're-harrow', or to 'go over again'. It originally meant 'to repeat' (mid 14th century). It wasn't until the late 16th century that it came to its modern meaning.)

A session when actors are called to work through some scenes from the play in private. A TECHNICAL REHEARSAL is the first time when technical elements (lighting, set etc.) are combined with actors. A DRESS REHEARSAL is a performance of the show as it will be on opening night.

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.

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').

Submitted by Bert Morris.

REUTLINGER

A range of adjustable steel wire fittings which can be used to suspend a static load and adjust the height easily. Available from Doughty Engineering.

[Doughty Engineering website](#)

RIDER

(Technical Rider) Information sent to a venue by a touring group detailing lighting, sound, staging and dressing room requirements. Ideally arrives before the group !

ROSIN

Also known as Colophony or Greek Pitch, Rosin is a solid form of resin obtained from pines and some other plants, mostly conifers, produced by heating fresh liquid resin to vaporize the volatile liquid terpene components. It is semi-transparent and varies in color from yellow to black. At room temperature rosin is brittle, but it melts at stove-top temperatures. It chiefly consists of different resin acids, especially abietic acid.

It is used in a number of applications for its friction-increasing properties. Ballet, flamenco, and Irish Dancers are known to rub the tips and heels of their shoes in powdered rosin to reduce slippage on clean wooden dance floors or competition/permanence stages. - it was at one time used in the same way in fencing and is still used as such by boxers.

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.

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 PLOT

A plot 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.

SAFE SYSTEM OF WORK

UK Health and Safety terminology. Can be defined as 'the integration of people, articles and substances in a suitable environment and workplace to produce and maintain an acceptable standard of safety. In this system, due consideration should be given to foreseeable emergencies and the provision of adequate facilities'

Submitted by Chris Higgs

SAND BAG

A canvas bag or sack, sealed at one end and tied at the other end, used to act as a weight. A sand bag can be attached to an unused flying spot line to stop it running back through the pulleys, and to enable it to fly in without fouling adjacent equipment.

SCENE CHANGE*

TO BE DEFINED

SCISSOR LIFT

A scissor lift is a type of aerial work platform (AWP), also known as an aerial device, elevating work platform (EWP), or mobile elevating work platform (MEWP). The AWP is a mechanical device used to provide temporary access for people or equipment to inaccessible areas, usually at height. The MEWP can usually be driven around the work area by the operator at height to provide safe access to a wide area, on a flat floor. Scissor lifts have also been used in scenic automation to provide a moveable platform, often built onto a moving base. The scissor lift is used because it is a self-contained device which requires no construction for it to operate within, and which does not extend beyond the horizontal dimensions of the platform.

The mechanism to achieve the vertical lift is the use of linked, folding supports in a criss-cross X pattern, known as a pantograph (or scissor mechanism). The upward motion is achieved by the application of pressure to the outside of the lowest set of supports, elongating the crossing pattern, and propelling the work platform vertically. The platform may also have an extending bridge section to allow closer access to the work area, because of the inherent limits of vertical-only movement.

The contraction of the scissor action can be hydraulic, pneumatic or mechanical (via a leadscrew or rack and pinion system). Depending on the power system employed on the lift, it may require no power to enter descent mode, but rather a simple release of hydraulic or pneumatic pressure. This is the main reason that these methods of powering the lifts are preferred, as it allows a fail-safe option of returning the platform to the ground by release of a manual valve.

SCRIPT

The text of a musical or play. Also contains stage directions and other notes.

SEGUE (pronounced

Musical term for an immediate follow-on. Now often used as jargon for any kind of immediate follow-on.

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?' French: d?cors.

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 with lead shot, used as a weight to hold scenery in place on stage. See also BRACE WEIGHT.

SHOW DECK

A false floor built on top of the theatre stage, which contains technical elements such as automation tracks or revolves, concealed lighting or smoke effects. In some large shows, the show deck completely replaces the existing theatre stage, which is put back into position when the show has finished its run.

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.

The Show 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.

SHOWCALLER

The member of the stage management team who is calling the cues. In the UK this person is known as the **DSM on the book**.

SIGHTLINES / SIGHT LINES

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 marked in the wings as a guide to the actors and crew to stay out of view.

SILL

See FLAT.

SILL IRON

A piece of flat iron screwed to the bottom rail of a door flat which holds it together, and ensures that the flat doesn't warp. Invisible to the audience.

SINGLE PURCHASE

Counterweight flying system where the cradle travels the same vertical distance as the fly bar. The counterweight frame therefore occupies the full height of the side wall of the stage. See also Double Purchase.

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.

SIZE

A bonding medium used with pigments and water to make an economic paint. Size is produced by boiling animal connective tissue, so it's known as Animal Glue. It's similar to Gelatin, also an animal glue, which is used in foodstuffs. See also SCENIC PAINT.

SKIN MONEY

Extra payment made to actors/actresses when nudity is required on stage.

SKIP (Costume/Props)

A large wicker basket or box, often wheeled, which stores costumes and/or props for touring.

