



## BASIC GLOSSARY OF TECHNICAL TERMS

With help from [www.theatrecrafts.com](http://www.theatrecrafts.com)

compiled Feb 2012

CONTENTS	PAGE	CONTENTS	PAGE	CONTENTS	PAGE
<b><i>The Theatre Building</i></b>	<b>1</b>	<b><i>Lighting (cont)</i></b>		<b><i>Stage Management (cont)</i></b>	
Aisle	1	Flood	5	Clove Hitch	10
Auditorium	1	Fresnel	5	Cue	10
Backstage	1	Gobo	5	Cue Light	10
Bastard Prompt	1	Gobo Holder	6	Deputy Stage Manager (DSM)	11
Control Room	1	Hook Clamp	6	Drapes	11
Cyclorama	1	Hot Spot	6	Dress Rehearsal	11
Fly Floor(s)	1	House Lights	6	Dressing (the set)	11
Fly Tower	1	Internally wired bar (IWB)	6	Flat	11
Foyer	1	Iris	6	Foot	11
Front of House (FOH)	1	Kilowatt	6	Gaffa tape	11
Front Tabs	1	Lantern	6	Get out/in	11
Green Room	1	Lighting Plan	6	Go	11
Grid	2	Lighting Plot	6	Go Up	11
House	2	Mirror Ball	6	Going dark	11
In the Round	2	Parcan	6	Half	11
Iron	2	Profile	7	Heads on stage	11
OP	2	Projection	7	Legs	11
Orchestra	2	PVC tape	7	Libretto	11
Prompt Corner	2	Safety Chain	7	Marking out	11
Proscenium Arch	2	Snap	7	Masking flat	12
Raked Auditorium	2	Tallescope	7	Model	12
Raked Stage	2	Wash	7	Open the House	12
Safety Curtain	2	Working lights	7	Prompt Book (Script)	12
Scene Dock	2			Prompt Corner	12
Setting Line	2	<b><i>Sound</i></b>	<b>7</b>	Prompt Desk	12
Stage	2	Amplifier	7	Props	12
Stage Door	3	Amplitude	7	Props Table	12
Thrust	3	Analogue Signal	7	Safe system of work	12
Thunder Run	3	Balanced Line	8	Sightlines	12
Traverse	3	Cans	8	Spotter	12
		CD (Compact Disc)	8	Stage Crew	12
<b><i>Lighting</i></b>	<b>3</b>	Channel	8	Stage Left/Stage Right	12
13A Plug	3	Compressor	8	Stage weight	13
15A Plug	3	Condenser Mic	8	Stagger-Through	13
Adaptor	3	D I Box (Direct Injection)	8	Standby	13
Ampere	3	Echo	8	Tabs	13
Backlight	3	Effects, sound	8	Technical Rehearsal	13
Bar	3	Feedback/Howl round	8	Upstage	13
Barn Door	3	Foldback	9		
Beam Angle	3	Loudspeaker	9	<b><i>Scenery/Special Effects</i></b>	<b>13</b>
Betapack	3	Mic level signal	9	Book Flat	13
Birdie	3	Microphone	9	Border	13
Blackout (BO)	4	Mixer	9	Box Set	13
Board	4	Phantom Power	9	Brace	13
Cantata	4	Phono plug	9	Door Flat	13
Channel	4	Radio mic	9	Entrance	13
Circuit	4	Show relay	9	Exit	13
Circuit Breaker	4	Speakon connector	9	False Perspective	13
Colour Filter	4	XLR	9	False Proscenium	14
Colour Frame	4			False Stage	14
Colour Mixing	4	<b><i>Stage Management</i></b>	<b>10</b>	Fireplace Flat	14
Cross Fade	4	Acting Area	10	Gauze	14
De-Rig	4	Assistant Stage Manager	10	Monkey Pole	14
Dimmer	4	Blacks	10	Pin Hinge	14
Dip	5	Blocking	10	Pyrotechnics	14
Downlight	5	Blues/Working lights	10	Screw Eye	14
Earthing	5	Boards	10	Smoke Machine	14
Exit Sign	5	Bomb tank	10	Stage Weight	14
Fade	5	Calling the show	10	Tabs	14
Fade Times	5	Cleat	10	Truck	14
Fader	5	Cleat line	10		
Flash Box	5	Cloth	10	<b>Addendum 2023</b>	<b>15</b>
Flash Button	5			<b>Jobs in the Theatre Industry</b>	<b>17</b>

## ***The Theatre Building***

**AISLE** A passage through seating (not always in the centre).

**APRON** Section of the stage floor which projects towards or into the auditorium. In proscenium theatres, the part of the stage in front of the house tabs, or in front of the proscenium arch.

**AUDITORIUM** The part of the theatre accommodating the audience during the performance. Sometimes known as the 'house'. From the Latin *Audire* - 'I hear'.

**BACKSTAGE** The part of the stage and theatre which is out of the sight of the audience. The service areas of the theatre.

**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 DSM can't hear themselves cueing ! Stage Right can also be called OP (Opposite Prompt).

**CONTROL ROOM** Room at the rear of the auditorium (in a proscenium theatre) where lighting and sometimes sound is operated from. 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.

**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 sharktooth 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)..

**FLY FLOOR(S)** High working platform at the side(s) of the stage from which the flying lines are handled. Often are also the site for socket panels for connecting flown lighting apparatus to dimmers, and also sometimes a lighting position.

**FLY TOWER** Extension of the stage walls up to allow scenery to be flown up until it is out of sight of the audience, and to support the GRID. Known as the 'flies'. The ideal fly tower should be more than twice the height of the pros. arch, and is said to have 'full flying height'. The load on the grid is transferred to the ground via the walls of the theatre.

**FOYER** Part of the front of house area of the theatre into which the audience first arrive on entering the theatre. The foyer normally contains: Box Office, Toilets, Entrance to auditorium, Bar, Concession / merchandising stand.

**FRONT OF HOUSE (FOH)** 1) Every part of the theatre in front of the proscenium arch. Includes foyer areas open to the general public. 2) All lanterns which are on the audience side of the proscenium and are focussed towards the stage. The backstage areas of the theatre are known as **Rear of House (ROH)**.

**FRONT TABS** House curtains/House Tabs. The main set of curtains ('tabs') in the venue. Not every show will use the tabs, but it's often nice to save the audiences' first view of the set for a special moment as the show starts, not as 'wallpaper' while they're coming into the auditorium. However, this entirely depends on the nature of the show.

**GREEN ROOM** Room close to the stage (i.e. the green) for the actors to meet and relax.

**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. 2) Arrangement of scaffolding from which lanterns are hung in a performance space with no flying facilities. Grid is short for GRIDIRON.

**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')

**IN THE ROUND** Theatre in the Round is a form of audience seating layout where the acting area is enclosed 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.)

**IRON** See SAFETY CURTAIN.

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

### **ORCHESTRA**

1) In Greek Theatres, the central performance area used by the Chorus or for dancing.

2) Refers to the main seating area of the auditorium at floor level.

3) Colloquially known as 'the band' the musicians who perform from the orchestra PIT.

