

## Theatre Glossary of Terms

**acting areas:** See center stage, downstage, stage left, stage right, and upstage.

**action:** The core of a theatre piece; the sense of forward movement created by the sequence of events and physical and psychological motivations of the characters.(Action/Reaction relates to cause and effect).

**actor:** A person, male or female, who performs a role in a play or an entertainment.

**actor's position:** The orientation of the actor to the audience (e.g., full back, full front, right profile, left profile).

**adaptation:** The act of changing a form of literature into a script.

**add-a-word story:** Players sit in a circle. One player says a word which begins a story. In order, each player adds one word to continue the story. It may continue around the circle any number of times. A story theme may be established at the beginning, or the story may be the answer to a question.

**aesthetic valuing:** Standards applied in making judgments about the artistic merit of a work.

**air writing:** Students make circles and semi-circles with isolated body parts (wrists, elbows, arms, shoulders, head, waist, knees, ankles, etc.). Students imagine that the body extends out in all directions and can write on the ceiling, walls and floor. Write names using circles, semi-circles, and other shapes. Write large and small, etc.

*Variation:*

*Select a word from a concept being studied.*

**amphitheater:** A round structure arranged around an open space with tiered seating.

**antagonist:** A person, a situation, or the protagonist's own inner conflict in opposition to his or her goals.

**antonyms (opposites):** Players choose a partner. Rules: no sound, no telling or showing your partner what to do. Leader says pair of opposites, and players illustrate them physically. Leader may ask players for suggestions of opposites as activity progresses. (i.e. hot/cold)

*Variation:*

*Leader gives only one word of antonym.*

**applause:** Appropriate positive audience response to a creative work (clapping).

**apron:** The stage area in front of the main curtain that extends toward the audience.

**archetype:** An original model of a person, ideal example, or a prototype upon which others are copied or emulated; a symbol universally recognized by all.

**articulation:** The clear and precise pronunciation of words.

**artistic vision:** The unifying concept that the director develops and communicates to guide the production elements.

**aside:** Words spoken by a character directly to the audience rather than to the other characters who supposedly do not hear the speech.

**audience:** The people watching and listening to the performance who respond to live theatre.

**autos sacramentales:** Spanish term for a religious play.

**ball rhythm:** This game may be done with balls or bean bags. Players form a circle with one player in the center who has a ball. The player throws it to each player in the circle who returns it to center. They try to maintain an even rhythm. A second ball is added. The center player throws one ball to a player while the player next to that one throws the other ball to center. This continues with a regular rhythm. If players become proficient, center player may throw ball to any other player, catch the other ball from the player throwing it, etc.

**bestia fiera:** In Spanish religious plays they are allegorical characters representing fallen angels and devils from hell.

**blocking:** The planning and working out of the movements of actors on stage.

**body positions:** See actor's position.

**buffoon:** A comic character; a clown, a fool.

**burlesque:** Physical comedy that uses exaggeration that is directed at a person, custom, artifact or event.

**bunraku:** Japanese puppetry using large rod puppets.

**call and response:** A ritualistic theater technique in which a leader vocalizes a phrase and the actors respond with a predetermined phrase.

**carros:** In Spain large flat or two-story wagons which carried scenery and players and served as stages.

**center stage:** The center of the acting area.

**character:** The personality or part an actor re-creates.

**character traits:** Unique qualities (vocal, physical, emotional/personality, intellectual) of a person, animal, or object in a story.

**characterization:** The development and portrayal of a personality through thought, action, dialogue, costuming, and makeup.

**cheat out:** The position of the actor's body to a 3/4th turn-out toward the audience. (e.g., "If you can see the audience, they can see you.")

**choregus:** In Greek theatre a rich and important citizen who paid the playwright's production costs.

**choreographer:** The person responsible for designing a show's dance numbers.

**circle switch:** Players stand in a circle with leader. Leader begins a simple sound and movement and "passes" it to the right. Each player passes the same sound and movement to the right until the leader calls "Switch." The player "caught" turns to the left and begins a different sound and movement. Continue, changing the direction each time "switch" is called.

