

GCSE WORKBOOK

Component 1, Section A: TECHNICAL THEATRE TERMINOLOGY

This is a section of the exam with multiple choice questions. There are 4 marks available but they could be on ANY technical aspect of theatre production. This booklet will furnish you with all the terminology you may need to show your knowledge of how a theatre works

There are many different types of theatre stage

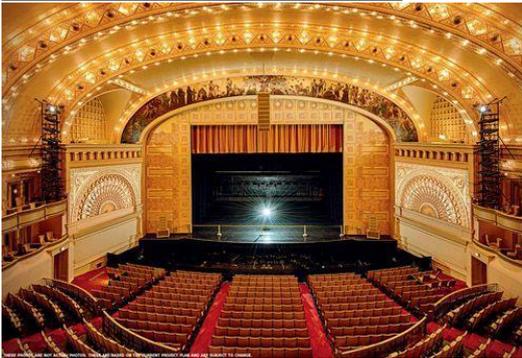
The most common theatre spaces are:-

1. Proscenium Arch
2. Thrust stage
3. Theatre in the round
4. Traverse stage
5. Promenade theatre
6. End on staging

The stage serves as a space for actors or performers and a focal point for the members of the audience.

These staging types are discussed below.

PROSCENIUM ARCH (END ON)



The primary feature is a large arch, the proscenium arch, through which the audience views the performance. The audience directly faces the stage, which is typically raised several feet above the front row audience and views only one side of the scene. The proscenium arch evolved from the *Proskenium* in Ancient Greek theatres. This was the space in front of the *skene* or backdrop where the actors actually played. The proscenium arch is the most commonly used type of staging and is the most traditional form. A lot of London theatres have this type of staging such as Richmond theatre and the Apollo.

Advantages: The audience are often kept distant from the performers, because the acting area is separate from the audience, elaborate set and costume can be used as it is easier to change, lighting the performance is easy as you do not have to consider the effects on the audience, it is easier to create a fourth wall as the audience are often more distant.

Disadvantages: It is less intimate, the audience often are not as close so can't make out small details, the view of all the action can often be restricted especially if seating or the stage are not raked (on a slope).

THRUST

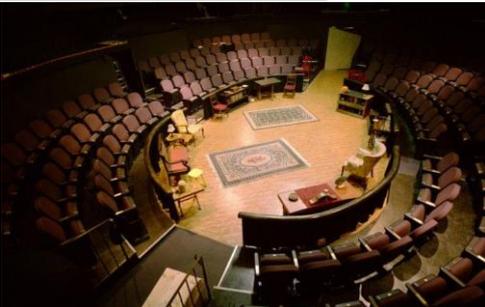


Thrust stages may be similar to proscenium stages but instead of the audience on one side they are on three, so they form a U shape around the acting area. Concerts often use this form of staging.

Advantages: A thrust has the advantage of greater intimacy between audience and performer than a proscenium, while retaining the use of a backstage area. Entrances onto a thrust are most readily made from backstage, although some theatres provide for performers to enter through the audience.

Disadvantages: Directors have to be aware at all times that one side may not see the action, it can have restricted view for the audience, and the closeness to the action can cause discomfort if it is a particularly disturbing scene.

THEATRE IN THE ROUND



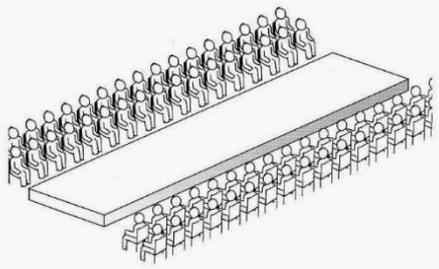
In theatre in the round, the audience is located on all four sides of the stage, Contemporary theatres often use this type of staging such as The Cockpit or The Citizens Theatre in Glasgow.

Advantages: the audience is placed quite close to the action which provokes a feeling of intimacy and involvement, entrances and exits can be made through the audience, the audience can be used as part of the performance, props and set will have to be used creatively as no backdrops can be used.

Disadvantages: in the round stages require special considerations in production such as;

- Scenery that does not mask actors and the rest of the stage from parts of the audience
- Backdrops and curtains cannot be used so the director must find other ways to set the scene
- Lighting is more difficult than for a Proscenium stage since the actor must be lit from all sides without blinding nearby audience members
- Entrances and exits must be made either through the audience, making surprise entrances very difficult, stage entrances are normally in the corners of the theatre
- The actors need to ensure that they do not have their backs turned to any part of the audience for long periods of time in order to be seen and heard

Traverse stage



With this type of staging the audience is on two sides of the acting area (similar to an avenue or alley way, when the walls are on two sides. We often associate catwalks for modelling with this type of theatre.). Again this type of staging is most commonly used by modern theatre spaces.