**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.

**PROSCENIUM ARCH** The opening in the wall which stands between stage and auditorium in some theatres; the picture frame through which the audience sees the play. The 'fourth wall'. Often shortened to Proscenium or Pros Arch. In some older theatres, the Proscenium Arch is ornate and painted to contrast with the surrounding walls, to really make it stand out. Nothing outside the Proscenium Arch was part of the show. However, as there are many different audience layouts now, many theatres (particularly multi-purpose studio theatres) have no Proscenium Arch at all, or it may not be decorated as such.

**RAKED AUDITORIUM** Audience seating area which is sloped, with its lowest part nearest the stage.

**RAKED STAGE** A sloping stage which is raised at the back (upstage) end. All theatres used to be built with raked stages as a matter of course. Today, the stage is often left flat and the auditorium is raked to improve the view of the stage from all seats. A rake is expressed as a ratio (eg a 1:25 rake rises by 1cm vertically over 25cm horizontally).

**SAFETY CURTAIN** A fireproof curtain that can be dropped downstage of the tabs to separate the audience from the stage in the event of fire. A Safety Curtain is required by most UK licensing authorities for theatres of traditional design. The regulations also require that it is raised and lowered at least once in view of each audience (usually during the interval). Usually made from sheet metal and electrically operated, these curtains were originally of iron construction faced with asbestos and lowered using a hydraulic damping system. Colloquially known as the 'iron'. Also known as FIRE CURTAIN.

**SCENE DOCK** High-ceilinged storage area next to the stage, sometimes used for building and storing flats/scenery.

**SETTING LINE** Imaginary line running across the width of the stage, in line with the proscenium arch, which is marked on the groundplan and is used as a reference when planning furniture layouts etc. Usually the furthest downstage anything can be set without fouling the house tabs.

**STAGE** The part of the theatre on which performances happen, adjacent to the auditorium.

**STAGE DOOR** The backstage entrance to the theatre. Performers and technicians enter here.

**THRUST** Form of stage which projects into the auditorium so that the audience are seated on at least two sides of the extended piece.

**THUNDER RUN** Long channel down which a cannonball is rolled to give a realistic thunder rumble effect. Built into the roof of some older theatres, but mostly now unused for safety reasons.

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

## ***Lighting***

**13A PLUG** Standard domestic power connector in the UK. Three rectangular metal contacts (live, neutral and earth) with a fuse built-in (2A, 3A, 5A, 7A, 10A or 13A fuses are interchangeable).

**15A PLUG** Standard power connector in UK theatres. Three round metal contacts (live, neutral and earth); the principal difference from the domestic 13A connector is that the 15A version has no fuse.

**ADAPTOR** Connector which allows two or more electrical devices to be connected to a single power outlet. The connection is normally parallel, that is, each device is fed the same voltage, but the current is divided between them. Sometimes known as a 'Twofer'. A three-way splitter is known as a 'Threefer'. A Series splitter is also available where a voltage is shared equally between two loads.

**AMPERE** The standard unit for measurement of electrical current passing through a circuit (usually abbreviated to AMP). Written as 'I' in equations. Cables, fuses and switches are designated by their current carrying capacity. (Following phrase refers to UK standards). Square pin plugs are rated at 13 Amps maximum and Round pin plugs at either 5 Amps or 15 Amps maximum, depending on the size of the pins. If a cable rated at 5 Amps is used with a load of 15 Amps (for example), the cable will overheat and possibly catch fire.

**BACKLIGHT** Light coming from upstage, behind scenery or actors, to sculpt and separate them from the background.

**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.

**BARN DOORS** A rotatable attachment consisting of two or four metal flaps (hinged) which is fixed to the front of a Fresnel or PC type lantern to cut off the beam in a particular direction(s). Profile lanterns use SHUTTERS to achieve a greater degree of control and accuracy. Barndoors are also available for parcans and birdies.

**BEAM ANGLE** The angle of the cone of light produced by a lantern. Defined as the angle within which the lowest intensity in a beam of light from a lantern is not less than one-tenth of the maximum.

**BETAPACK** (Trade Name) Portable 6 way dimmer pack manufactured in the UK by Zero88.

**BIRDIE** A compact low voltage display luminaire containing a Par 16 or MR16 lamp. So called because it is similar to, but much smaller than, the Parcan, and is hence 'one under Par'. (It's a golfing reference). Requires a 12 Volt external transformer, but is ideal for concealing in pieces of set or as downstage uplights.

**BLACKOUT (BO)** 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')

**BOARD** The main control for the stage lighting. Originally known as the switchboard or dimmerboard, it is now usually remote from the dimmers. The lighting operator for a show is said to be 'on the board', and is sometimes known as the 'board op'.

**CANTATA** (Trade Name) Range of 1200W lanterns produced by Rank Strand (now Strand Lighting) in the UK.

**CHANNEL** A complete control path for signals in lighting or sound equipment. In a lighting desk, the channels are directly controllable by the lighting operator. Within the desk, the channels are 'patched' to a dimmer or dimmers which the desk then sends a signal to depending on the level of the channel.

**CIRCUIT** 1) The means by which a lantern is connected to a dimmer or patch panel. Numbered for reference.

2) A complete electrical 'loop' around which current can flow.

**CIRCUIT BREAKER** An electro-mechanical 'fuse' that can be reset, rather than having to be replaced. Available in the same ratings as fuses.

**COLOUR FILTER** A sheet of plastic usually composed of a coloured resin sandwiched between two clear pieces. The coloured filter absorbs all the colours of light except the colour of the filter itself, which it allows through. For this reason, denser colours get very hot, and can burn out very quickly. There are a number of manufacturers of Colour Filters - Lee (UK) and Rosco (US) are the more popular. Each manufacturer's range has a numbering system for the different colours. It's important to specify which range you're talking about when quoting numbers. A colour filter is sometimes known as a GEL, after the animal material Gelatine, from which filters were originally made.

**COLOUR FRAME (GEL FRAME or FILTER FRAME)** A frame which holds the colour filter in the guides at the front of a lantern. Many different sizes of frames are needed for the different lanterns.

**COLOUR MIXING** Combining the effects of two or more lighting gels:

1) Additive : Focusing two differently coloured beams of light onto the same area (eg Cyc Floods). Combining colours in this way adds the colours together, eventually arriving at white. The three primary colours additively mix to form white, as do the complementary colours.

2) Subtractive : Placing two different gels in front of the same lantern. Subtractive mixing is used to obtain a colour effect that is not available from stock or from manufacturers. Because the ranges of colour are so wide, the need for subtractive mixing is reducing. Combining colours in this way reduces the light towards blackness. The three primary colours mix subtractively to form black (or to block all the light).

**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.

**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.

**DIMMER** Electrical or electronic device which controls the amount of electricity passed to a lantern, and therefore the intensity of the lamp.

- DIP** 1) Small covered trap at stage level containing electrical outlets.  
2) Any dimmer outlets at floor level around the stage (e.g. 'What's the nearest dip circuit to downstage left so I can plug the birdie in?')  
3) Lighting equipment on stands at stage level. (e.g. 'We're just focussing the dips now')  
4) Low lighting intensity when cross fading between two higher states - 'there's a dip between these two states'.  
5) Transparent lacquer for colouring lamp bulbs - known as 'Lamp Dip'.

**DOWNLIGHT** A light from directly above the acting area.

**EARTHING** Electrical safety requirement that metal parts of electrical equipment are connected to a common earth or ground point so that in the event of a fault, excess current can be carried away, causing the fuse to blow.