**circus maximus:** The oldest and largest circus which included chariot races and gladiators.

**climax:** The point of highest dramatic tension or a major turning point in the action.

**closet drama:** A play in Roman times written to be read, not staged.

**clustering:** When leader claps hands, players cluster according to the kind of shoes worn. They DO NOT TALK. They use only visual cues, deciding which cluster they belong to just by looking. They may gesture to invite others into their cluster if they think they belong, but if they do not agree, reasons are not

explained. Let them find the cluster they think best fits their shoes. Have each cluster identify their criteria. There are no wrong clusters. If someone thinks he or she belongs in a cluster, validate the reasoning.

Players introduce themselves to everyone in the cluster. (If students already know each other, have them give some information about pets, family members, etc.).

*Variation:*

*Other possibilities for clustering: Using pantomime, they cluster according to their favorite kind of movie, (a character in a familiar story, a favorite ride in an amusement park, etc.)*

**Code of Honor:** A narrow focus of theatre during the Spanish Golden Age.

**cold reading:** A reading of a script done by actors who have not previously reviewed the play.

**collaboration:** The act of working together in a joint intellectual effort.

**commedia dell'arte:** A professional form of theatrical improvisation, developed in Italy in the 1500s, featuring stock characters and standardized plots.

**complication:** See rising action.

**conflict:** The opposition of persons or forces giving rise to dramatic action in a play.

**context:** The interrelated conditions in which a play exists or occurs.

**convince and switch:** An A/B partner improvisation in which one actor tries to persuade the other in order to achieve his/her objective. The players take turns being each character.

**cooperation:** The act of working together, getting along, and sharing responsibility.

**corrales:** In Spain the courtyards closed in by neighboring buildings and in which plays were staged.

**costume:** Any clothing worn by an actor on stage during a performance.

**creative drama:** An improvisational, process-centered form of theatre in which participants are guided by a leader to imagine, enact, and reflect on human experiences.

**crisis:** A decisive point in the plot of a play on which the outcome of the remaining actions depends.

**critique:** Opinions and comments based on predetermined criteria that may be used for self-evaluation or the evaluation of the actors or the production itself.

**cue:** A signal, either verbal or physical, that indicates something else, such as a line of dialogue or an entrance, is to happen.

**curtain call:** Following a performance, the appearance of the actors onstage to acknowledge the appreciation of the audience and to take a bow.

**design:** The creative process of developing and executing aesthetic or functional designs in a production, such as costumes, lighting, sets, and makeup.

**deus ex machina:** Literally, “god in the machine”; a mechanical crane used to lower and raise gods in ancient Greek theatre.

**devising (also called collaborative creation, particularly in the United States):** A form of theatre where the script originates not from a writer or writers, but from collaborative, usually improvisatory, work by a group of people (usually, but not necessarily, the performers).

**dialogue:** The conversation between actors on stage.

**diatribe:** A bitter, sharply abusive attack or criticism.

**diction:** The pronunciation of words, the choice of words, and the manner in which a person expresses himself or herself.

**Dionysus:** He is the Greek god of wine, new life, and illusion. They had drama festivals in his honor.

**directing:** The art and technique of bringing the elements of theatre together to make a play.

**director:** The person who oversees the entire process of staging a production.

**dithyramb:** The unison movements of the Greek chorus to honor Dionysus.

**donkey (rabbit, duck, elephant):** Everyone stands in a circle with a leader in the center. The leader points at someone in the circle, calls out one of the figures described below, and counts out “1, 2, 3.” The player pointed at and the two persons on either side of the player get into the position of that figure. If they do it

in a count of 3, the leader points to another player and calls out another figure. Any player who cannot get into the figure in time is out of the game. The game sounds like, “Elephant, one, two, three, horse, one, two, three,” etc. Players may make up gestures to represent other animals or characters.

FIGURE	MIDDLE PLAYER	SIDE PLAYERS
Elephant	Arms in front with hands together to form a trunk	Arms in a big “C” position to form ears on either side
Horse	Both fists in front of nose to form muzzle	Arm bent at 90 degrees with elbow on the middle person’s shoulder and forearm straight up to form an ear
Rabbit	Both hands behind back to form a tail	Arm straight up to form an ear
Angel	Both hands together as in prayer, sing an angelic “ahhh” on 3	Both arms extended straight out at the side to form a wing, sing an angelic “ahhh” on 3
Donkey	No movement at all	No movement at all
Kitten	Fingers spread out in front of face to look like whiskers	Arms angled to represent kitten ears for middle player
Duck	Arms make a duck’s bill in front of face	Outside arm extends to form wings

**downstage:** The stage area toward the audience.

**drama seeds:** Students curl up into balls, feet tucked, prepared to "grow" into various characters on cue from teacher.