Advantages: actors can enter from upstage (US) and downstage (DS) if required, a backdrop or cyclorama can still be used on one side, audience are closer to the action.

Disadvantages: it can restrict the view of some audience members if one side is used more often, it can be difficult when positioning lights as the audience are often quite close.

PROMENADE



This is a very different way of staging. The actors are placed all around a venue or even outdoors. The audience are often led by actors, ushers, technical staff or signs from one part of the performance to another. More and more theatre companies are using this type of staging as it allows them to take their audience members outside. This form of staging allows you to explore spaces. A theatre company who uses this type of staging is The Grid Iron Theatre Company, who once used Edinburgh Airport and the audience were taken from the Traverse Theatre to the Airport, it was excellent and very affective.

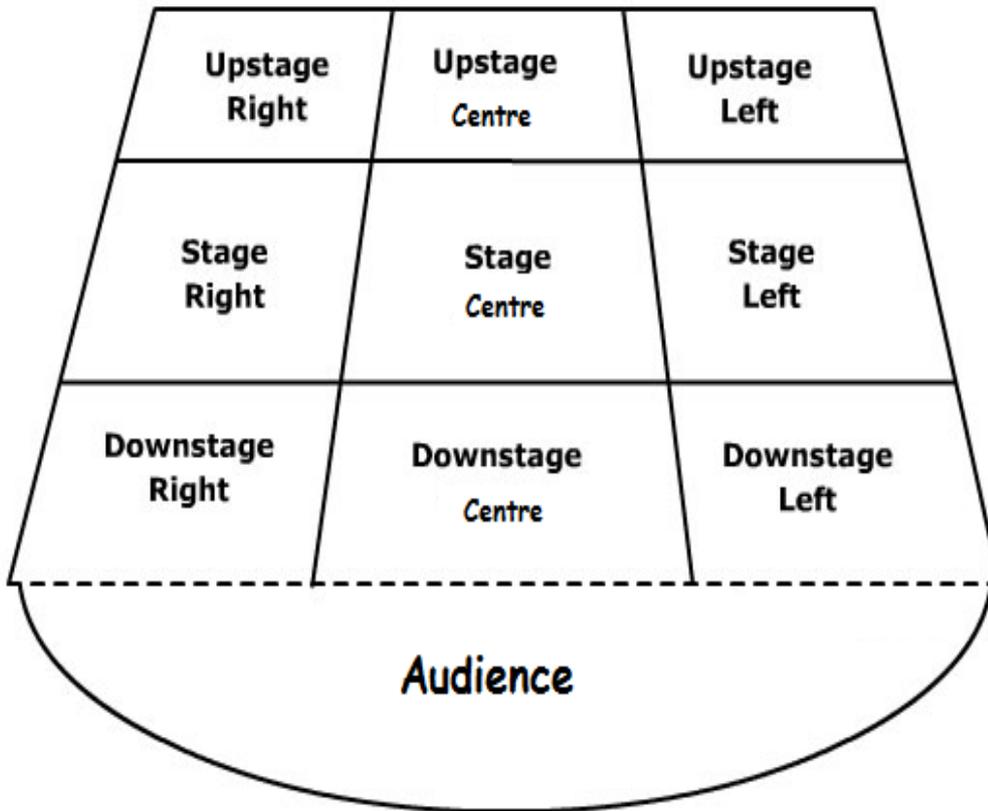
Advantages: the audience are a part of the action, it is very intimate, different spaces can be used, so the audience are moving instead of the set. You can use the outdoors, castles of very picturesque setting for your performance. The audience can experience different things in each part of the performance.

Disadvantages: the actors need to get themselves from one place to another quickly (in some cases), there may be interruptions such as noise or other people, there are health and safety implications, the audience have to be mobile, it can be a long time for them to stand.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/drama/performing/stagerev1.shtml> - for more information

You must know off by heart the following stage areas:-

Stage areas are named so that people can easily say **where** an actor needs to be. The areas of the stage are always related to the actor, so 'stage left' (SL) would be on the actor's left when facing the audience. The *director*, watching from the audience, would see stage left on his or her right.