**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'.

**FADE** A fade is an increase, diminishment or change in lighting or sound level.

**FADE TIMES** On computerised memory lighting control desks, a lighting fade can have two times - an up fade and a down fade. The Up fade time refers to the time it takes dimmer levels to rise to their new positions. The Down fade time refers to the time for dimmer levels falling to their new positions.

**FADER** A vertical slider which is used to remotely set the level of a lighting or sound channel.

**FLASH BOX** A small box containing the socket into which a pyro cartridge is plugged. Also known as a flash pod.

**FLASH BUTTON** A push switch on a lighting desk which flashes selected channels / memories / submasters to full (100%) while pressed. Some Flash buttons on submasters can be set to latch (ie they stay on when pushed, until they are pushed again).

**FLOOD** 1) A lensless lantern that produces a broad non-variable spread of light. Floods are used in battens, or singly to light cycloramas or large areas of the stage.  
2) To increase the beam angle of a Fresnel or PC by moving the lamp and reflector towards the lens. 'Flood that a bit, please!'. The opposite movement is called Spotting.

**FOLLOWSPOT** A powerful profile lantern usually fitted with its own dimmer, iris, colour magazine and shutters mounted in or above the auditorium, used with an operator so that the light beam can be moved around the stage to follow an actor. Sometimes another lantern may be used in the same way. Powerful followspots use discharge lamps which cannot be dimmed, so these followspots have mechanical dimming shutters to dim the light output.

**FRESNEL** (pronounced 'Fre-nell') A type of lantern which produces an even, soft-edged beam of light through a Fresnel lens. The lens is a series of stepped concentric circles on the front and pebbled on the back and is named after its French inventor, Augustin Jean Fresnel (1788-1827). He developed the lens for French lighthouses so that they could be seen further out to sea and could achieve a longer focal length with a lot less glass than a standard plano-convex lens.

**GOBO** A thin metal plate etched to produce a design which can then be projected by a profile spotlight. There are hundreds of gobo designs available - common examples are breakup (foliage), windows and scenic (neon signs, city scapes etc.). The image can be used soft focus to add texture, rather than a defined image. A number of composite gobos in different coloured lanterns can, with careful focusing, produce a coloured image (e.g. a stained glass window). Greater detail can be achieved using a glass gobo, which consists of a thin layer of aluminium etched onto glass. There are a few possible origins for the word GOBO.

1) It came from the early days of Hollywood. When the Director of Photography wanted daylight excluded from some area of the set, he'd say 'GO BlackOut'. Loads of people would run around putting black material between the sun and the set.

2) It stands for Graphical Optical BlackOut.

3) It's short for Go-Between, as the gobo goes between the lamp and the lens.

4) It's short of GO Before Objective (i.e., it goes before the Objective lens).

Material from 1967 uses the word 'MASK', and no mention is made of 'GOBO', so we can assume the word wasn't in widespread use then. In the US TV/Film industry, a Gobo is a piece of material used to mask or block light, placed in front of a lantern (also known as a SHADOW MASK) and a Cookie (short for Cucaloris (from the Greek kukaloris: the breaking up of light)) is the same as a UK Gobo. PATTERN and TEMPLATE can also refer to a gobo. In the film industry, the word gobo can be used as a verb (e.g. 'We need to gobo off that light so the camera doesn't see it').

**GOBO HOLDER** A metal plate designed to hold a gobo of a particular size in a lantern of a particular type.

**HOOK CLAMP** A clamp with a wing bolt for hanging a lantern on a horizontal lighting bar. Introduced in the UK in 1959 by Strand, replacing the 2-bolt and 2-nut L Clamp.

**HOT SPOT** The brightest part of the beam from a lantern, usually showing the centre. Profile lanterns have a Field control which enables a beam to be flattened so it has no hot spot.

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

**INTERNALLY WIRED BAR (IWB)** A Scaffolding bar (aluminium) which has a number of sockets (usually 15A) positioned along its length, the wiring for which is contained within the bar.

**IRIS** Adjustable aperture which, when placed in the gate of a profile lantern, varies the size of a beam of light. Originally, iris diaphragm. Most followspots have an iris permanently installed.

**KILOWATT** 1 kilowatt (1kW) is equal to 1000 Watts. The WATT is a measure of electrical power.

**LANTERN** General term for unit of lighting equipment including spotlight, flood etc. Term now being replaced by the internationally recognised 'luminaire' (esp. Europe).

**LIGHTING PLAN** A scale drawing detailing the exact location of each lantern used in a production and any other pertinent information (E.g. its dimmer number, focus position and colour number). Often drawn from the theatres' groundplan.

**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.

**MIRROR BALL** A lighting effect popular in discos, ballrooms etc. A large plastic ball covered with small mirror pieces. When a spotlight (usually a PINSPOT) is focused onto the ball, specks of light are thrown around the room. Usually motorised to rotate.

**PARCAN** Type of lantern which produces an intense beam of light, ideally suited to 'punching' through strong colours, or for special effect. The Parcan is literally a cylinder of metal (the 'can') within which sits the PAR lamp (PAR stands for Parabolic Aluminised Reflector) which consists of the bulb, a reflector and a lens in a sealed unit. The Parcan first appeared in the early 1970's in the Rock concert industry due to the intensity of the beam, and the light weight and near indestructibility of the lantern. The lens of the lamp is either clear (which produces a narrow beam), frosted (medium) or stippled (wide).

**PROFILE** A type of lantern with at least one plano-convex lens which projects the outline of any chosen shape placed in its gate, sometimes with a variable degree of hardness/softness. Profiles include four beam-shaping metal shutters, a gate to take an iris or gobo and an adjustment to make the beam smooth and even ('flat') or hot in the centre ('peaky').

## **PROJECTION**

1) Slides are used to project still archive images or textures. Libraries of slides contain images for every occasion. Kodak Carousel projectors are the industry standard, and some types can be linked to a controller to perform complex dissolves and fades from one projector to another. More powerful projectors are available using very intense discharge sources and large format glass slides to produce a massive image.

2) Lighting effects : Moving cloud / rain / fire effects can be achieved using a powerful lantern known as an effects projector with a motorised glass disc painted with the required effect. An objective lens is required in front of the disc to focus the image.

3) Gobos

4) Film : 35mm film projection is common in many theatres as a device for keeping the building open to the public when productions are in preparation. 16mm film projection is used in smaller venues. Film projection can, of course, also be integrated into a performance.

5) Video : Video projection is now being used to bring television pictures to the large screen. Cheaper than using film, but the image quality is not as good. Video projection equipment can also be more difficult to set up. Images can be front projected or back/rear projected depending on the amount of space and the effect required. If actors are required to walk in front of the screen and not have the image appearing on them, back projection is the only answer.

**PVC TAPE** Plastic insulating tape used for taping cables to bars and for securing coiled cables. Neater and cheaper than Gaffa tape. Also known as LX tape.

**SAFETY CHAIN** Chain or wire fixed around lantern and lighting bar or boom to prevent danger in the event of failure of the primary support (eg Hook Clamp). A requirement of most licensing authorities. In the UK, current legislation.

**SNAP** A lighting or sound cue with no fade time - the cue happens instantly.

**TALLESSCOPE** (Trade Name) A retractable alloy vertical ladder on an adjustable wheeled base. The platform at the top is just large enough to hold one person. Used for rigging lanterns, focusing etc. Collapsible enough to fit through a standard doorway. Outriggers are used to stabilise the tower from falling sideways. Two people are used to move and steady the Tallescope. Sometimes known as a 'TALLEY'.

