

Appendix 2: Glossary for Theatre

Terms in italics are reproduced from the glossary of the National Core Arts: Theatre Arts Standards by the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards.

acting skills: the use of voice, movement, improvisation, and characterization

acting techniques: specific skills, pedagogies, theories, or methods of investigation used by an actor to prepare for a theatre performance

action: the events within the play that move the plot along

aesthetics: an idea of what is beautiful or artistic; a set of criteria for judging something beautiful or artistic

articulation: the use of all of the articulators (lips, teeth, tongue, soft and hard palettes, larynx, and glottis) to deliver speech or language clearly

audition: a tryout for a theatrical role

balance: the arrangement of design elements and actors to create visual stability on stage

believability: theatrical choices thought to be “true” based upon an understanding of any given fictional moment, interpretation of text, and/or human interaction

blocking: an actor’s traffic pattern on stage

breath support: the use of the diaphragm to breath correctly

Bunraku puppetry: a traditional Japanese form of puppet theatre featuring large puppets that are operated by puppeteers onstage while the narrative is recited offstage. The puppets have heads, hands, and feet of wood attached to bodiless cloth costumes

business: movements that mime or make use of props, costumes, and makeup to strengthen the personality of the character the actor is portraying

character: a person, animal, or thing in a scene, story, or play

character arc: the status of the character as it unfolds throughout the story, the storyline, or a series of episodes. The characters begin the story with a certain viewpoint; in response to events in the story, their viewpoints change

character development: creating from a text a character that uses tactics to overcome obstacles to achieve objectives; portraying this character by choosing and sustaining throughout the performance physical actions, vocal qualities, and believable emotions

character traits: observable embodied actions that illustrate a character’s personality, values, beliefs, and history

conflict: the problem, confrontation, or struggle in a scene or play; conflict may include a character against him or herself, a character in opposition to another character, a character against nature, a character against society, or a character against the supernatural

costumes: the clothing an actor wears to create a character.

creative drama: a process-centered, non-exhibitional approach to drama intended to benefit the performers themselves; story drama and process drama are two types of creative drama

an experiential, process-based activity, not a performance for an audience

creative processes: the application of production and technical elements (see the definitions) to a theatrical production

also, the process by means of which an artist creates a work of theatre; the steps include:

Identifying the audience and purpose of a theatrical performance

Exploring the elements of character, plot, setting, conflict, and dialogue to create a work of theatre

Gathering and interpreting information from diverse sources to create a work of theatre

Using ideas, skills, foundations, and techniques to create a work of theatre through guided exploration

Implementing choices of elements, principles, and skills to create a work of theatre

Reflecting for the purposes of self-evaluation and improvement

Refining a work of theatre through feedback and self-reflection

Performing a work of theatre in front of others

cue: 1. a signal for a performer or technician to perform an action or say a line; 2. a signal from a side-coach to perform an action or say a line.

design: a purposeful plan, based on an overall concept, for the spectacle of a play (see also design concept)

design concept: the overall visual theme of a combined theatrical design in which features such as lights, sets, costumes, makeup, props, and sound work together to tell the story. A design concept is a visual way of expressing how the technical elements will illuminate the central theme of the play

devised drama: creation of an original performance piece by an ensemble

dialogue: a conversation between two or more characters

diaphragmatic breathing: the use of the diaphragm muscle to support the breath

diction: the choice and use of words

drama: a literary composition (a play) intended for a performance before an audience

dramatic play: make-believe where children naturally assign and accept roles, then act them out

dramatic structure: the composition of a theatrical work, including a play, scene, or improvisation, that includes:

exposition: the background information included in the beginning of the play that introduces characters, actions, setting, and so on.

inciting incident: an action that occurs that sets the conflict of the play in motion.

rising action: the intensification and the complication of the inciting event.

conflict: the central struggle of the play, either within a character or plot.

climax: the moment in the play when all conflict comes to a central and high point.

falling action: the actions that occur after the climax, heading towards resolution.

resolution/dénouement: the ending action that resolves or concludes the conflicts within the play.

elements of theatre: setting, character, conflict, dialogue, plot, and theme (see also production elements)

elision: the deliberate omission of something; the omission of a letter or syllable between two words, sometimes marked with an apostrophe; used a great deal in the works of Shakespeare

Elizabethan (Shakespearean) cosmology: the study of the belief system, current in the time of Shakespeare, according to which the physical universe was a totality of phenomena in time and space

ensemble: a group of actors who work together cooperatively and responsibly to achieve the group's goal by means of problem-solving and creativity

enunciation: saying the vowels and consonants correctly

event: something that happens at a certain place and time

expression: the way a character says words to convey meaning and emotion

facial expression: movements of the face that show feelings or ideas

focus: commitment by a participant (an actor, technician, director) to remain in the scope of the project or to stay within the world of the play
also, the intended point of interest on stage

genre: relating to a specific kind or type of drama and theatre such as a tragedy, drama, melodrama, comedy, or farce

gesture: an expressive and planned movement of the body or limbs

given circumstances: the underlying actions and events that have happened before the play, story, or devised piece begins

