THEATRE ARTS VOCABULARY

act - to perform for an audience representing another person.

acting area - see stage
actor - performer, player, thespian.
ad lib - create lines or action spontaneously when necessary.

angel - financial backer of a play production.
apron - part of the stage projecting past the curtain line toward the audience.
arena stage - see theatre-in-the-round.
articulation - process of starting and stopping vowel and consonant sounds.
audible - able to be heard.
audience - people who watch and or listen and respond to a performance.
audition - try out for a role in a play.
backstage - area that the audience cannot see.
batten - piece of wood or pipe from which lights, scenery and curtains are hung.
believable - convincing to the audience.
blackout - all stage lights go off at the same time.
blocking - planned movement on stage.
"break a leg" - wish for good luck in a performance.
boards - see stage.
build vocally - use the voice to change mood and increase intensity

business - 'small bit of action. ex. bouncing a ball, writing a letter, making a sandwich.
call board - place where announcements and notices for actors and crew are posted.
cast - actors in a play.
casting - selecting the actor who will play each role in a show.
centerstage - C, middle portion of the stage area; between L & R and U & D.
characterization - putting together all facets of a character to make that person a believable individual who can be portrayed before an audience.

cheat, cheat out - 'aiming body out toward the audience when talking to another character.

climax - 'high point in the action of a scene.

collaboration - the work of many people toward a common project; work done by many people.

comedy - play that treats situations or characters in a humorous way; play with a happy ending.

company - actors and crew of a production.

countercross - 'move to adjust stage picture after another actor has moved.

crew - group of workers who handle a specific aspect of a production.

cross, X - 'move from one stage area to another.

cue - last word or action before your line or action; signal for next line, sound effect, light change, etc.

curtain call - appearance of the cast at the end of the show in response to the audience applause.

curtain line - imaginary line on the stage below the grand drape.

cyclorama, cyc - Curtain or drop across back of stage; can serve as background for some scenes.

deck - see stage

dialogue - spoken lines in a skit or play; actual words that the characters say.

diaphragm - muscle below the ribs that expands out and down causing air to enter the lungs.

director - the person in charge of a production. - the BOSS of the play.

downstage, down - D, portion of the stage closest to the audience; toward the audience.

dress rehearsal - final rehearsal before the show opens with full costumes, makeup, lights, sound, props, etc.

dual role - actor's task of thinking, feeling, moving & speaking as the character while maintaining technical control - staying open and audible, remembering lines and cues, using "fake" props as if they are real, etc.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>effect</td>
<td>'remembering a feeling from your own life to apply to a performance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>emotional recall</td>
<td>'remembering a feeling from your own life to apply to a performance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>encore</td>
<td>repeated or additional performance at the end of a play.</td>
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<tr>
<td>entrance</td>
<td>'come onto the stage.</td>
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<tr>
<td>exhale</td>
<td>expel air from the body.</td>
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<tr>
<td>exit</td>
<td>'leave the stage.</td>
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<tr>
<td>exposition</td>
<td>beginning of the play which explains the who, what and where of the plot.</td>
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<tr>
<td>extra</td>
<td>castmember who serves as background for action. Usually used in television or films.</td>
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<tr>
<td>eye contact</td>
<td>a performer looking out at the audience directly from time to time. (Should be done at least half the time.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>finale</td>
<td>concluding part of any performance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>flat</td>
<td>canvas covered wooden frame used for scenery.</td>
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<tr>
<td>flies</td>
<td>area between the top of the proscenium arch and the stage ceiling; loft; fly area.</td>
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<tr>
<td>fly</td>
<td>to raise scenery above the top of the proscenium opening to lower it down to the stage floor.</td>
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<tr>
<td>followspot</td>
<td>spotlight that can be moved around during a performance.</td>
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<td>front, out front</td>
<td>see house.</td>
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<tr>
<td>full back</td>
<td>actor facing away from the audience. Used only on special occasions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>full front</td>
<td>actor facing the audience directly. Used for important lines and actions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>gesture</td>
<td>'movement of a part of the body to communicate an emotion or idea.</td>
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<tr>
<td>give a scene</td>
<td>'give audience attention to another actor or actors.</td>
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<td>grand drape</td>
<td>front curtain separating the stage from the audience, often simply called &quot;the curtain.&quot;</td>
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<td>greenroom</td>
<td>backstage lounge or waiting room for the actors (almost never painted green!)</td>
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<tr>
<td>grip</td>
<td>stagehand who moves scenery on and off stage.</td>
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<tr>
<td>house</td>
<td>the audience; place where the audience sits; front, out front.</td>
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</table>
imagery - words or phrases that appeal to the senses.

imagination - ability to form mental images or concepts that are not actually present in reality. A necessary component of theatre, utilized by actors and the audience.

improvisation - make up dialogue and action as you go; usually guided by an idea, theme, or topic. Acting without rehearsal.