**WASH** A lighting cover over the whole stage (e.g. 'We'll use the red wash for the hell scene')

**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.

## **Sound**

**AMPLIFIER** Sound equipment that converts the low voltage, low current signal from a tape deck, mixer etc. into a higher current signal suitable for driving speakers. As a general rule, each speaker in a sound system requires a separate amplifier. Each amplifier case usually contains two amplifiers (for the separate left and right parts of the sound signal), so with a single amplifier box, you can drive two speakers.

**AMPLITUDE** The strength of a vibrating wave; in sound, the loudness of the sound.

**ANALOGUE SIGNAL** A continuously variable signal that can have any value over a given range.

1) In lighting: an analogue voltage within the range 0 to 10 Volts can have values of 0, 2, 8.785 or any value between. Most dimmers require an analogue voltage in order to operate (from 0 to -10V or 0 to +10V depending on the



manufacturer). Most lighting control desks produce a digital multiplexed output, which is converted by a demux box to an analogue signal for the dimmer. See also Digital dimmer.

2) Sound: An analogue recording will record the exact waveform of the original sound, simply converting it to an electrical signal at the microphone, and back into air movement at the speaker. See DIGITAL.

**BALANCED LINE** A method of carrying sound or data signals which reduces interference by using a third conductor, the shield. In the balanced line the shield, which is grounded, is in addition to the two signal- (or data-) carrying conductors. Balanced lines are less prone than unbalanced to interference. In balanced lines, one of the signal wires carries the audio signal, while the other carries an out-of-phase (inverted) copy. When the signal reaches the destination, the inverted copy is flipped and added to the original. Any noise added by interference is also inverted. When combined with the non-inverted noise, the two noise signals cancel each other out.

**CANS** 1) Headset earpiece, microphone and beltpack used for communication and co-ordination of technical departments during a performance. (e.g. 'Electrics on cans', 'Going off cans', 'Quiet on cans!'). The common system in the UK is produced by Canford Audio under the TechPro brand.

2) Any headphones.

**CD (Compact Disc)** Digital sound storage medium introduced in 1982. Provides a high quality source of music, sound effects etc. Also used as a playback medium for sound effects etc by large theatres with long running shows, although CDR (Recordable CD) is becoming more affordable.

**CHANNEL** A complete control path for signals in lighting or sound equipment. In a lighting desk, the channels are directly controllable by the lighting operator. Within the desk, the channels are 'patched' to a dimmer or dimmers which the desk then sends a signal to depending on the level of the channel.

**COMPRESSOR** A piece of sound processing equipment that ensures all wanted signals are suitably placed between the noise and distortion levels of the recording medium. It evens out the unwanted changes in volume you get with close-micing, and in doing so, adds punch to the sound mix. A Limiter is used to stop a signal from exceeding a preset limit. Beyond this limit, the signal level will not increase, no matter how loud the input becomes. A Limiter is often used to protect speaker systems (and human ears) by preventing a system from becoming too loud.

**CONDENSER MIC (Capacitor Mic)** A microphone that uses the varying capacitance between two plates with a voltage applied across them to convert sound to electrical pulses. Condenser microphones need a power supply to provide the voltage across the plates, which may be provided by a battery within the case of the microphone, or it may be provided from an external phantom power supply. A condenser mic is more sensitive and has a faster reaction to percussive sounds than a Dynamic mic and produces a more even response.

**D.I.BOX (Direct Injection)** Interface unit to convert the high impedance unbalanced output of an instrument (e.g. Electric guitar) into a low impedance balanced signal of low level suitable for connection to the microphone input of a mixing desk. Usually has an output jack socket so that the instruments unprocessed signal can be passed direct to the musicians amplifier.

**ECHO** A repeated sound received late enough to be heard as distinct from the source.

**EFFECTS, SOUND** 1) Recorded : Often abbreviated to FX. There are many sources for recorded sound effects, from Compact Discs, to downloading from the internet. May form an obvious part of the action (train arriving at station) or may be in the background throughout a scene (e.g. birds chirping).

2) Live : Gunshots, door slams, and offstage voices (amongst many others) are most effective when done live.

**FEEDBACK / HOWLROUND (Sound)** A loud whistle or rumble heard emanating from a sound system. It is caused by a sound being amplified many times. (E.g. a sound is picked up by a microphone and amplified through the speaker. The microphone picks up this amplified sound and it is sent through the system again). Feedback can be avoided by careful microphone positioning, and can be reduced by use of Equalisation to reduce the level of the frequency band causing the feedback.

**FOLDBACK** Means by which musicians can hear part of the rest of the sound mix (including voices) and how their instruments sound after being amplified. Also enables actors on stage to hear musicians or effects when they cannot hear the output of the auditorium sound system.

**LOUDSPEAKER** Device for converting the electrical signal from an amplifier back into sound waves, most commonly by vibrating a paper cone. Most speaker systems are composed of a number of sources - each designed to handle a specific range of frequencies.

**MIC LEVEL SIGNAL** Low level audio signal produced by circuitry in microphone. Needs boosting either by a pre-amp or a mixing desk before it can be amplified. Susceptible to interference over long cable runs.

**MICROPHONE** Device for converting sound into electrical pulses which can then be amplified or recorded onto tape. Signals from a microphone are very low level and are amplified in the mixing desk to line level.

**MIXER** A desk comprising a number of input channels where each sound source is provided with its own control channel through which sound signals are routed into two or more outputs. Many mixing desks can also change the quality of the sound (EQUALISATION). A Powered Mixer has an amplifier built into it. Sound sources of varying levels are accepted which can be amplified if necessary. Also known as a Sound Desk or Sound Board.

**PHANTOM POWER** Some condenser microphones require a power supply in order to operate. If this supply is not from a battery within the microphone body, it is known as a phantom power supply. It is usually 48 Volts DC (can be 9 - 52 volts from most mics), and is supplied either by a separate battery pack, or by the sound desk. The supply is termed 'phantom' because it is 'invisibly' carried down the same microphone cable as the sound signals.

**PHONO PLUG** An unbalanced audio connector used for connecting line-level equipment together (eg CD player, tape recorder). Unsuitable for professional use due to lack of durability. Also known as RCA connector, Pin Plug.

**RADIO MIC** Device consisting of a microphone head, transmitter pack with batteries, aerial and mains receiver unit which allows actors and singers to be amplified with no visible means of connection. Almost universally used in musicals where the singers have to be amplified to be heard over the orchestra / band. Used in non-musical shows for sound reinforcement.

**SHOW RELAY** A network of speakers carrying the sound of the show, and sometimes stage managers calls, to the furthest reaches of the theatre. (e.g 'Can we turn the show relay down please?')

**SPEAKON CONNECTOR** Manufactured by Neutrik. A type of shielded, locking multipin speaker connector which can safely carry the high currents from an amplifier needed to drive large speaker systems. Available in 4- or 8-way types, and ideal for bi-amplified systems. The cable version of the connector is male, and the panel mount connector is female.

**XLR** Multipin metallic connector. (3 pin for normal sound use, 5 pin for DMX, Colour Scrollers etc). Sometimes called Cannons after the original manufacturer.