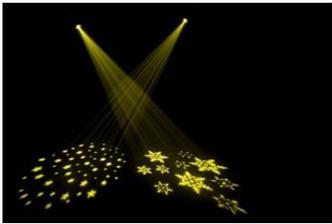
USR - Upstage Right	USC - Upstage Centre	USL - Upstage Left
CR- Centre Right	CS - Centre Stage	CL - Centre Left
DSR - Downstage Right	DSC - Downstage Centre	DSL - Downstage Left

The roles and responsibilities of theatre makers

Theatre Maker	Role and responsibilities
Playwright	This is the name given to the person who writes the play.

Performer	A performer is an actor or entertainer who realises a role or performance in front of an audience.
Understudy	An actor who studies another's role so that they can take over when needed.
Lighting designer	The lighting designer is responsible for designing the lighting states and, if required, special lighting effects for a performance. The final design will result in a lighting plot which is a list of the lighting states and their cues.
Sound designer	The sound designer is responsible for designing the sound required for a performance. This may include underscoring, intro and outro music as well as specific effects. The final design will result in a sound plot which is a list of the sounds required and their cues.
Set designer	The set designer is responsible for the design of the set for a performance. They will work closely with the director and other designers so that there is unity between all the designs and the needs of the performance.
Costume designer	The person who designs the costumes for a performance. The costume department of a theatre is often called the wardrobe.
Puppet designer	The person who designs the puppets for a performance.
Technician	A person who works backstage either setting up technical equipment such as microphones or rigging lights before a production or operating technical equipment during a performance.
Director	A director is in charge of the artistic elements of a production. A director will often have the initial creative idea ('concept') for a production, will work with the actors in rehearsal, and will collaborate with designers and the technical team to realise this idea in performance.
Stage manager	The Stage Manager is in charge of all aspects of backstage, including the backstage crew. They will oversee everything that happens backstage before, during and after a performance. During the rehearsal period, the Stage Manager and their team will make sure that all props are found or made, scene changes are rehearsed and smooth, and all other aspects of backstage are prepared. They are also in charge of the rehearsal schedule.
Theatre manager	This is the person who is responsible for and manages the front-of-house team who deal with the audience during the production (for example, the box office manager, ushers and similar staff).

LIGHTING TERMINOLOGY: Lighting is a very technical area and there are many types of lights (or lanterns).



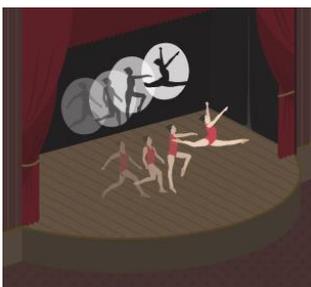
← **Coloured gels** can be added to the front of some lanterns so that they throw coloured light onto the stage. Some can also be fitted with what is known as a **gobo**. This is a sheet inserted on a frame at the front of the light with a design cut into it. It filters the light, creating a picture effect on the stage. For example, a gobo could be used to create a dappled lighting effect to look like the leaves of a forest, or could be cut to create strips of light onstage which look like the bars of a prison. This example is a YELLOW gel with star shaped Gobos.

Spot → has a hard-edged effect, used to light characters or elements on the stage. Coloured filters can be used with this lamp.



← **Fresnel** - Used for a softer edged effect, with a diffusing lens in front of the lamp. It's useful for good overall light when used with others. Coloured filters can be used with this lamp.

Flood → Produces a clear wide-angled light, but there's little control over the spread of the light. Coloured filters can be used with this lamp.



← **Strobe** - A flashing light, used for special effects. It's often used to give the effect of old movies. It produces a jerky effect on the movements of actors when used on its own.

Parcan → Used for general cover and can hold a gel or gobo in order to project colour or shapes onto the stage.



← **Barn Doors** – Adjustable flaps used to shape the light and how it is projected onto the stage.

Birdie → A miniature lantern ideal for hiding in small parts of a set or along the downstage edge of the stage. Provides a surprisingly bright soft-edged pool of light.



← **Safety Chain** – Used to ensure the light is safely attached to the lighting rig.

Knowledge and understanding

You must develop knowledge and understanding of the following characteristics of performance text(s) and dramatic work(s). Please add a definition to each of the following?

Genre	
Structure	
Character	
Form	
Style	
Language	
Sub-text	
character motivation and interaction	
The creation of mood and atmosphere	
The development of pace and rhythm	
Dramatic climax	
Stage directions	
The practical demands of the text	