

LITERACY
ACROSS THE
CURRICULUM

SUBJECT TERMINOLOGY FOR PERFORMING ARTS



The
Appleton
School

Accessories

Additional items of costume or small props.

Accompaniment

Theatre: music used to underscore a scene or music played in dance or singing rehearsals.

Music: pieces of music written with an instrument or vocal part designed to support or compliment the melody.

Advertising Standards Authority (ASA)

The ASA is a self-regulatory body set up by the advertising industry. It covers press releases, broadcast, film and internet advertising as well as posters and leaflets.

Alignment (dance)

The correct placement of body parts in relation to each other.

Acoustics

The quality of sound produced in a venue, this can be influenced by the size and shape of the venue and the fittings within the space such as curtains, flats etc.

Amateur theatre

Theatre companies whose members produce performance but do not get paid.

Artistic intention

The aim of a performer to communicate clearly the intention behind the specific production to an audience.

Annotation

Diagrams, screenshots and written notes showing how the performer works on the text/script.

Angling

To set, fix, direct or adjust at an angle. An example would be fixing flats or placing furniture on a set.

Arena

An area, surrounded on three sides by seating, in which a performance, entertainment or sporting event takes place.

Artistic intention

The aim of a performer whether an actor, dancer, musician, choreographer or director to communicate clearly the intention behind the specific production to an audience.

Audio recording

Sound recording of performances and musical compositions.

Audience

The people who consume a performing arts performance by watching, listening or reading.

Audience participation

Moments when the audience takes part in the action and contributes to the performance on stage.

Auditorium

The space in a theatre where the audience sits or stands when listening to or viewing a performance.

Aural setting

An audible accompaniment to a performance such as music, words, song and natural sound or silence.

BBFC

British Board of Film Classification. This organization is responsible for censorship of all films and DVD content released in the UK. The BBFC determine the age classification given to film/DVD releases.

Blackout

Lighting term, switching all lights out at once, leaving the stage in complete darkness.

Blocking

The precise planning of how actors will move about the stage. Usually planned by the director and initiated in rehearsal and recorded in the stage manager's book.

Body language

Non-verbal communication through movement, position and gesture.

Camera movement

The way the camera moves during filming to add depth, interest and variation for the viewer.

Panning: a camera movement in which the camera stays in one position, usually on a tripod, and sweeps horizontally from left to right.

Tracking: a camera movement where the camera is moved alongside or towards the subject in the scene/action

Zoom: a movement of the camera lens to make a subject seem closer. To 'zoom in' or 'zoom out' to create more distance.

Centre stage

The centre spot on a stage.

CGI

Computer generated images used in film and television. The application of computer graphics to printed or moving images. Often refers to 3D computer graphics used for special effects in film.

Character

A person portrayed in a drama or other artistic piece.

Character interaction

The ways in which characters communicate or interact with each other in a scene. The action or relationship among two or more characters.

Character motivation

The reason behind a character's actions, behavior in a given scene.

Chorus

Musical theatre: a group of singers in musical theatre supporting principal soloists. They can also comment on the action taking place on stage.

Drama: a group of actors working in unison who mediate between the action and the audience.

Chorale

Sung by a chorus, a harmonized version of a song requiring work on cadence points and vocal lines, including alto, tenor and bass.

Climax

The most significant moment in a film, dramatic event, musical, play or dance. The highest point of the drama after which the action falls away into the resolution.

Close-mic

A technique of placing a microphone relatively close to an instrument or sound source to produce a non-reverberant sound and consequently reducing any extraneous noise.

Cold opening

A short sequence before the opening credits **or** title sequence of the film to grab the viewer's attention and takes the viewer straight into the narrative. This is also known as a cold open or teaser sequence.

Collaborate/collaborators

When a group of people from different performing arts areas work together on a project.

Colour palette

In design terms a range of colours used in a production for costumes and set.

Commission

A special assignment that is given to a person or a group.