The UK standard for wiring the 3 pin connector is as follows : Pin 1 (Screen), Pin 2 (+ve / 'hot'), Pin 3 (-ve, 'cold'). (Xternal, Live, Return).

A 5 pin connector for DMX512 use has the following connections: pin 1 = screen, pin 2 = data -ve ('cold'), pin 3 = data +ve ('hot'), pin 4 and 5 are not used by many manufacturers. A comparison is made between the signals carried by the two data cables, and any differences are cancelled out, meaning that noise/data error reduction is very effective.

## **Stage Management**

**ACTING AREA** The 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').

**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. They are also a member of the stage 'crew'.

**BLACKS** 1) Black clothing worn by stage management and all crew 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.)

**BLUES/WORKING LIGHTS** Blue lights used backstage in a performance situation.

**BOARDS** Slang term for the stage floor. (e.g. 'How long have you been treading the boards?').

**BOMB TANK** Metal bin or box covered with fine mesh in which Theatrical Maroons can safely be detonated.

**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.

**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.

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

**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 (usually black) has a large number of small low-voltage lamps sewn or pinned through it which gives a magical starry sky effect.

**CLOVE HITCH** Invaluable knot that every technician should know.

**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.

**DEPUTY STAGE MANAGER** Usually shortened to DSM, in the UK, this is the member of the Stage Management team who attends all rehearsals and then calls the cues / runs the book for the show. Known in some places as a Stage Director.

**DRAPES** Stage Curtains. See also TABS.

**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.

**FLAT** A lightweight timber frame covered with scenic canvas. Now usually covered with plywood or hardboard and consequently not so lightweight. 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.

**FOOT** 1) The action of bracing the bottom of a ladder while a colleague climbs it (e.g. 'Can you foot this please?').  
2) Holding the bottom edge of a flat with your foot while a colleague raises the top of it to a vertical position.

**GAFFA TAPE** Ubiquitous sticky cloth tape. 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.

**GET OUT/IN** Moving an entire production out of the venue, and into either a large waste-disposal skip or into transport. Usually preceded by the STRIKE. GET IN moving set, props etc into the theatre.

**GO** The action word used by DSM 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 DSM 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).

**GOING DARK** Warning to people on stage that the lights are about to be switched off. Normally said during lighting plotting sessions or technical rehearsals.

**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.

**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.

**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.

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

**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 wooden floor surfaces!

**MASKING FLAT** A piece of solid scenery used to prevent audiences seeing backstage (or unwanted) areas.

**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.

**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.

**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 should also contain 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 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.

**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.

**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'

**SIGHTLINES** 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. Always marked in the wings as a guide to the actors and crew.

**SPOTTER** Member of the fly crew who's responsibility is to check it's safe to fly an item on cue. Sometimes this role is taken by the flyman / fly operator themselves. It's essential there's ALWAYS visual confirmation it's safe to move any flown object. A stage manager might not have time to check the stage is clear before giving the cue to fly so it's important someone else has the authority to NOT FLY if there's someone or something in the wrong place.

**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 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)

Stage Left = PS (Prompt Side)

**STAGE WEIGHT** Heavy weight used with a brace to support scenery flats.

**STAGGER-THROUGH** The first tentative attempt to run through the whole show. Very rarely runs smoothly, hence the name.

**STANDBY** 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'.

**TABS** A generic term for curtains.

**TECHNICAL REHEARSAL** 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. 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.

**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.

### ***Scenery/Special Effects***

**BOOK FLAT** Two-fold piece of scenery. Book flats are free-standing when angled open, allowing quick setting and compact storage. Booking describes the action of opening or closing a book flat.

**BORDER** A narrow horizontal masking piece (flattage or cloth), normally of neutral colour (black) to mask the lighting rig and flown scenery from the audience, and to provide an upper limit to the scene. Often used in conjunction with LEGS.

**BOX SET** Naturalistic setting of a complete room built from flats with only the side nearest the audience (the fourth wall) missing.

**BRACE** 1) Angled strengthening timber within a flat.

2) Support for scenery (flattage) on stage 2a) Extendible, hooking into a screw eye on the flat and being weighted to the floor (commonly known as a 'Stage Brace') 2b) French, right-angled non adjustable triangular frame, made from timber, and attached to the flat with pin hinges. Often swung flush to the flat for storage or flying.

**DOOR FLAT** Scenery item consisting of a wall containing a working (practical) door.

**ENTRANCE** A part of the set through which actors can walk onto the stage or the act of an actor walking onto the stage

**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).

**FALSE PERSPECTIVE** A scenic design technique that makes a building or set appear larger than it actually is. The scale of objects that are supposed to be further from the observer is reduced to make them appear further away.

**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.

**FIREPLACE FLAT** Scenery item consisting of a partial wall and a fireplace. Another BACKING FLAT is placed behind the fireplace to mask sightlines.

**GAUZE** Cloth with a relatively coarse weave. Used unpainted to diffuse a scene played behind it. When painted, a gauze is opaque when lit obliquely from the front and becomes transparent when the scene behind it is lit. Many different types of gauze are available; Sharktooth gauze is the most effective for transformations, because it is the most opaque. Vision gauze is used for diffusing a scene and for supporting cut cloths. Also known as a Scrim.

**MONKEY POLE** A stick threaded at one end with the line used to cleat two adjacent flats together, enabling the flats to be quickly and silently joined or separated. The stick remains attached to the line and flat of which it forms part.

**PIN HINGE** Hinge with removable pin used to join two pieces of scenery together.

**PYROTECHNICS (Pyro)** Chemical explosive or flammable firework effects with a manual detonation. Usually electrically fired with special designed fail-safe equipment. There are many different variations of pyrotechnic effects available. The categories are as follows:

Theatrical Flash - a flash and a cloud of smoke

Maroon: produces a very loud bang. Must only be detonated inside a bomb tank covered with a protective mesh.

Gerbe: version of the Roman Candle firework, throwing a shower of sparks into the air. Possibly named from the French 'Gerbe' meaning a sheaf of wheat, due to its shape.

All pyrotechnics should be used with close reference to local licensing laws, and the manufacturers instructions.

Professional advice should be sought before the first use of effects.

**SCREW EYE** A threaded metal ring screwed to the rear of a flat for securing a stage brace.

**SMOKE MACHINE** A Smoke Machine or Fogger is an electrically powered unit which produces clouds of white non-toxic fog (available in different flavours/smells) by the vaporisation of mineral oil. It is specially designed for theatre & film use. A Haze machine, Hazer or Diffusion Fogger is used to produce an atmospheric haze, rather than clouds of smoke, and is used by many lighting designers to reveal airborne light beams. The first smoke machines came onto the market in the late 1970's.

It's essential to know whether your venue uses SMOKE DETECTORS on the fire alarm system

**STAGE WEIGHT** Slotted cast iron weight placed on foot of extendible or French brace to prevent movement.

**TABS** Originally 'tableaux curtains' which drew outwards and upwards, but now generally applied to any stage curtains including a vertically flying front curtain (house tabs) and especially a pair of horizontally moving curtains which overlap at the centre and move outwards from that centre.

**TRUCK** 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')

**ABTT**

(UK) The Association of British Theatre Technicians, which was formed in 1961 as a charity, to provide a forum for discussion among theatre technicians, architects and managers of all disciplines, and disseminate information of a technical nature, to all its members.