**dramatic play:** Children’s creation of scenes when they play “pretend.”

**dramatic structure:** The special literary style in which plays are written.

**dramatize:** Create a theater piece from literary or imaginative sources.

**dress rehearsal:** The final rehearsal just prior to opening night in which the show is run with full technical elements. Full costumes and makeup are worn.

**ekkyklema:** In Greek theatre, a platform or couch on wheels that was rolled out through the central door of the skene carrying the bodies of characters killed offstage. It could also be used for interior scenes.

**electronic media:** Means of communication characterized by the use of technology (e.g., radio, television, and the Internet).

**eleggua:** This is a god of the Yoruba tribe in Africa; he can be a trickster.

**Elizabethan theatre:** The theatre of England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I and often extended to the close of the theatres in 1640.

**emotions:** Various psychological states experienced by living beings in response to internal or external stimuli (ex. happy, sad, angry).

**empathy:** Sharing the same feelings or emotions as another.

**ensemble:** A group of theatrical artists working together to create a theatrical production.

**entrance:** Point or place where an actor comes in.

**epic theatre:** Theatrical movement of the early 1920s and 1930 characterized by the use of such artificial devices as cartoons, posters, and film sequences distancing the audience from theatrical illusion and allowing focus on the play's message.

**ethos:** The inner source, the soul, the mind, and the original essence that shapes and forms a person or animal.

**exit:** Point at which an actor leaves.

**exposition:** Detailed information at the beginning of a story that reveals the facts of a plot.

**farce:** A comedy with exaggerated characterizations, abundant physical or visual humor, and, often, an improbable plot.

**feelings:** Emotions.

**focus:** Concentrate on immediate action or activity.

**focus improvisation (give and take):** Two players are given a where, who, what, time, weather, etc. and objectives. Scene is begun. Leader side coaches with "A give!" or "B Take!" The players are to listen to the side coaching and give the total focus to the other player, or take focus from him while continuing to play the scene.

**follow the changing leader:** Players stand in a circle. There is no verbal communication. Anyone may be the leader at any time by doing movements and trying to get the others to follow. The current leader may change the movement or any player may take over as leader.

**form:** The overall structure or shape of a work that frequently follows an established design. Forms may refer to a literary type (e.g., narrative form, short story form, dramatic form) or to patterns of meter, line, and rhymes (e.g., stanza form, verse form).

**formal theatre:** Theatre that focuses on public performance in front of an audience and in which the final production is most important.

**gallery walk:** Students walk through a "museum" of theatrical or visual art works created by classmates.

**the gelosi:** A famous Italian commedia company.

**genre:** Literally, "kind" or "type." In literary and dramatic studies, genre refers to the main types of literary form, principally tragedy and comedy. The term can also refer to forms that are more specific to a given historical era, such as the revenge tragedy, or to more specific subgenres of tragedy and comedy, such as the comedy of manners.

**gesture:** An expressive movement of the body or limbs.

**gesture pass:** Students stand in a circle. The leader starts by making eye contact with someone else in the circle and making a movement or gesture with a sound. It can be anything. The other person repeats the gesture and sound, makes eye contact with someone else and makes ANOTHER gesture and sound to pass on. Continue game until all or most have participated at least once.

**gibberish:** A nonsense language, using random vocalization.

**go/stop:** Players spread out in space provided. There are two rules: no sounds, no touching. When the leader says, "Go," players move; when the leader says, "Stop," players freeze.

*Variations:*

*1 - move as though you are following the clues on a treasure hunt*

*2 - move as though you are looking for an address you can't find*

*3 - move as though you are looking for something you lost (they must determine what is lost)*

*4 - move as though you are sneaking and don't want to be heard, etc.*



**Greek chorus:** The group of men who sang and danced together during a play. They represented a variety of characters and often commented on the action of the play.

**Greek theatre:** Theatrical events in honor of the god Dionysus that occurred in Ancient Greece and included play competitions and a chorus of masked actors.

