

Agitprop - Pertaining to a kind of drama and dramatic technique of social protest with a Marxist outlook -- 1930s. From "agitation" and "propaganda."

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Beat - The elapsed time between the inception of an objective/intention, and its completion or deflection. Also referred to as a "unit of action," a beat is the smallest division of a monologue or scene. The term is part of the system of acting developed by the Russian director and teacher, Konstantin Stanislavsky (1863-1938).

Bedroom farce - A broad comedy in which much of the action centres about one or more bedrooms. Such farces commonly exploit mistaken identity, lost clothing, and sexual innuendo for comic effect and have proved an important part of the staple diet of the commercial theater in the 20th century.

Below - Opposite of above; toward the front of the stage.

Biomechanics - An experimental acting system, characterized by expressive physicalization developed in Russia by Vsevolod Meyerhold (1874-1940).

Burlesque - A ludicrous imitation of a dramatic form or a specific play. Closely related to satire, it usually lacks the moral or intellectual purposes of reform typical of the latter, being content to mock the excesses of other works. Famous examples of burlesque include Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* and, more recently, such burlesques of the movies as *Dames at Sea*. In the United States, the term has come to be associated with a form of variety show which stresses sex.

Business - Obvious and detailed physical movement of performers to reveal character, aid action, or establish mood (e.g., pouring drinks at a bar, opening a gun case).

Callbacks - Follow-up auditions for a play that are held after the initial tryouts. Callbacks usually involve readings from the script.

Call board - A noticeboard situated in the backstage area, upon which messages for the cast and stage crew are displayed.

Caricature A character portrayed very broadly and in a stereotypical fashion. Ordinarily objectionable in realistic dramas.

Casting - Obviously derived from the phrase "casting a mold," the word casting in the theater means fitting performers into roles. Casting takes place at auditions.

Casting against type - Purposely choosing for a role in a play an actor who is opposite in characteristics from the role described in the playscript.

Catharsis - A Greek word, usually translated as "purgation," which Aristotle used in his definition of tragedy. It refers to the vicarious cleansing of certain emotions in the members of the audience through their representation onstage.

Catwalk - A narrow bridge above the stage from which scenery and lighting equipment can be manhandled.

Center stage - A stage position in the middle acting area of the stage or the middle section extended upstage and downstage.

Character - A person depicted in a play. In structural terms, characters are the agents of the action. The performer playing a character is an actor. Aristotle's second element of drama.

Characterization - The playwright's means of differentiating one personage from another by assigning them physical, sociological, psychological, and moral traits.

Choragus - A wealthy person who underwrote most of the expenses for the

Comedy of manners - A form of comic drama that became popular in the latter half of the seventeenth century in France and among English playwrights during the Restoration. It emphasizes a cultivated or sophisticated atmosphere, witty dialogue, and characters whose concern with social polish is charming, ridiculous, or both.

Comic premise - In the writing of comedy, the comic premise is an idea or concept which turns the accepted notion of things upside down and makes this notion the basis of a play.

Comic relief - Humorous episodes in tragedy that brief(b)20 (r)0 (g)-liss

Convention - See Stage Convention.

Costume - The clothing worn on stage by an actor or other performer. Pioneered by the ancient Greeks, who developed specific costumes for each character in both tragedy and comedy, the art of costume revived in medieval times and culminated in the fabulous costumes of the court masques, as well as in the more formalized outfits of the commedia dell'arte. During the 17th century, most actors appeared in contemporary dress, although there was a gradual movement towards more elaborate clothing in the early 18th century that eventually led to a reversion to contemporary styles by Garrick and others. The 19th century saw the first authentically costumed versions of Shakespeare and, with the advent of realism, a demand for historical accuracy. The 20th century has seen increasingly imaginative designs ranging from the completely naturalistic to the highly symbolic as well as the linking of costume with lighting and other aspects of theatrical design so that it is no longer considered in isolation.

Counterweight - A device for balancing the weight of scenery in a system which allows scenery to be raised above the stage by means of ropes and pulleys.

Cover - (1) In acting, to take a position so as to conceal another actor or an object from clear view of the audience; (2) To canvas, hence covering; (3) A property man stationed in the wings to fire a cover gun; (4) In acting, concealing from the audience that some mistake has been made in the performance.

Crew - The backstage team assisting in mounting a production.

Crisis - The culmination of the plot in a play when the primary conflict is at the point of highest tension. Also called climax or turning point.

Cross - A movement by a performer across the stage in a given direction.

Cue - Any prearranged signal, such as the last words in a speech, a piece of business, or any action or lighting change that indicates to a performer or stage manager that it is time to proceed to the next line or action.

Cue sheet - A prompt book marked with cues, or a list of cues for the use of technicians, especially the stage manager.

Curtain - (1) The rise or fall of the physical curtain, which separates a play into structural parts; (2) The last bit of action preceding the fall of the curtain.