**NODA**

UK National Operatic and Dramatic Association, for amateur theatre producers, performers and crew.

**Theatre Building**

**APRON**

The **Apron** is a section of the stage floor which projects towards or into the auditorium. In proscenium theatres, it's the part of the stage in front of the house tabs, or in front of the proscenium arch, above the orchestra pit.

Also known as **Forestage**.

If an apron stage extension is added to an existing traditional proscenium arch theatre, this often results in poor sight lines from seats that are higher in the auditorium, leading to audience members having to lean forward in an attempt to see.

**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. A chalked snap line can be used to mark the line in the rehearsal room and on stage.

House Centre is the centre line of the auditorium (which is usually the same as that of the stage).

**GHOST LIGHT**

This is occasionally used as a synonym for 'ghost load' a lantern connected in parallel with a stage-practical to ensure the dimmer has enough load on it. More usually it's a light on a pole left on-stage while nobody is about. The practical advantages are that the last people out & first people in won't fall in the orchestra pit in the dark. Another explanation is that the light is left on to keep the theatre ghost company overnight. Apparently when all the lights go out, the ghost thinks it has been abandoned and causes accidents to happen on the set.

**STEEL TOE-CAPPED BOOTS**

Essential footwear for crew members working in technical theatre. Sometimes known as Steelies.

**Stage Management**

**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 are then called by name.

A similar call is given after the interval (e.g. "Act Two Beginners to the stage please").

The call is usually given 5 minutes before the advertised performance start time, but this may vary depending on how long the actors take to get into position.

**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")

3) Blackout Check takes place in some multi-purpose venues to ensure that window curtains or blinds are closed and that there is no stray light either from adjacent rooms or the outside world, before the audience is admitted.

**BORDER**

A narrow horizontal masking piece (flattage or cloth), normally of neutral colour (black) to mask the lighting rig and flown scenery from the audience, and to provide an upper limit to the scene. Often used in conjunction with LEGS.

In part of the 20th century, borders were made from asbestos materials, but are now made from fire-retardant cloth (e.g. Wool Serge).

**BOX SET**

Naturalistic setting of a complete room built from flats with only the side nearest the audience (the fourth wall) missing.

A single static box set that represents more than one room is called a COMPOSITE SET (for example if the living room and the kitchen are both on stage permanently).



<p><b>CLEARANCE</b>          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'!</p>
<p><b>DOOFER</b>          An object or tool that you're not sure of the correct name for. For example, 'Pass me the doofer so I can sort this thingy'.</p>
<p><b>PRESET</b>          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) The process of putting any part of the production into its' starting position / setting. A Preset Checklist is used by stage management and all other technical teams, to ensure that everything is correctly set to start the show.          3) 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. A control desk with two presets is sometimes known as a '2 scene preset' desk</p>
<p><b>STAGE MANAGER PHRASES</b>  <b>"Get on your cues"</b> - actors and crew members must concentrate so that they react as soon as they get a cue, not once they notice others reacting.  <b>"Quiet Backstage"</b> - there should be no talking backstage or in the wings unless essential, and then only at a whisper.  <b>"Quiet On Cans"</b> - the headset system (for communicating between crew members) must only be used for giving and receiving cues. There should be no unnecessary chatter.</p>

**Sound**

<p><b>AUDIO SPECTRUM ANALYSER</b>          Allows sound operator to see the howl round frequencies</p>
<p><b>COMPRESSOR/LIMITER</b>          Stops a signal level e.g. from a mixer from getting too high e.g. overloading the next piece of equipment in the chain</p>
<p><b>GRAPHIC EQUALIZER</b>          Allows the sound operator to compensate for how the incoming sound works in the performance space</p>
<p><b>SIGNAL PROCESSOR</b>          Audio equipment that modifies or enhances the audio signal. Examples of signal processors include Graphic Equalisers, Noise Gates, Effect Processors, Delay Lines, Compressors and Limiters.          Digital sound desks now have these functions built in, but separate (outboard) equipment is still required for many applications</p>

## **JOBS IN THE THEATRE INDUSTRY**

### **ANIMATEUR**

(From French) Facilitator of a community, education or group event (social, cultural or artistic). The Animateur may be a group leader, or may have initiated a project. They are responsible for running the event.

### **ARMOURY**

The Department in a large producing theatre which deals with the maintenance and storage of prop weapons.

### **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. They are also a member of the stage 'crew'.

The ASM is responsible for setting props used during the show, as well as carrying out a pre-show check list to ensure all props are in the correct place and that all furniture used on stage is correctly placed for the start of the show.

An ASM may also have a small acting role in some performances (they are then known as an Acting ASM).

See also STAGE MANAGER and DSM.

### **BOOK COVER**

A member of the stage management team who takes over the duties of the DSM on the Book (calling cues, giving calls etc.) in the event that the DSM is not available or is on leave.

### **BOX OFFICE MANAGER**

Member of the theatre staff responsible for the operation of the Box Office, including customer service standards, ticket sales in person, by phone or online, and the correct recording of ticket sales, repayments to theatre companies etc.

### **BUSINESS MANAGER**

Also known as General Manager or Chief Financial Officer.

Member of the management team of a theatre company who is responsible for the financial control. The Business Manager manages the budget, including cost-effective purchasing, payroll for employees and reduction of costs where possible.

### **CASUALS**

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

### **CHIEF ELECTRICIAN**

The senior member of the theatre's stage lighting team, although not necessarily the lighting designer.

In common with many theatre jobs, the actual duties of the Chief Electrician vary from theatre to theatre. Some chiefs are responsible for electrical maintenance of the building, some design the lighting for nearly every in-house production, some design no lighting at all, some have a team of eight staff under them, some have two. Many theatres employ casual staff to assist on lighting rigging sessions. Some theatres have a separate sound department, smaller venues have the lighting team also running sound for shows (and doing sound design for some).

Abbreviated to CLX in some UK venues.

### **CHOREOGRAPHER**

Member of the production team responsible for setting dances and movement sequences during the production.

### **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 they are 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).

### **COMPANY STAGE MANAGER**

Shortened to CSM. The Company Stage Manager acts as a liaison between the production company and the actors / performers, particularly with regard to contracts, logistics, accommodation & transport.

See also Production Stage Manager.

### **CONDUCTOR**

The director of an orchestra. See also MUSICAL DIRECTOR.

### **COSTUME DESIGNER**

Member of the creative team for a show responsible for the clothes worn by the actors throughout the performance. They work with the director to discuss the needs of the show before coming up with a series of sketches to illustrate the looks for particular characters. The designer then works with the wardrobe team at the theatre / production company to decide which items are already in stock, which can be adapted from existing stock, which should be hired, which should be bought and which should be made from scratch. Charity shops are

useful sources for modern / recent items, and theatre are many theatrical costume hire companies available in larger cities.

**COSTUME MAKER**

Member of the Costume / Wardrobe team that works to make or assemble costumes based on the requirements of the costume designs.

**COSTUMER**

Member of the WARDROBE Department. See also DRESSER.

**CRITIC**

Journalist who writes reviews for theatre productions.

**CUTTER**

Member of the costume team that supervises the construction of costumes that are made from patterns. They are also responsible for creating the patterns from the Costume Designers' sketches / designs.

**DANCE CAPTAIN**

Member of a group of dancers in a show who is responsible for leading rehearsals and warm-ups prior to the performance.