**group characters:** Actors work together to create one character. (e.g., an elephant, a cave, a whale)

**guild:** An association of craftsmen or merchants who produced plays.

**hanamichi:** Also known as the "flower path." In Kabuki theatre the bridge that extends from the back of the auditorium to the left side of the stage.

**heavens:** The area above the stage where lights are hung and scenery is stored.

**house:** The front of the theatre comprised of the lobby, audience, ticket booth, etc.

**house manager:** The person responsible for the front of the theatre including tickets, lobby, audience seating.

**improvisation:** A spontaneous style of theatre in which scenes are created without advance rehearsing or scripting.

**inamorato/inamorata:** The young lovers in commedia dell'arte theatre.

**incantation:** In the 14<sup>th</sup> Century, a written or recited formula of words designed to produce a particular effect; phrases used to "cast a spell."

**inflection:** Changes in pitch or tone of voice to indicate meaning.

**informal theatre:** A theatrical performance that focuses on small presentations, such as one taking place in a classroom setting. Usually, it is not intended for public view.

**isolation:** Movement made with one part or a small part of the body (e.g., rolling head, shrugging shoulders).

**Juba dance (hambone):** A style of dance originating in West Africa that involves stomping as well as slapping and patting the arms, legs, chest, and cheeks.

**Kabuki:** One of the traditional forms of Japanese theatre, originating in the 1600s and combining stylized acting, costumes, makeup, and musical accompaniment.

**kairos:** A time in between, a moment of undetermined period of time in which something special happens.

**lazzi:** In commedia dell'arte these were jokes, stunts, gestures, witty comments and funny speeches that had little to do with the play but added humor.

**leading centers (gold cord):** Students imagine they have a gold cord attached to the middle of the head, pulling them upward toward the ceiling. The rest of the body falls toward the floor. The back straightens. How does that change the walk? What kind of character would walk this way? Now the cord snaps and they go back to a normal walk. Now the cord is attached to the middle of the back (chest, right shoulder, nose, left hand, etc.). The rest of the body falls toward the floor. What kind of character would walk this way? Each time the cord snaps, students go back to a normal walk.

**leading the blind:** Line students up in two lines, facing each other. Have one line of students hold their hands out in front of them and close their eyes. Ask students in the “seeing” line, one at a time, to cross over and pick one “blind” partner, take his/her hand, and begin leading him/her around the room silently. The blind partner should not know who his/her leader is. Emphasize the care that the leader must take to make sure that the blind partner does not bump into anything or anybody. As the partnership becomes more trusting, direct them to move in different ways (skip, crawl, dance, etc.). After some time has passed, reverse the roles. The blind party may open the eyes and take the role of leader, and the other student should close the eyes and become blind.

*Variations:*

*Instead of holding hands, the connecting point could be elbows, shoulders, or finger tips.*

In debriefing, have participants share the experiences they had being the “seeing” partner (responsible for keeping the “blind” partner safe) and the “blind” partner (finding a building trust in the relationship).

**lemonade:** Divide class into two teams of equal size, and have them line up facing each other on opposite sides of the space. Team A secretly decides on a “trade” or activity to pantomime, and the two teams chant the following chant to each other:

Team A: Hey, hey, we're from L.A.

Team B: What's your trade?

Team A: Lemonade.

Team B: Show us some if you're not afraid.

Team A then pantomimes their trade until Team B guesses what they are (gardeners, bricklayers, teachers, secretaries, doctors, dog groomers, etc.). The game is then repeated with team B choosing the trade.

**level:** The height of an actor's head as determined by his or her body position (e.g., sitting, lying, standing, or elevated by an artificial means).

**machines:** The object of the machine is to have a group of students (from 3 to 8) create an integrated group motion that repeats a rhythmic motion like a machine. It can include repeated sounds, even words or phrases.

Have one student at a time enter the performance space and create a repeated movement to a rhythm that he/she can sustain for a few minutes.

Encourage variety in movement by reminding students that they can use space in many different ways, that the movements they choose can have different textures, and that they can work at different levels (on the floor, reaching for the ceiling, etc.).

Each new student who enters the performance space relates a new movement to the ones that have already been created. Make sure they do not form a line, but that they use the space in all its dimensions.

Have them add sounds, words, or phrases to the movement.