Curtain call - The staged bows at the end of the play in which both actors (through their presence and bows) and the audience (through their applause) acknowledge their mutual appreciation and participation in the theatrical event.

Cycle plays - In medieval England, a series of mystery plays that, performed in a series, relate the story of religion, from the creation of the universe to doomsday.

Cyclorama - A large curved drop used to mask the rear and sides of the stage, painted a neutral color or blue to represent sky or open space. It may also be a permanent stage fixture made of plaster or similar durable material.

Deadwood

Green room - A room in the theater where all the actors and crew members can assemble to relax or receive instructions.

Grid - A metal framework above the stage from which lights and scenery are suspended.

Ground plan - A scale drawing of the top view of a stage, showing placement of furniture, large props, and other scenic elements. Commonly referred to as a floor plan.

Groundrow - A long low piece of scenery, basically a small flat, which is often painted to suggest an horizon. The upper edge can be shaped to represent mountains, waves, or other features.

Hand props - Small props carried onstage or offstage by actors during the performance. See Props.

Hamartia - See tragic flaw.

Heads up! - A warning call by a flyman who is moving scenery overhead.

Heroic drama - A form of serious drama, written in verse or elevated prose, which features noble or heroic characters caught in extreme situations or undertaking unusual adventures. In spite of the hardships to which its leading figures are subjected, heroic drama -- unlike tragedy -- assumes a basically optimistic worldview. It has either a happy ending or, in cases where the hero or heroine dies, a triumphant one in which the death is not regarded tragically. Plays from all periods, and from Asia as well as the west, fall into this category. During the late seventeenth century in England, plays of this type were referred to specifically as heroic tragedies.

High comedy - A comedy which is subtle and articulate, giving rise to thoughtful laughter; also collectively. Sometimes limited to the comedy of manners; hence, high comedian.

History play - In the broadest sense, a play set in a historical milieu which deals with historical personages, but the term is usually applied only to plays which deal with vital issues of public welfare and are nationalistic in tone. The form originated in Elizabethan England, which produced more history plays than any other comparable place and time. Based on a religious concept of history, they were influenced by the structure of the morality play. Shakespeare was the major writer of Elizabethan history plays. His style has influenced many later history plays, notably those of the Swedish playwright Strindberg.

House - The audience portion of the theater building.

Hubris - The concept of pride and its consequences as depicted in ancient Greek

Impressionism - A style of painting developed in the late nineteenth century which stressed the immediate impressions created by objects -- particularly those resulting from the effects of light -- and which tended to ignore details.

As such, its influence on the theater was primarily in the area of scenic design, but the term impressionism is sometimes applied to plays like Chekhov's, which rely on a series of impressions and use indirect techniques.

Improvise - To invent lines or business not in a script, to ad-lib; hence, improvisation, etc.

Inciting incident - The occurrence that sets in motion the action of the play. Also known by the term point of attack.

Ingénue - The role of a sweet, naive girl; an actress who plays such a role or roles.

Inner stage - An area at the rear of the stage which can be cut off from the rest by means of curtains or scenery and revealed for special scenes.

Intermission - A pause in the action, marked by a fall of the curtain or a fade-out of the stage lights, during which the audience may leave their seats for a short time, usually ten or fifteen minutes.

Irony - A condition the reverse of what we have expected or an expression whose intended implication is the opposite of its literal sense. A device particularly suited to theater and found in virtually all drama.

Juvenile - The role of a boy or young man; an actor who plays such a role or roles. Sometimes also the role of a young girl or young woman; an actress who plays such a role or roles. Hence also juvenile lead.

Juxtaposition (Contrast) - The act of placing two or more things side by side, for comparison.

Kill - To eliminate or suppress, as to remove unwanted light or to ruin an effect through improper execution (e.g., to "kill a laugh").

"Kitchen-Sink" Theater - A label pasted on British "angry young man" and social problem plays in the late-1950s and 1960s, because so many of them took place in rundown one-room apartments. The term was used by approvers and detractors alike, the former neutrally, as a useful shorthand denoting productions following the trend begun by John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*, and the later reprovingly, as if theater must be beautiful rather than honest.

Left stage - The left side of the stage from the point of view of a performer facing the audience.

Libretto - The text of a musical comedy or other dramatic piece chiefly composed of sung dialogue. Plural, librettos or libretti; hence also librettist.

Mechane - An item of stage machinery used in the ancient Greek theater. It consisted of a large crane from which actors could be suspended in mid-air, as if in flight.