**DANCER**

Member of the company whose role is choreographed, and who has no spoken words.

**DAYMAN**

A member of the backstage staff who is hired or paid by the day, for the specific hours worked. Prefixed by the appropriate technical area (e.g. Stage Daymen, Electrics Dayman / LX Dayman etc). May also be required to work shows (Show Dayman).

**DEPUTY STAGE MANAGER (DSM)**

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.

**DIALECT COACH**

Specialist who's bought into a production to train actors in a specific dialect / accent.

**DIRECTOR**

There are many types of director.

Broadly, the role involves being responsible for the overall artistic vision of a production.

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR - Normally in charge of the programming of a venue. May also direct shows.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - Manager in charge of the administration of a venue.

TECHNICAL DIRECTOR - In charge of the technical requirements of a production.

(The term LIGHTING DIRECTOR is used in the UK for a TV Lighting Designer).

**DIT**

(Film) Digital Imaging Technician. Head of the team that works with the cinematographer / director of photography to use the best workflow, camera settings, signal path etc to ensure the best image quality and integrity on a film set.

**DOP**

(Film-making) Director of Photography. Also known as the Cinematographer. Responsible for the capturing of visuals for the film, working with the Director and translating their requirements into suitable equipment / technology to capture the images, along with their own artistic input. DOPs such as Roger Deakins bring their own visual style to a project, whilst capturing the images the Director has created.

**DRAMA**

The academic subject area into which theatre falls.

**DRAMA TEACHER**

Teacher of Drama.

**DRAMATIST**

A playwright, composer or lyricsist who takes an existing story and transforms it into a play or musical.

**DRAMATURG**

Works as an advisor/assistant to the director on the background and historical relevance of the play being produced. Also can act as a liaison between director and playwright, and can work on the text of the play (editing & revising scripts). Also advises the theatre management staff on the suitability of plays for the theatre's audience and artistic policy.

**DRESSER**

Member of the WARDROBE Department who helps actors with costume care and costume changes during the performance.

**EDUCATION DIRECTOR**

The Education Director is a member of the theatre staff and is responsible for fulfilling the outreach and

educational programme of the theatre or company.

This may involve organising activities and workshops, meeting with school teachers about organising trips and workshops, managing staff, preparing and delivering an Education Plan, conceiving and directing youth performances as the outcome of workshops etc. They may also develop resources on current productions. In some organisations they may also be known as the Education Manager, Outreach Co-Ordinator etc.

#### **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!! For more information search

[British Academy of Stage and Screen Combat](#)

#### **FIGHT DIRECTOR**

Responsible for choreographing any fight sequences during a show (whether they involve weapons or not), and for ensuring the safety of actors involved in the sequence, and anyone on stage at the same time.

#### **FINANCIAL BACKER**

See ANGEL.

#### **FLYMAN**

Term for the operator of the theatre's flying system. Can be male or female, and now usually referred to as FLY OPERATOR or FLY PERSON. See also SPOTTER.

#### **FRONT OF HOUSE MANAGER**

Member of theatre management who is responsible for the day to day running of the front of house (FOH) area (as opposed to the backstage areas). They may oversee the running of the box office, any merchandising / catering stands as well as the ushers and any part of the building the public may enter during their visit to the theatre.

Another responsibility is to produce a nightly **House Report** which consists of the numbers of tickets sold of various types, info about the weather, number of ushers and any problems with the public experience of the FOH areas. This information is passed to the Stage Management team who use part of the info (on ticket sales) in the Show Report.

Often shortened to **FOH Manager**. Also known as **House Manager**.

#### **GRIP**

(US only) 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.

#### **LIGHTING DESIGNER**

Member of the production team for a show who is responsible for the overall look of the lighting. They may have an Assistant Lighting Designer who concentrates on the necessary paperwork for the lighting design. The Lighting Designer (or LD) is responsible for liaising with the director about style and with the set and costume designers about colour and decides on the position, type, focus direction and colour of every lighting instrument in the rig. They draw a lighting plan to communicate this to other members of his team (and to the theatre staff who are rigging the lighting). During a lighting plot, the lighting states are built, which are then amended during Technical Rehearsals.

#### **LIGHTING DIRECTOR**

A lighting designer for television is known as a lighting director.

#### **LIGHTING OPERATOR**

Member of the show crew who runs the lighting board during the show for the Electrics Team. Also known as LBO (Lighting Board Operator).

#### **LITERARY MANAGER**

A theatre company or producing venue may employ a literary manager to work on reading plays that are submitted to evaluate them and decide if any are suitable to be put into production. They may also be responsible for suggesting existing plays / texts to the theatre management and artistic team.

#### **LX**

Short for Electrics ('Elecs'). 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).

#### **LYRICIST**

Author of the text of a musical / the words of a song.

See also DRAMATIST.

#### **MASTER**

1) An overall control fader or lever on a lighting or sound control board. The Grand Master takes precedence over all other controls and allows the operator to fade out the entire output of the lighting desk.

On a lighting desk the PRESET MASTER allows the control of a section of the desk independently from the rest.

See also SUBMASTER.

2) An original (e.g. Master tape, master plan) which should be used only to make a copy from which to work.

3) A Department Head (e.g. Master Carpenter, Master Electrician).

### **MASTER ELECTRICIAN**

See CHIEF ELECTRICIAN.

### **MILLINER**

Person who makes / builds / constructs hats or headpieces.

### **MUSICAL DIRECTOR**

Often the conductor/leader of a musical, or the person responsible for the musical content of a production. Also known as the MD.

### **MUSICIAN**

Member of the company who plays a musical instrument.

### **PRODUCER**

That person or body responsible for the financial and contractual side of a production. This can include the raising of money to stage the production, hiring the facilities, employing the technical crew, front of house and publicity staff, director and cast. The producer usually works closely with the director before embarking on a production.

A person who provides the finance directly is known as an ANGEL.

### **PRODUCTION ELECTRICIAN**

Member of the electricians team in a theatre (or contracted by a production) who is responsible for the technical preparation of the lighting rig. The interpretation of this role is varied depending on the size of the production / venue. It may include taking the lighting plan and generating paperwork such as lists of equipment, colour gel requirements, circuit hookups (which dimmer connects to which socket in the rig / which DMX channel) etc. They are also likely to be responsible for ordering / preparing additional equipment for the rig (e.g. boom stands), preparing the rig for focussing etc.

Also known as Prod LX.

### **PRODUCTION MANAGER**

(UK) Responsible for technical preparations, including budgeting and scheduling of productions.

### **PRODUCTION SOUND ENGINEER**

Often shortened to PE. Works alongside the Sound Designer to help in translating artistic ideas into equipment (and installing it).

### **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 they can see the actors.

### **PROPERTIES MANAGER**

The Props Manager / Properties Manager is in charge of the stock of props at a theatre.

In the UK, the ASM (Assistant Stage Manager) is often responsible for propping a show (finding/buying props and organising the making of additional ones). Larger organisations might have a Prop Manager who is responsible for sourcing the props required for a show (or a series of shows).

### **PROPERTY DESIGNER**

Also known as a Prop Designer. Specialist member of the design team, often working alongside the set designer, who is given the responsibility for designing specific props for a theatre, film or TV project.