Commedia dell'arte

Traditional Italian comedy from the 16th Century. It takes a specific comedic style which includes slapstick humour and stock characters. Characters such as Harlequin and Columbine, The Captain, Pantalone the Zanni or fool. Often employing set pieces of comedic business 'Lazzo' and acrobatics. The action often involves music witty dialogue and all kinds of trickery. Characters often confide in the audience and speak directly to them.

Comedy

A play that treats characters and situations in a humorous manner.

Commercial broadcasting

Privately owned media broadcasting of television and radio programming.

Contracts

These range from permanent, part-time, fixed term, to freelance.

Conventions

Stage: traditional ways of staging performances.

Music: musical terms and concepts for example melody, accompaniment, tonality.

Costume

Clothing worn by performers in performance.

Cross fade

A lighting action in which a particular lighting cue fades a specific lighting state as the next one builds, usually used between scenes.

Cue

The command given by the stage manager to technical departments, lighting and sound, to carry out a particular operation during the performance. It also refers to the line that is spoken by an actor directly before the next actor responds.

Cue sheet

A list of actor's lines, musical effects, set or choreography and technical tasks to be carried out when the line is spoken or an action completed. Lighting and sound cue sheets would list the effects, levels etc. for a particular scene.

Design concept

Usually a director's vision in consultation with the designer, of a play/performance in production which includes all staging elements.

Depth of field

Used in photographic/film/video terms. The distance between the nearest and furthest points.

Devised production

The process of creating a performance, usually based around a stimulus.

Dialogue

Words spoken, often from a script, between characters in plays, film, television and radio. Spoken conversations between two or more characters expressing thoughts, feelings and actions and reactions.

Digital recording/live streaming

Live performances that are transmitted live from theatres/concert halls or have been recorded and then transmitted and viewed on cinema screens and sometimes on television.

Digital platform

Any digital media product that can be created, viewed and distributed on digital devices.

Direction (theatre)

Given by the director to actors in rehearsal. Practical moves and actions with a scene.

Divisions of the stage

The way in which actors and directors divide the stage to help with blocking of a scene. The positions on the stage taken by actors/performers. These are always based from the actor/performers left and right.

Documentary theatre

This usually involves the use of pre-existing material for example newspapers, historic documents, interviews, journals and letters, used as source material for dramas about real events.

Docudrama

A genre that combines real events with fictional representation. Real people are represented by actors in the recreation of real events. Sometimes film footage/interviews, taken at the time of the events being represented, is edited into the drama adding to the authenticity of the final product.

Dramatic climax

The turning point in the drama, often a moment of tension, the point at which the action moves towards a resolution.

Drapes (tabs)

Curtains used on stage to mask the wings or close off part of the stage, often to accommodate the setting of the next scene.

Dresser

Employed as part of the production team to help dress the actor/performers between scenes.

Duet/duo

A performance involving two dancers, actors or musicians.

Dynamics

Dance: the qualities of movement based upon variations in speed, strength and flow.

Music: the levels of sound for example loud or soft in a piece of music.

Drama: the action and movement within a scene related to the positioning of characters and their interaction.

Editing

The assembly of, or modifying of, material in preparation of a script for performance. This can also include cutting of material that is felt unnecessary to the plot.

Editing technique (film)

Cut: a simple editing technique. One shot ends and another begins, with no transition or effects used.

Cross-cut: an editing technique used to establish that action is occurring at the same time.

Effect

Stage: an event or a moment intended to create a particular emotional response.

Music: effects are ways of changing the sound and length of notes through amplification or distortion.

End on staging

A performance space with the audience on one side, also referred to as 'end on'. Originally called 'Proscenium Arch' but has more recently been dropped as modern theatres have tended to be built without a structural proscenium in order to allow a range of staging possibilities.

Ensemble

Theatre: a company of performers and designers working together on a performance project as equals in order to achieve an effective performance.

Music: a group performance of three or more musicians.

Epic theatre

Political drama; episodic in nature, aimed at communicating a message to the audience best associated with the work of Bertolt Brecht. This style of theatre employs a range of theatrical devices or techniques to alienate the audience and to remind them that they are watching a play. Epic theatre is representing a possible version of life but not real life itself.

Episodic

A performance made up of a number of episodes or sections linked by a theme.