Medieval drama - There is only meager evidence of theatrical activity in Europe between the sixth and tenth centuries, but by the end of the fifteenth century a number of different types of drama had developed. The first of these, known as liturgical drama, was sung or chanted in Latin as part of a church service. Plays on religious themes were also written in the vernacular and performed outside of the church. The mystery plays (also called cycle plays) were based on events taken from the Old and New Testaments. Many such plays were organized into historical cycles which told the story of humanity from the creation to doomsday. The entire performance was quite long, sometimes requiring as much as 5 days. The plays were produced as a community effort, with different craft guilds being responsible for individual segments. Other forms of religious drama were the miracle play -- which dealt with events in the life of a saint -- and the morality play. The morality play was a didactic and allegorical treatment of moral and religious questions, the most famous example being Everyman. The medieval period also produced several types of secular plays. Other than the folk plays, which dealt with legendary heroes like Robin Hood, most were farcical and fairly short.

Meininger Company - A theater company founded in 1874 by George II, Duke of Saxe-Meiningen (1826-1914). Run by the duke and his wife, Ellen Franz, with the help of the actor Ludwig Chronegk, the troupe made significant innovations in emphasizing the role of the director and the importance of good ensemble playing, particularly in crowd scenes. It was also influential in its use of historically accurate costume and scenery and experimental stage lighting, its ideas being spread throughout Europe during its many tours (to thirty-eight cities between 1874 and 1890) of Shakespearean and other classic works.

Melodrama - Historically, a distinct form of drama popular throughout the nineteenth century which emphasized action and spectacular effects and employed music to heighten the dramatic mood. Melodrama employed stock characters and clearly defined villains and heroes. More generally, the term is applied to any dramatic play which presents an unambiguous confrontation between good and evil. Characterization is often shallow and stereotypical, and because the moral conflict is externalized, action and violence are prominent, usually culminating in a happy ending meant to demonstrate the eventual triumph of good. Literally, "a play with music," denoting the nineteenth century's fondness for performing plays with full-scale scores of incidental accompaniment, dances and songs.

Melody - The total sound of the production, from actors speaking the dialogue, to any musical component or sound effects that are required; Aristotle's fifth part of drama. (Some critics refer to this element as "music".)

Metaphor - When we use a metaphor, we announce that one thing is another, in order to describe it or point up its meaning more clearly. The art of theater operates on the level of a metaphor, in that we are asked to accept the imagined world on the stage as reality.

Point of attack - The moment in the story when the play actually begins. The dramatist chooses a point in time along the continuum of events which he or she judges will best start the action and propel it forward.

Polishing - The directorial process of "fine-tuning" a production. The process usually comes after the blocking (staging) is completed and the actors have thoroughly studied and committed their roles to memory. As in the polishing of furniture, the process brings out all the details of the script in an effort to communicate its intent most effectively to an audience.

Popular drama - Drama which has its origin in folk ritual; drama which has little value as literature; drama which succeeds with the public, whatever its merit or lack of merit; hence popular theater.

Postmodernism - Term used to describe certain contemporary artistic tendencies, among them the blurring of distinctions between dramatic forms and the mingling of elements from disparate styles, periods, and cultures.

Preparation - The obvious arranging of cirar to (t)-22 (i)18(i)-2 (on)16 (h)10 (ha)4 (s)-, 2 (o (t)-22 (i)18)-40 (f

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Regisseur - Continental term for theater director; it usually denotes a dictatorial director.

Rehearsal - The preparation by the cast for the performance of a play through repetition and practice.

Renaissance drama - European drama of the period roughly between the 14th and early 17th centuries, when the influence of classical drama combined with a revival of intellectual aspirations effectively laid the foundations of the modern theater.

Repertory, or repertoire - A kind of acting company which, at any given time, has a number of plays which it can perform alternately; also, a collection of plays.

Representational - Said of a dramatic work, or of a style of acting and staging: naturalistic; using the theater to represent life realistically in every outward detail; hence representationalism.

Resolution - That point in the play when the conflicts are resolved; also, the method used to solve the conflicts within the play.

Restoration drama - English drama after the restoration of the monarchy, from 1660 to 1700. Presented for an audience of aristocrats who gathered about the court of Charles II, drama of this period consisted largely of heroic tragedies in the neoclassical style and comedies of manners which reflected a cynical view of human nature.

Return - A flat used at the right and left wings, which can run offstage behind the tormentor. Sometimes the flat, or return, can serve as the tormentor.

Reversal - A sudden switch of circumstances or knowledge which leads to a result contrary to expectations. Called peripeteia or peripety in Greek drama.

Revolving stage - A large turntable on which scenery is placed in such a way that, as it moves, one set is brought into view while another one turns out of sight.

Revue - A musical entertainment in which a team of performers presents a program of unrelated songs, dances, and sketches in quick succession. Such shows are often enlivened with an element of satire or topicality.

Right stage - The right side of the stage from the point of view of a performer facing the audience.

Rising action - In dramatic structure, the escalating conflict; events and actions that follow the inciting incident.

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Created by: Deb Moore

Please send comments to: moore_debraoh@colstate.edu

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