also, in the text of a play, the information the playwright gives concerning character, setting, and relationships

guided drama experience: a leader guides participants during a process drama, story drama, or creative drama experience (see the definitions) through side-coaching, narration, and prompting; the action of the drama does not stop in order for the leader to support the students; facilitator may guide participants in or out of role

haiku: an unrhymed form of Japanese verse that consists of three lines, the first containing five syllables, the second containing seven syllables, and the third containing five syllables

imaginary elsewhere: an imagined location which can be historical, fictional, or realistic

imagined worlds: an imaginary world created collectively by participants in a drama experience

improvise: the spontaneous, intuitive, and immediate response of movement and speech; a distinction can be made between spontaneous improvisation, which is immediate and unrehearsed, and prepared improvisation, which is shaped and rehearsed

improvisation: a spontaneous performance during which the actors establish a story (including objectives, setting, characters, and relationships) with little or no preparation

inflection/pitch: the use of high and low sounds in speech to convey meaning and emotion

inner thoughts: the underlying and implied meaning or intentions in the character's dialogue or actions (also known as subtext)

kabuki (歌舞伎): a classical form of traditional Japanese theater, dating back to 1603. The kanji characters, from left to right, mean sing (歌), dance (舞), and skill (伎). Kabuki is sometimes translated as "the art of singing and dancing." Kabuki theatre is also known for the stylization of its drama and for the elaborate makeup worn by its performers

level: 1. the placement of an object or person on the stage from upstage to downstage; 2. the vertical height of an actor or set piece as measured from the stage floor

lighting: the use of a variety of instruments to illuminate both the actors and sets on stage

locomotor movement: movement that travels through space

makeup: cosmetics applied to the face and body to enhance character

Māori: the Māori culture is a rich and varied one, and includes traditional and contemporary arts. These traditional arts include carving, weaving, kapa haka (group performance), whaikorero (oratory) and moko (tattoo), and are practiced throughout the country. Māori

is an oral culture rich with stories and legends. They are the indigenous Polynesian people of New Zealand (Aotearoa)

marionette: a jointed puppet manipulated from above by strings or wires attached to its limbs

meter: rhythm, as given by division into parts of equal duration:

iambic: unstressed, stressed = 2 syllables

trochaic: stressed, unstressed = 2 syllables

anapestic: unstressed, unstressed, stressed = 3 syllables

dactylic: stressed, unstressed, unstressed = 3 syllables

spondaic: stressed = every syllable stressed

mime: to act out movement or portray a character without speaking or using props (totally silent)

monologue: a speech (within a play) delivered by a single actor alone on stage

motivation: reasons why a character behaves or reacts in a particular way in a scene or play

movement: a physical action used to establish meaning and emotion in order to create a character.

non-locomotor movement: the movement that is performed “in place” around the axis of the body; non-locomotor movement does not travel through space

non-representational materials: objects which can be transformed into specific props through the imagination

nursery rhyme: a short song or poem for young children

objective: a goal or particular need or want that a character has within a scene or play

obstacle: something that stands in the way of the character achieving his/her objectives

offering (offer): a suggestion, made verbally or by means of movement, that one actor gives to another in order to initiate or advance an improvisation

open: a body position in which the character’s face and body can be seen by the audience when the character stands on a proscenium or thrust stage

pantomime: conveying a story by using expressive body and facial movements, but without using speech, props, costumes, or sounds (instrumental music can be used as background)

pause: within a speech, a moment of silence that is used to show meaning and emotion and/or to develop a character

performance: a structured presentation of a theatrical work in front of an audience

performance process: the process by means of which an artist prepares for, presents, and learns from a performance; the steps include:

Identifying the audience and purpose of the work and/or performance

Selecting artistic resources, materials, and/or repertoire to create, perform, and present

Analyzing the structure, context, and/or aesthetics of the work

Interpreting meaning through personal understanding of the work and/or performance

Rehearsing, adjusting, and refining through evaluation, reflection, and problem-solving

Presenting and producing a work of theatre and/or performance for others

Reflecting upon a work of theatre and/or performance and self-evaluating to set goals

phrasing: the use of punctuation, pause, and word- or phrase-emphasis to create meaning and emotion

plagiarism: the act or practice of reproducing someone else's work and presenting it as one's own; also, incorporating into one's own work material that was borrowed from another's work without permission or acknowledgment of the original source

play: a form of writing intended for live performance

plot: a narrative as revealed through the action and/or dialogue; traditionally, a plot has the elements of exposition, inciting incident, conflict, rising action, climax, and resolution or falling action

posture/stance: the position of the limbs and the carriage of the body as a whole that communicate character

process drama: a non-linear, episodic, process-centered, improvised form of drama in which teacher and students are in-role exploring and reflecting on an issue, story, theme, problem, or idea in a non-exhibitional format that is intended to benefit the performers themselves