Evaluate

To judge the strengths and weaknesses of a performance, contribution to a project or product.

Execution

Carrying out actions with the required intention.

Excerpt/vignettes

Short performance pieces taken from often longer text/scripts or musical scores.

Expressionism

An art form which explores the world through a subjective vision with no attempt to achieve realism.

Facial expression

The use of the face by a performer to show emotion, mood, feeling and character.

Fade

The process of fading either up or down, increasing or decreasing levels of light or sound.

Farce

A genre of comedy involving ludicrous situations which become increasingly ludicrous as the play progresses

Flashback

A scene used in film/television/theatre to reference events that have taken place previously at an earlier time in the story.

Flash forward

A scene used in film/television/theatre to project a possible future for the characters in the story.

Fly/fly tower

To raise or lower scenery onto the stage from above the performance area by means of a rigging system of ropes and pulleys. The fly tower is the area above the stage where the scenery to be flown is stored during the performance.

Focus (in performance)

Use of eyes to enhance performance or interpretive qualities. Full concentration on the task in hand.

Focusing

The process of positioning and aiming a light source onto a particular section of the performance area.

Form

The overall shape and structure of the performance.

Freelance

A person who is hired by different companies to work on particular projects/productions.

Furnishings

Furniture, fittings and other decorative items such as curtains and carpets used on a set.

FX

Stage managers abbreviation for sound effects. SFX is usually used to identify special effects such as a smoke machine or pyrotechnic effect.

Genre

A system of identifying different styles of texts and performing arts products.

Get-in

Rigging or putting up the set and lights for a production.

Get-out

Striking the set and rigging at the end of a production run.

Gesture

Any movement by a performer using head, shoulders, arm, hand, leg or foot to help convey meaning.

Grease paint

A type of stage make-up, supplied in stick form and applied to face or body.

Harmony

A combination of simultaneous sounds eg chords, accompaniment and counterpoint that can support a melody.

Improvisation/improvise

The spontaneous and creative performance either based around an idea or on an aspect of a text/script, musical composition, theme or scenario in order to further understanding for the performers involved.

Dance: the exploration or generation of movements without planning.

In the round

A performance space with audience on all sides.

Intention

The aim or desired outcome of the finished performance.

Intonation and phrasing

Drama: the effective use of voice, the rise and fall of the voice to enhance the quality and understanding.

Music: the accuracy of pitch when playing an instrument or singing.

Interpretation

Finding the meaning that is in the text/script, music, choreography leading to characterization and the concept behind the performance being realized.

Levels (referring to light and sound)

The intensity of a light or sequence of sound used in performance.

Levels (referring to stage)

Physical levels used by the performer to indicate status in performance. Also pieces of set of different levels such as steps used by the performer to elevate his/her position.

Levels (referring to dance)

Distance from the ground eg low, medium, high.

LX

The stage managers abbreviation for lighting effects used in the 'Book' or stage manager's copy of the play/musical.

Location

A particular place where a performance might take place. See also 'site specific'.

Melodrama

A style of play, which originated in the 19th century often using sensational events as the basis of the drama.

Motif (dance)

A movement phrase that encapsulates an idea that is repeated and developed throughout the dance.

Motif development refers to the ways in which a movement phrase can be varied.

Movement

Material: the elements that make up dance actions, space, dynamics and relationships.

Memory: the automatic recall of learned movements, without conscious thought.

Stage: the 'blocking' of a scene or movements of the performers during their performance. Also refers to the action of a play as it moves from event to event.

Multimedia

The bringing together of several media elements in a performance. Eg Projected scenery, film and live performances.

Musicality

Vocal: the effective use of voice in performance to create interest and understanding. The considered use of the full vocal range to clearly convey meaning.

Dance: the ability of the dancer to make the unique qualities of the accompaniment evident in the finished performance

Musical score

The written music that includes details of instruments and vocal parts. Also known as libretti.

A full score includes all the instrumental and vocal parts usually on different staves and is used by the conductor of the performance.

A vocal score shows the voice parts with a simplified accompaniment, usually for piano.