Experiment with slowing the machine down or speeding it up, keeping the rhythm consistent.

*Variations:*

*1 - ADD A PART: A player goes on stage and becomes an imaginary part of a larger machine. Each successive player adds a part until everyone has had a turn.*

*2 - A machine can be free form, or it can be designed around a concept (laughter, grief, hunger, etc.) or a topic (first day of school, drug abuse, playground conflict, etc.)*

*3 - A machine can consist of complex parts such as the sections of a car wash.*

**makeup:** Cosmetics and sometimes hairstyles that an actor wears on stage to emphasize facial features, historical periods, characterizations, and so forth.

**masks:** Coverings worn over the face or part of the face of an actor to emphasize or neutralize facial characteristics.

**masques:** An Elizabethan masked ball.

**mechane:** See Deus Ex Machina.

**melodrama:** A dramatic form popular in the 1800s and characterized by an emphasis on plot and physical action (versus characterization), stock characters, cliff-hanging events, heart-tugging emotional appeals, the celebration of virtue, and a strongly moralistic tone.

**melodrama conventions:**

1 - AUDIENCE INTERACTION: Cue cards to encourage audience responses such as "Hiss! Boo!" "Applause," "Cheers."

2 - EXAGGERATION: The style of acting in melodrama in which the speech, movement, gestures and facial expressions are magnified beyond truth by the actors.

3 - FULL FRONT ACTING POSITIONS: Characters frequently deliver lines directly facing the audience.

4 - MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT: Used to underscore character entrances and exits and to highlight plot points.

5 - OLIO: A sing along with the audience performed before or after the melodrama or in between scenes of the play.

6 - STOCK CHARACTERS:

- Hero often wears "white hat" (protagonist)
- Villain often wears black hat, black cape, black mustache (antagonist)
- Heroine is usually girlfriend of Hero; could be main protagonist
- Sidekick is the friend or helper of either the Hero or the Villain; often provides comic relief and frequently referred to as bumbling
- Sick or Old Person is usually related to the Hero or Heroine and adds complication to the plot

**mime:** An ancient art form based on pantomime in which conventionalized gestures are used to express ideas rather than represent actions; also, a performer of mime.

**minstrel show:** Musical theatre that usually consisted of performances of traditional African-American music and dance provided by white actors in blackface and characterized by exploitive racial stereotypes.

**mirror exercise:** A/B partners face each other. A begins moving in slow motion and B reflects as mirror. Teacher calls "switch," and A becomes reflection; B becomes leader. This activity is done without talking. This is an excellent way to get players used to working with others.

**monologue:** A long speech by a single character.

**mood:** The state of mind or feeling communicated in a work of art, frequently through color.

**mosqueteros:** In Spain these were the spectators who stood in the patio of the outdoor theatres.

**motivation:** A character's reason for his or her actions or words in a play, film, television, program or video; an inner drive that causes a person to act a certain way.

**musical director:** The person who is in charge of the instrumental and vocal production of the theatrical performance.

**musical theatre:** A type of entertainment containing music, songs, and, usually, dance.

**mystery voice:** Also known as "Greetings, Your Majesty." A theatre game in which one student (guesser) sits with back to audience. Teacher silently chooses one student to speak a line to the guesser in a disguised voice. The guesser has three chances to guess who the mystery voice is. If the guesser is correct, he/she continues to play. If the guesser cannot guess the mystery voice after three tries then he/she gives up the throne.

**name games:** Introductory activity to help with self-identity and creative expression. An effective "ice breaker" for beginning lessons. *variations: with rhythm (K), take your name to the center (1), with emotions (2), with pantomime ball toss (3), with gesture (4), with adjectives (5), "This is my time, this is my space, My name is \_\_\_\_\_, You will remember me." (6).*

**name six game:** All the players except one, who stands in the center, sit in a circle. The center player closes his eyes while the others pass any small object from one to the other. When the center player claps his hands, the player who is caught with the object in his hands must keep it until the center player points at him and gives him a letter of the alphabet. (No effort is made to hide the object from the center player.) Then the player who has the object must start it on its way immediately so that it passes through the hands of each of the players in the circle in turn. By the time it returns to him, he must have named six objects, the name of each beginning with the letter suggested by the center player. If the player does not succeed in naming six objects in the time that the object makes the round of the circle, that player must change places with the one in the center. If the circle is small, the object should be passed around two or more times. (Variation: Leader chooses a category (foreign cars, current movies, desserts,

rivers in the United States, rock groups, etc.), and player must name six from the category as the object is passed.)