Cecily O'Neill describes process drama being used to explore a problem, situation, theme, or series of related ideas or themes through the use of the artistic medium of unscripted drama

production: a structured performance created for and presented to an audience

production elements: technical elements selected for use in a specific production, including sets, sound, costumes, lights, music, props, and makeup, as well as elements specific to the production such as puppets, masks, special effects, or other story telling devices/concepts (see also elements of theatre)

projection/volume: the appropriate use of loud and soft sounds to convey meaning and emotion to the entire audience

pronunciation: the correct way to speak or articulate a word

props/properties: objects used by an actor on stage

proscenium: the part of a modern stage in front of the curtain; the foreground

prose: non-metered language

rate/cadence: the speed with which words are spoken to convey meaning and emotion

readers' theatre: an orchestrated reading that relies primarily on vocal characterization and does not include the elements of visual theatre, such as costuming, sets, or blocking, in the presentation

rehearsal: the period of time used to prepare a play for performance before an audience

resonance: the fullness of voice created by vocal vibrations

responding process: the approach that an artist or artistically literate person uses to respond to a work of theatre, including:

Engaging the senses actively and purposefully while experiencing a theatrical performance

Describing what is seen, felt, and/or heard (perceived/experienced) in a performance

Analyzing the use and organization of the elements, foundations, skills, and/or techniques of theatre in a performance

Interpreting the meaning of a theatrical performance based upon personal experience and knowledge

Evaluating and justifying, using supportive evidence and aesthetic criteria

saying "yes": to accept an offer in an improvisation

scene: a subdivision of a play, characterized by a single situation or unit of dialogue

script: the written text of a play, screenplay, or similar work

script analysis: the study of a script to understand the underlying structure and themes of the play's story, and the motives and objectives of its characters

scripted drama: a piece of writing for the theatre that includes a description of the setting, a list of the characters, the dialogue, and the action of the characters

set: the space on a stage and the structures of this space (scenery) that represents the setting of the play and in which the actors perform

setting: the time, place, and atmosphere in which the scene or play occurs

side-coach: the teacher's role as one who comments during an activity to affirm or correct students' performance as they work toward the achievement of objectives, especially in creative dramatics

sound: the process of using music, audio effects, and reinforcement to enhance the setting and mood

stage: the place where the actors perform

stage geography: the physical areas of the stage labeled center stage, down center, up center, stage right, stage left, up stage left, down stage left, up stage right, and down stage right

stage picture: a visual image created by using any combination of set, costume, props, lighting, and character placement

staging: patterns of movement in a scene or play including, for example, stage crosses, entrances, and exits which help to convey meaning

status: the importance or lack thereof of a character or object on the stage

story drama: episodic, process-centered, improvised form of drama that uses existing literature as a starting point for drama exploration, the drama explores moments (before, after, or within) that may not exist in the story and is presented in a non-exhibitional format that is intended to benefit the performers themselves

story elements: characters, setting, dialogue, and plot that create a story

style: the use of a specific set of characteristic or distinctive techniques such as realism, expressionism, epic theatre, documentary theatre, or classical drama; style may also refer to the unique artistic choices of a particular playwright, director, or actor

subtext: an implied meaning or unspoken complication that generally runs concurrently with the main plot

sustainability: the sustained portrayal of a character—with no noticeable break or lapse—throughout a performance

tactic: the means by which a character seeks to achieve their objective, the selection of tactics are based on the obstacle presented; in acting and directing a tactic refers to a specific action verb

technical design: in a production, the plan—based on an overall concept—for costumes, sets, props, lighting, sound, makeup, and special effects

technical elements: the elements of spectacle such as sets, sound, costume, lights, music, props, and makeup used to create a unified and meaningful design for a theatrical production

text analysis (script): the examination of the elements of theatre in a text to gain greater understanding of the theme and of the character that the actor portrays

theatre etiquette: the appropriate behavior of an audience, performers, or technicians in a variety of settings

theatre or theater: 1. the place where plays are presented to an audience; 2. the art of creating performances

theatre sports: a form of improvisational theatre that uses the format of a competition for dramatic effect. Opposing teams perform scenes based on the audience's suggestions and are rated by the audience or by a panel of judges (who are usually trained improvisers themselves)

theatre text (script): any written text used as a script

theatrical conventions: practices and/or devices that the audience and actors accept in the world of the play even when it is not realistic, such as a narrator, flashback, or an aside

theme: the aspect of the human condition under investigation in the drama; it can be drawn from unifying topics or questions across content areas
the central idea of a play

thinking on your feet: ideas and concepts, formed in an improvisation that are spontaneous

three-dimensional character (round): a character that is developed emotionally, psychologically, and physically

venue: a place where a performance is held

viewpoints: a technique of improvisation that provides a vocabulary for thinking about and acting upon movement and gesture

visual composition: the arrangement of actors and scenery on a stage for a theatrical production, sometimes known as *mise en scène*

vocal placement: resonating the voice in different parts of the body, such as the nose, chest, and sinuses

voice: vocal qualities that are used to convey meaning and emotion in order to create character

whole-body movements: the locomotive and non-locomotive use of the body to communicate character (see also locomotor movement and non-locomotor movement)

word emphasis: the selection of the most important word or words in each phrase or sentence to create meaning, show emotion, and convey character