SMA / S.M.A.

(UK) Stage Management Association who also publish the Freelist - a list of stage management available for work.

SMOKE DETECTORS

Many theatre buildings have complex fire alarm systems installed. Some theatre spaces have smoke detectors in them, which trigger a fire alarm when the space fills with smoke. The use of SMOKE MACHINES in these spaces can (and does) result in expensive call-outs of the fire department and evacuated auditoria.

There are special heat-sensitive detectors called RATE OF RISE detectors which trigger a fire alarm when the temperature rises faster than it should normally. Properly calibrated (and regularly tested) these can be as effective as the smoke detectors (which work by 'seeing' smoke particles in the air). If it's not possible to get Rate of Rise detectors installed in your theatre space instead of smoke detectors, you may be able (subject to local building regulations and local fire department advice) to isolate the smoke detectors for the duration of the performance when you use smoke effects. Properly designed alarm systems incorporate timed isolation, so that smoke detectors are only off for a specific period, and automatically come on after that period.

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. masking 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.

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 center 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.

SPOT LINE

A temporary line dropped from the grid to suspend something in an exact special position.

SQ

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 Stage staff 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 Stage Hands) 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 DIRECTOR

See DSM.

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!).

NB: The Netherlands, Portugal and Germany use the opposite to the rest of Europe; i.e. Stage Left UK = Stage Right. The directions are seen from the director's and audience's perspective, NOT the actors. In

Portugal *Isquerda* (left) is the equivalent of UK Stage Right and *Direita* (right) is the equivalent of UK Stage Left.

STAGE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

Association representing Stage Managers in the US and UK.

US Stage Management Association

SM Network

STAGE MANAGER

The Head of the Stage Management team comprising the deputy stage manager (DSM) and assistant stage manager (ASM). The DSM is normally "on the 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.

French: régisseur.

German: Theatermeister or Bühnenmeister.

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 WEIGHT

See BRACE WEIGHT.

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.

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".

In the US, the word "Warning" replaces "Stand-by".

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 he/she is called in to perform in the role for which he/she is an understudy.

See also ALTERNATE, SWING, UNDERSTUDY.

Additional information submitted by Pierce Peter Brandt

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.

STATE PLOT

See RUNNING PLOT.

STILE

See Flat.

STIPEND

A type of payment to the cast and crew to help towards expenses incurred during the production process. The amount is usually based on the total money the show brings in, but sometimes it can be a set amount.

From Middle English *stipendium* (from Latin) meaning a fixed sum of money paid periodically for services or to defray expenses.

Submitted by Amy McIntire

STRIKE

1) To disassemble a stage set ("strike the set"), to remove props from the stage. (e.g. "How many crew do you need for the strike", "Strike the armchair after scene 1" etc.)

2) The act of turning on a discharge lamp (e.g. "Make sure you strike the followspot at the half")

SUPERSTITION / SUPERSTITIONS

Theatrical people are notoriously superstitious. There are many rules which some people swear by related to working in the theatre.

1) Backstage **whistles** were originally used to give instructions to the sailors who (because they knew the best knots) had the job of operating the theatre's flying system. Nowadays, whistling is forbidden backstage because it might result in a lost sailor cutting a rope and dropping something on somebody.

2) Mentioning '**Macbeth**' in a theatre is said to invoke the curse of the Scottish Play. The only way to break the curse is for the offender to spin on the spot and then spit. This is an approximation to a purification ritual. The spin turns back time, and the spit expels the corrupting poison. This particular play is always called The Scottish Play.

3) Saying 'Good Luck' is not allowed backstage. The term '**Break a Leg**' is used. See the separate page about this!

4) Peacocks are seen as evil (their feathers display an 'evil eye' and their flesh was believed to be poisonous), and are not allowed near theatres.

More information about Break A Leg

SWAG

1) A particularly artistic way of drawing a set of tabs diagonally up at the same time as flying them out. Looks much better than it sounds.

2) Souvenirs given to crew following a particular show or event, usually in the form of T-shirts, posters, & coffee mugs.

SWING

A member of the cast of a musical (or a play with a large cast) who understudies multiple chorus roles in the production. When a chorus member is not well, has a day off or, in some cases, is performing in a principal role for which he or she is the understudy, a swing performs in this chorus member's place. In the cast of a musical, there will be a male swing who understudies all the male chorus roles in the cast, and also a female swing who understudies all the female chorus roles. In larger casts, there might be two or more swings for each gender. Swings are members of the cast 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.

See also ALTERNATE, STANDBY, UNDERSTUDY.

Submitted by Pierce Peter Brandt

SWL

Safe Working Load.

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.

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.

TBC

To be confirmed. In a cast list, this can be taken to mean To be cast.

TECH

- 1) Short for Technical Rehearsal. (e.g. 'The Tech took 14 hours')
- 2) A member of (amateur) crew ('I'm the lighting tech for this show')

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.

TECHNICAL RIDER

See RIDER.