**neutral:** A "ready" position. Students stand still, eyes on leader, listening for directions.

**Noh:** One of the traditional forms of Japanese theatre in which masked male actors use highly stylized dance and poetry to tell stories.

**objective:** A character's goal or intention.

**onnagata:** In Japanese Kabuki the male actors who play female roles.

**operetta:** A theatrical production with elements of opera but lighter and more popular in subject and style.

**orchestra:** The circular area on which the chorus performed in Greek theatre.

**outside in:** The actor's process of developing a character by using the physical traits to formulate the emotional and psychological aspects of the character.

**pacing:** The tempo of an entire theatrical performance.

**pageant:** Any elaborate street presentation or a series of tableaux across a stage.

**pantomime:** Acting without words through facial expression, gesture, and movement. It is also the manipulation of imaginary objects often called space work.

**paraskenia:** In ancient Greek theatre the rectangular rooms projecting in front of the skene on both sides. They served as dressing rooms.

**pass the pulse:** Students hold hands and "pass a hand-hug," student to student. Leader starts the hand-hug (or pulse) by squeezing the hand of the person next to him/her. That person passes it on by squeezing the hand of the person next to him, etc. Add to the difficulty gradually, first by speeding up the pulse (time it as it goes around the circle), then by sending pulses in both directions, and finally by having students cross their arms and squeeze with the opposite hands.

**pathos:** An appeal to an audience's emotions, sympathies and imagination.

**periaktoi:** The Greek word for a triangle of flats that can be revolved for scenic changes; also called a prism set.

**personification:** Actor's use of body, voice and imagination to give human feelings and traits to non-human characters.

**pitch:** The highness or lowness of the voice.

**play:** The stage representation of an action or a story; a dramatic composition.

**play catch:** This is a mime activity in which the teacher decides on the size of the "ball"; and then A/B partners toss the ball among themselves. Once the game is in motion, the leader calls out that the ball is becoming various sizes and weights.

**playwright:** A person who writes plays.

**plot:** That which happens in a story; the beginning, which involves the setting, the characters, and the problem they are facing; the middle, which tells how the characters work to solve the problem; and the ending, in which the problem is resolved.

**process drama:**

#### 1 - CHORAL MONTAGE

Students select phrases, words or a story from their writing that is the most meaningful and powerful to them. The teacher taps each student to begin walking and talking. When they finish they freeze in place. Everyone is speaking at once but some finish before others. (composing shared response, interpreting meaning, main idea)

#### 2 - CONSCIENCE ALLEY (TUNNEL OF ADVICE, GOOD ANGEL BAD ANGEL)

Students form two parallel lines. One character walks through the tunnel while the others speak as that character's subconscious. They whisper advice, encourage as if good angels or discourage as if bad angels.

#### 3 – CONTINUUM

Students place themselves along a physical continuum to stake their position on the issue or dilemma raised in a story. People who most strongly disagree with a statement stand far to the left and those who most strongly agree stand on the far right. Students then discuss an issue related to the drama with those next to them. It is valuable to repeat the strategy later in the drama as they may change their opinions.

*Variation:*

**CORNERS**

*Participants group themselves in corners according to their beliefs, opinions, ideas. (taking a stance, forming an opinion, supporting and articulating opinion)*

#### 4 - DAILY LIFE

This convention works backwards from an important event in order to fill in the gaps in the history as to how the characters have arrived at the event. A chronological sequence is built up from scenes prepared by groups, involving the central character at different times in the preceding twenty-four hours. After the scenes are run together, each scene in the sequence is subsequently re-drafted to take into account the influence of other group's scenes. (sequencing, visualization, facts and details)

#### 5 - DEVISING

Drama that is developed for performance from the improvisation work of the participants. Although it doesn't originate from a script, it may generate a script.

#### 6 – EVESDROPPING

These conversations add tension or information to a situation that should not have been heard. The group might not know who the speakers are or might only know one of the speakers. The conversation might be reported by spies or be in the form of gossip and rumor. The group can go backwards or forwards in time to recreate key conversations that illuminate the present situation.