Musical theatre

A style of theatre that brings together music, song, dance and dialogue to tell a story.

Musical

Chronology: the timelines of the development of music eg Baroque, Classical, Romantic.

Context: the placing of musical styles, composers and their work in relation to the audience. The time and place when the music was first created.

Elements: terms used when composing music. Melody, texture and tonality.

Language: staff notation, chords symbols, musical terminology and vocabulary

Terminology/vocabulary: specific musical words used on scores eg Andante, repeat etc.

Music production

The use of any technology including the use of computers, effects and software to perform, record and compose music.

Narrative

The story line within the performance.

Notated score

A detailed score with performance information including musical notation such as dynamics, tempo and a range of techniques where appropriate.

Notation

Music: the method used to write music down as a score.

Dance: the symbols used to record sequences of dance eg Laban notation.

Observation

A short written report by a member of your performing group commenting on your work.

Pace

The speed at which someone moves, or with which something happens. When considering dialogue the speed at which something is said.

Pause

A break in the action or speech, a short time of silence.

Performance conventions

A set of rules which the audience and performers are familiar with and which act as a useful way of quickly signifying the nature of the action or a character.

Performance environments

The different settings for performances eg in the round, traverse, end-on proscenium arch, site specific.

Personal skills audit

A personal checklist of the skills that you have and are good at and those that will need to be improved as you work through aspects of Unit Two.

Phrase (dance)

A short sequence of linked movements.

Physical skills

Skills that enable an effective performance such as appropriate posture, alignment, balance, co-ordination, control, flexibility, mobility, strength, stamina and extension and isolation in dance.

Physical theatre

A style of theatre that puts emphasis on movement rather than dialogue. It can often be abstract in style, using movement in a stylised and representational way.

Pitch

An outline of an idea for the creation of a particular project/production.

Pitch can also refer to:

Theatre: the different levels high and low of the performers voice.

Music: the level of music high, low and the different singing levels alto, tenor, bass, soprano and musical instruments.

Plot

The way in which the story develops, the organization of events/scenes and character development to bring the production to a satisfying conclusion.

Portfolio

A record of the research and work carried out for unit one.

Posture

The way a performer holds his/her body.

Pre-production

All the work, planning and research that is done prior to production of the film, television or theatre production.

Production values

The different elements that together make up a production eg lighting, sound, set, costume.

Producer

The people who plan, co-ordinate and create media products including the sourcing of funds/sponsors.

Production company

The group that you will work with to produce and develop the ideas that will be rehearsed and presented/performed for Unit One and Unit Two. It takes responsibility for all aspects of the production that you are involved in.

Profile

Performer profile including a CV or a type of spotlight with an optical system producing a narrow hard-edged light beam.

Projection (design)

The projection of images as part of stage setting, slides or video material used to project film, images or textures.

Projection (vocal)

Directing the voice out of the body so that it can be heard clearly at a distance, not to be confused as shouting. Voice projection is controlled and uses the organs of speech without straining them.

Prop/property

Prop/props the shortened form of property. These are the objects that appear on set, screen or stage.

Pyrotechnics

The use of explosions, flashes and smoke on stage.

Recruiting processes

Recruiting processes in the performing arts business include auditions, interviews, show-reels, screen tests, demo recordings (CD), CV's, and websites. Candidates may go through several of those listed and have several recalls before being offered a position.

Refine

To rehearse scenes and make changes and polish as necessary in order to reach a clear interpretation of the piece to be performed.

Rehearse

To work on the script/performance in a rehearsal studio/workshop in order to bring it to a standard of readiness for an audience.

Relationships

The way in which performers relate, interact and make connections between each other in performance.

Repetition

Rehearsing or performing the same action, scene, movements, dance sequences/phrases or music.

Research

The search for information and facts in relation to projects or portfolio.

Rondo

A piece of music or dance form with alternating and repeating sections eg verse and chorus.

Rigging

A system of suspending equipment such as lights over the stage. The use of battens, lines and pulleys enabling the vertical movement of scenery.

Rhythm

The arrangement and accent of notes with different values.