TEMPO

(Italian for TIME) Musical term for the speed or pace at which a piece of music should be performed. A fast-paced piece is known as UP-TEMPO, and a slow piece is DOWN-TEMPO. Modern music defines tempo in terms of beats per minute (BPM). Before the invention of the METRONOME to measure and time BPM, classical music used descriptive Italian terms (such as ADAGIO (slow), ALLEGRO (fast), PRESTO (faster)) for speed. The original Italian terms contain additional nuances (e.g. ALLEGRO as well as meaning fast, also implies the piece should be performed joyfully).

THROUGH-COMPOSED

A musical performance (especially in musical theatre and opera) is said to be through-composed if the musical content is continuous, rather than being a series of songs interrupted by recitative pieces and/or dialogue. The term applies in particular to composers such as Stephen Sondheim or Andrew Lloyd-Webber. A piece such as *Les Misérables* is said to be through-sung as there is no spoken dialogue.

THUNDER SHEET

Large suspended steel sheet with handles which produces a thunder-like rumble when shaken or beaten.

TOPPING AND TAILING

- 1) See Cue to Cue.
- 2) The practice of reversing 'hemp' lines in a theatre to spread wear over as great a length of rope as possible. Over a period of time this practice can considerably increase rope lifetime, especially if lines are rotated between sets as well as positions in the grid (The short of set 1 becomes the long of set 40, for example)
Additional information submitted by Chris Higgs

TORCHING

(Stage Management) The act of helping actors or other crew members off stage using a torch to guide them. Often the role of the ASM.

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 female dancers (for example) warming up or actresses doing costume changes. Used in addition to a teaser, the first border behind the proscenium arch.

TRANSFORMATION

An instant scene change, often effected by exploiting the varying transparency of gauze under different lighting conditions.

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.

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 from 'The Cabinet of Dr Casey')

TRAP ROOM

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

TRAVELLERS

Curtains or scenic pieces moving on horizontal tracks.

TRAVERSE

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

See also IN THE ROUND, END ON, THRUST.

TREADS

General name for any stage staircase or set of steps. 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.

TRIM

US for DEAD on a flying piece. (e.g. 'The Trim on this piece is 14 feet from the deck')

TRIPPING

US for TUMBLING a cloth that can't be flown out of sight.

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

TUMBLING

Flying a cloth from the bottom as well as the top when there is insufficient height to fly it in the normal way. See TRIPPING.

TURN

Techie name for an Actor/Artiste. ('What time does the turn get here?')

TWIRLIES

Derogatory (or not ?) term for performing members of a ballet group.

UNCLE BUDDY

US Term. A type of steel snubbing device, also called a LINE-LOK, named after its' alleged inventor.

UPSTAGE

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

USITT

United States Institute of Theatre Technology.
[USITT Website](#)

VAC FORMING

Vacuum forming is a process of reproducing architectural and textural relief detail on sets by forming a thin plastic sheet into the required shape by a suction process.

VALENCE

US term for a TEASER attached to the main house tabs.

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 "Vis".

VOMITORY

An auditorium entrance or exit up through banked seating from below. Often abbreviated to Vom. The word dates back to Roman times, and was an architectural feature of coliseums etc.

VT

(Short for Video Tape) A pre-recorded video clip that is played in during a live performance.

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. See also REVOLVE, JACKKNIFE STAGE.

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.

WALK-ON

A small acting role with no lines. Also known as SPEAR CARRIER.

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.

WARN

US equivalent of the UK's 'standby' for stage manager's cues. (e.g. 'Warn Light cue 12?'. 'Light cue 12 GO')

WEIGHT

See Counterweight and Brace Weight. Also, instruction given to rookie stage crew on errand to hardware supplier ; 'Go and get me a long weight'.

WET

1) See DRY (Sound) 2) See TECH (Wet Tech).

WET TECH

See TECHNICAL REHEARSAL.

WHISTLE

Backstage whistles were originally used to give instructions to the sailors who (because they knew the best knots) had the job of operating the theatre's flying system. Nowadays, whistling is forbidden backstage because it might result in a lost sailor cutting a rope and dropping something on somebody. See Superstition.

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.

WINGS

- 1) The out of view areas to the sides of the acting area (known as FLÜGEL in German)
- 2) Scenery standing where the acting area joins these technical areas.

WIPE

Single curtain moving across the stage on a single track (wipe track) rather than paired curtains on a tab track.

WIRE ROPE

Fine steel wires woven into a rope to give great strength. A kink or a knot in wire rope greatly reduces the strength.

WORKING LIGHTS

- 1) High wattage lights used in a venue when the stage / auditorium lighting is not on. Used for rehearsals, fit-up, strike and resetting.
- 2) Low wattage blue lights used to illuminate offstage obstacles and props tables etc. Known as Wing Workers.

X

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

YELLOW JACKET

US term for yellow plastic cable ramp sections.

ZARGES

(Manufacturer) German manufacturer of a range of ladders. Commonly refers to the 3-part ladder used on many stages around Europe.

<http://www.zarges.de/>