inflection - gliding from one pitch level to another. Can change the meaning of words.

inhale - take air into the lungs.

intermission - short break between the acts of a play or parts of a performance.

introduction - announce a scene or selection to an audience, giving information; includes title, author or playwright, and any necessary information to understand the performance.

kill - turn off; stop; remove from stage.

larynx - voice box, contains the vocal chords.

left, stage left - L, actor's left when facing the audience.

legs - narrow curtains on either side of the stage that mask the wings.

lines - pieces or sentences of dialogue.

makeup - cosmetics of various colors applied to the actor's skin so that facial features are visible and/or altered under stage lighting.

mask - hide from audience view.

mime - stylized pantomime; done in makeup and costume.

motivation - the reason behind a character's behavior.

objective - character's goal.

off - see backstage.

on - on stage.
one quarter - actor turned halfway between full front and profile. Used to share a scene.

onomatopoeia - words that sound like what they mean. ex. boom, clack, zip.

open, open up - turn toward the audience.

out front, front - audience seating area.
  pacing - tempo or speed at which scene is played. Very important in comedy.

pantomime - acting without talking or sound effects.

pick up cues - quickly begin a speech without allowing a pause between the first words of the speech and the cue.
  pitch - highness or lowness of the voice.

places - order for actors and crew to get into position for the beginning of a scene.

plant - place a prop on stage before the show so that it is available when the script calls for it.

player(s) - see actor.

playing area - see stage.

playwright - person who plans and writes plays.

practical - set piece or prop that is usable, actually works. Ex - door or window that opens and shuts, rock or hill you can stand on, lamps that can be turned on.

producer - person who finds financial investors, hires the director and production staff, sets the budget, etc. for a play production.

profile - actor position facing the wings, left or right. Used for arguments or love scenes.

project, (pro' ject) - throw the voice to the farthest person in the audience.

prompt book - script marked with directions and cues for use by the crews.

prompter - person situated offstage who supplies missed lines during a performance.
pronunciation - producing the sounds of words. (Correct sounds, stresses and accents can be found in the dictionary.)

properties - all articles and furnishing needed on stage in a play. with the exception or scenery and costumes; can be carried on or planted; props.

proscenium - permanent framed opening through which the audience sees a play.

raked stage - stage floor tilted toward the audience.

rate - speed or tempo.

Reader's Theatre -

rehearsal - cast members working on a production under the guidance of the director.

resolution - ending, happy or sad; conclusion to a story.

resonance - enrichment of sound from its vibration in a closed space.

resonators - body chambers where sound vibrates; throat, mouth, nasal cavity & sinus cavities.

right, stage right - R, actor's right when facing the audience.

rising action - conflict in a scene gets worse and/or more complicated.

role - part or character played by an actor.

royalty - money paid to a playwright for permission to stage his/her play.

scene - performance with beginning, middle and end; section of a play that occurs at one place, at one time.

scenery - hangings, structures, etc. that represent a location or decorate the stage; set.

script - written copy of a play.

sensory recall - 'remembering how an action or object felt, looked, smelled, sounded or tasted.

set - see scenery.

share a scene - 'have equal audience attention with another actor.
stage area(s) - sections of the stage, named for their relation to the audience.

stage directions - script instructions for movement, business, lighting, sound, etc. Usually in parentheses.

stage fright - 'nervous feeling about performing.

stage hands - see grip.

strike - to clear from the stage completely; take down and store away when the run of the play has ended.

take a scene - 'get audience attention.

teasers - short curtains hung above the stage to mask the lights and battens.

technical director - person in charge of everything back of the grand drape except the actors and costumes; answers to the stage manager.

technical rehearsal - rehearsal for perfecting lights, scenery, sound, and other technical elements.

theatre in the round - theatre facility where the audience surrounds the stage on all sides; arena stage.

thespian - see actor.

three quarters - actor facing upstage corners of the stage. Used to give a scene.

thrust stage - stage that extend well past the proscenium arch so that the audience surrounds it on three sides.

tongue twister - difficult to pronounce phrases or sentences used as articulation exercises.

top - lines begin before the previous line is finished.

tormentors - see legs.

tragedy - a play in which the protagonist fails to achieve their goal; a play with a sad or tragic ending.

trapdoor, trap - an opening in the stage floor that permits actors to enter from and exit to an area beneath the stage.

traveler - mid-stage curtain; act curtain.

troupe - group of actors, especially those that tour from place to place. (Source of the term "trouper.")
up, upstage - U, portion of the stage farthest from the audience; away from the audience.

vocal variety - changes in rate, pitch, volume and intensity that help a listener stay interested in a vocal performance.

volume - loudness or softness of the voice, sound effects or music.

wagon - platforms or large set pieces on casters.

walk on - part where an actor comes on and off stage without saying a line.

wardrobe - costumes.

wings - backstage area on either side of the stage.