In theatre, many props are found, either from stock in a prop store, or in charity shops, or bought from local shops or online. The task here is matching props to the requirements of the script and/or the vision of the director & designer. Propping (sourcing props) isn't seen as a design task, until the prop has to be built from scratch, or where an existing object is enhanced with additional designed elements to disguise it, or to add functionality to it.

### **PUBLIC RELATIONS**

Department in the theatre (or any company) which deals with the public image of the theatre. Sometimes known as the MARKETING DEPARTMENT.

### **PUBLICITY**

The department in the theatre whose job it is to entice the audience into the theatre, and to tell them what they need to know in order to get the most from the production.

### **RF CO-ORDINATOR**

Member of the sound team on large scale events who ensures that all users of radio frequency devices (radio mics, comms, in-ear monitors, IFB etc.) have radio frequencies allocated to them which do not interfere with each other, and are covered by the appropriate licences in the region in which the event is taking place.

### **ROAD MANAGER (ROADIE)**

A touring technician with one night shows, particularly music groups. Large groups will have a roadie in charge of a particular instrument or set of instruments (eg Guitar Roadie, Drum Roadie, Lager Roadie) who is responsible for the correct unloading and setting up (tuning etc) of the instruments before the artists arrive onstage for the sound check.

## **SCENIC CARPENTER**

A member of the set-construction team that builds the wooden parts of the set, under the supervision of the Head (or Master) Carpenter.

## **SCENOGRAPHER**

Designer responsible for all the SCENOGRAPHY - the visual aspects of a production (lighting, scenery, costumes etc). One of the greatest scenographers of current times was Josef Svoboda (1920-2002).

## **SEAMSTRESS**

Member of the wardrobe department who operates sewing machines and carries out other sewing tasks.

## **SET BUILDER**

Member of theatre's production department or outside contractor who is responsible for realising the set designer's construction in timber, steel or other material as specified by the designer.

## **SET DESIGNER**

Member of the artistic team for a show who works with the director to create the scenic 'look' for the stage throughout the show and any accompanying props. They sometimes also design the costumes.

The set designer works with the production manager to ensure the design stays within the budget. Many theatres have a stock of scenery which means that items can be reused by recovering or repainting in a different production

In Europe, the set design is sometimes called 'Decor'.

## **SET DRESSER**

Member of production staff who is responsible for the props and furniture that are required on the set. This position only exists in larger organisations. Set dressing is often the job of the stage management department.

## **SOUND DESIGNER**

Member of the production team who has the responsibility for planning and executing the layout of all sound playback and reinforcement equipment for the show. This role also includes the sourcing of music and sound effects for the production.

See also SOUND OPERATOR.

## **SOUND ENGINEER**

Member of the Sound Department / Audio Department, also known as Audio 1, who is responsible for operating the sound mixer to ensure that microphones and other audio sources are mixed to carry out the sound designers' vision for the show. Although many operations can be automated, to ensure that groups of microphones are unmuted at the right time, to ensure maximum quality and volume in the sound mix, faders must be continuously monitored and adjusted - only microphones that are needed at each precise moment should be 'live' so that no unwanted sounds are audible through the PA system.

The sound engineer on a musical will usually have an assistant working backstage, who ensures that radio microphones are working, and are fully charged, and allocated to the correct performers. Any faults during the show should be remedied (by changing batteries, adjusting aerials or replacing microphone heads) and communicated to the sound engineer immediately to adjust the mix accordingly.

## **SOUND OPERATOR**

Also known as Sound Op. The Sound Operator is responsible for operating the sound playback and mixing equipment for a show. They are sometimes a member of the Electrics department of the theatre and work with the sound designer for the production, or they may be employed just for the show.

The main operator is called Sound No.1 (or Audio 1)

A standby / second operator is Sound No.2 and so on.

## **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 **Stagehands**) 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 DOOR KEEPER**

The first person that technical staff, actors and administrative staff meet when they enter the theatre through the Stage Door. This is a pivotal role as 'Stage Door' has to know everyone, deal with a whole host of queries, pass messages, meet visitors, the press, agents, visiting theatre companies as well as being a point of contact on Health and Safety matters, fire procedures etc.

## **STAGE ELECTRICIAN**

Member of the electrics staff whose responsibility it is to set or clear electrics equipment during scene changes.

May also carry out colour changes on booms etc.

Sometimes abbreviated to SLX.

## **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.

Sometimes, on large (or complex) productions, particularly in school / college projects, two (or more) people share the role of Stage Manager - these Co-Stage Managers agree which aspects of the job they will be assigned.

### **STITCHER**

The Stitcher is a member of the costume construction team, who works with the Cutter on assembling/constructing costumes.

### **SUPPORTING ARTIST (SA)**

(Film Industry) A supporting artist is sometimes known as an 'Extra' - someone employed to fill out the background of a shot to bring the scene to life. For a crowd scene, the bulk of the supporting artists are employed without needing to see their faces, but performers who are closer to the camera, or who have to interact with more high-profile performers, are cast more carefully.

### **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')

### **TECHIE**

A stage technician. For more information, see The Techie Gospel. See also Lampy and Noise Boy. Many professional technicians don't particularly like this term.

### **TECHNICAL DIRECTOR**

Often shortened to 'TD' the exact role of the Technical Director changes according to the size of the theatre company, and also according to your location in the world.

In the US, the TD co-ordinates all technical aspects of the production, from organising crew calls to ensuring equipment is ordered, to liaising with the designers and sometimes adapting a design to fit the venue. In the UK, this person is usually called the PRODUCTION MANAGER.

The TD role sometimes overlaps with that of the UK Stage Manager also.

### **TOUR MANAGER**

The tour manager is responsible for organising the logistics of a touring music or theatre production. They organise the get-in and get-out schedule for the show, arrange cast and touring crew transport and accommodation, book transport for the production equipment (set, lighting, sound, costumes, props etc). Depending on the size of the production they may also be responsible for ensuring that lighting and sound requirements are scaled up or down according to the size of the venue (although this may be the responsibility of specialists within the crew).

### **UNDERSTUDY**

Also known as a COVER. A member of the cast of a musical or play who understudies one (sometimes more) of the principal roles and is also in the chorus. [For his or her role in the chorus, an understudy might have a character name, or might not.] Some understudies have gone on to become stars by outshining the actors they replaced.

A Cover Call (or Understudy Call) is a rehearsal for the understudies, to keep them up to speed with their alternate roles.

### **USHERS**

Members of Front-of-House staff who guide audience members to their seats, and often sit in the auditorium during the show in case of emergency.

Sometimes also known as STEWARDS.

Managed by the Front of House Manager (or FOH Manager).

### **VENUE MANAGER**

Job title for the person responsible for the overall running of an entertainment venue, including managing the team, finances and legal compliance, as well as ensuring quality of the audience experience and for visiting companies, and maximising chances to grow and enhance the venue's place in the community by developing partnerships with local businesses and groups

### **VOCAL COACH**

Member of the production team who is responsible for training the actors in vocal/singing techniques needed for the performance. They also help the actors to learn songs and ensure they are prepared for each rehearsal.

### **WHITE GLOVE**

A role is said to be 'white glove' if the person is not required or expected to help with setting up equipment, only in the operation of it.

### **WIGS**

The provision of wigs is normally part of the WARDROBE department in smaller organisations. However, larger organisations (touring opera companies etc.) will have a separate wigs department.