Roles and responsibilities

The jobs that you undertake as part of your production company. An understanding of what is involved in the range of jobs in the industry generally. Research of these forms part of the work in Unit one and will be referred to in the written paper Unit three.

Royalties

Theatre: payments made to the playwright or his/her estate for permission to perform their work in public.

Media: payments made to performers, song writers, musicians when their music is played on radio and television or used as recorded incidental music in a play.

Run

A rehearsal or performance that brings every aspect of the piece together. In the dress run, the performers work in their costumes, in a technical run, the technical team rehearses the lighting and sound cues and any special effects.

Safe working practice

Working with consideration of personal care and well-being, respect for others, safe execution, preparation and recovery after performance.

Scale (design)

The relationship between the real size of something and its size on a model or stage.

Short list

The list of ideas that the production company have generated and decided to include in the final performance. These are the best ideas that have been explored in rehearsal and through research.

Site specific/sensitive

Performances that are designed for specific spaces other than, purpose-built theatres.

Social, cultural and historical context

The circumstances existing at the time of the text/script/score being produced. It also refers to the physical and social setting of the piece including the culture, education and status of people involved.

Solo

An individual performance

Soundscape

The process of creating the atmosphere of a scene through sound only. The sounds are usually provided by the performers themselves and not by recordings.

Spatial awareness

Consciousness of the surrounding space and its effective use. Awareness of others within the performance space.

Spatial design

The way that elements of space have been considered when designing a set for a performance taking account of the demands of the text/script and action that will need to happen

Smoke machine

Sometimes referred to as a 'fogger' it is an electrically powered unit which produces clouds of white non-toxic fog or smoke and is used to create atmosphere. When used with light the light beams can be clearly differentiated creating some interesting effects.

Stage directions

Part of the text/script where the playwright gives suggestions to the performers of how to move or position themselves on set. They can also suggest ways in which the performer may deliver a speech.

Sponsorship

A marketing technique involving the funding or support of a performance, project or film.

Staging/set

The presentation of the performance within the setting on stage. This will include consideration of the action, suitability of the set, furniture, props, projections, backdrops and effects.

Staging configuration

The shape and nature of the performance space or stage. Consideration of the placing of the audience will depend on the final shape and position of the performance space.

Stage directions

The playwright's description of characters, setting, costume as well as indication of exits/entrances and suggestions for the delivery of lines or reactions to unfolding events within a scene.

Stage machinery

Any machinery installed to facilitate set changes or 'flying' of characters.

Strobe

A device giving a fast series of very short intense light flashes which can have the effect of making action intermittent and as if being performed in 'slow motion'. Because strobe lighting can trigger epileptic attacks in sufferers, the use of strobe lighting must be communicated to the audience before the performance begins.

Storyboard

A visual representation and plan of how the performance might take shape. In film this will often take the form of a frame by frame series of sketches and include camera angles, movements, edits and possible timing etc.

Technical skills

Dance: these include accuracy of action, timing, dynamic, rhythmic and spatial content and the reproduction of movement in a stylistically accurate way.

Drama: acting technique, voice production, timing, accuracy, dance and movement, spatial awareness.

Technical terms

These include wings, fly tower, flies, stage dock, orchestra pit, Tabs, LX, FX, The Book, SM (stage manager), ASM (Assistant Stage Manager).

Teching

The technical management of the whole show/performance undertaken by the stage crew.

Theatre in the round

A theatre configuration in which the stage is surrounded by the audience with aisles to allow for entrances and exits of the actors.

Timing

The rate of movement or speed of the action in performance. Timing also refers to the way in which a performer delivers a line for what is often comic effect.

Transition

The moment of cross-over between one scene and another.

Traverse staging

A theatre configuration where the audience sits along the left and right sides of the performance area.

Venue

The range of possible performance spaces where the piece is to be performed.

Voiceover

A segment of narration that is added to a broadcast/film with the speaker not seen on screen.

Workshop

Rehearsals in preparation for performance using basic substitute props and costume. These can also be planned activities for potential audience members and interested groups related to a specific performance or part of a theatre in education programme.