#### 7 – FLASHBACK

Students imagine and represent what happened just before the story or scene occurs, identifying possible causes and background.

#### 8 – GESTOS

An action that shows the true relationship between characters. Students summarize the relationship between characters (ideas, objects or forces) quickly with a simple gesture and expression.

#### 9 – HOTSEATING

Students assume the role of character and respond to questions and situations in that role. Preparation is critical. Variations include press conference and talk radio show.

#### 10 – INTERVIEW



In A/B pairs one student is the interviewer; one is the character. The function of the interviewer is to draw out information appropriate to the role and context. Ask questions that clarify, justify, supply information, deepen insights, interpret etc.

#### 11 - MANTLE OF THE EXPERT

Students remain themselves but imagine they possess the authority and skills of experts; they earn their expertise. (e.g., Students are expert scientists/doctors of paleontology.)

#### 12 – MEETING

The group is gathered together within the drama to hear new information, plan action, make collective decisions and suggest strategies to solve problems that have arisen. The meeting may be chaired by the teacher or committee or other individuals.

#### 13 - MISSING SCENE/CHANGE THE ENDING

A scene is enacted that provides additional background information or extends or changes the ending.

#### 14 - ROLE ON THE WALL

Important, pivotal roles are represented in picture form or diagram "on the wall." Information is added as the story is told. Individuals take information from the diagram and interpret the character in small group improvisations. It becomes a collective representation rather than a personal interpretation.

#### 15 - TEACHER IN ROLE

The teacher adopts a role and manages the theatrical possibilities within the context in order to achieve such results as exciting interest, controlling the action, inviting involvement, creating tension, challenging superficial thinking, or developing narrative. The teacher mediates the teaching purpose through involvement in the drama. The teacher is acting spontaneously while trying to achieve her teaching purpose. The teacher carefully chooses the status and power of her role to illicit the involvement of the students. She may take an authority role, one of the gang, devil's advocate, outsider, helpless, etc. depending on the purpose of the lesson and ability of students.

#### 16 - TRADING RUMORS

Participants are given a hint about a subject or conflict they will encounter. They pass around rumors or gossip about what they believe might be involved or what happened. (predictions)

### 17 - VERB CHAINS

In small groups students choose 5-7 verbs relating to the story to be dramatized. Each group creates a theatrical representation of their chosen verbs by linking them together as a chain using body and voice.

### 18 - VOICES IN THE HEAD

Others represent and speak of the possibly conflicting thoughts of the character at that moment or act as a collective conscience (variations include alter ego).

### 19 – THE WAVE/THROWING OUT SOUND & MOVEMENT

In a circle, each student will throw a body movement which is accompanied by a sound into the circle. The first time around, everyone in the circle can echo the movement and sound as each student goes. The second time around, you can do it “wave” style, with each person doing the sound and movement which the first person started in a “wave” around the circle.

**producer:** The person who finances a theatrical production.

**production meeting:** All technical managers, directors and designers meet to organize the effective execution of a theatre performance.

**production values:** The critical elements of a production, such as acting, direction, lighting, costuming, sets, and makeup.

**projection:** The placement and delivery of volume, clarity, and distinctness of voice for communicating to an audience.

**props (properties):** Items carried on stage by an actor; small items on the set used by the actors.

**proscenium:** The enlarged hole cut through a wall to allow the audience to view the stage. It is also called the proscenium arch. The archway is in a sense the frame for the action on the stage.

**protagonist:** The main character of a play and the character with whom the audience identifies most strongly. This character moves the plot forward.

**puppetry:** Almost anything brought to life by human hands to create a performance. Types of puppets include rod, hand, and marionette.

**reader's theatre:** A performance created by actors reading scripts rather than working from memory.

**rehearsal:** Practice sessions in which the actors and technicians prepare for public performance through repetition.

**resolution:** The third act of a dramatic structure, in which the conflict comes to some kind of conclusion; the solution of a problem.

**ring shouts:** An ecstatic dance ritual from Africa in which worshipers move in a circle while shuffling their feet and clapping their hands. Despite the name, shouting aloud is not an essential part of the ritual.

**rising action:** The middle part of a plot consisting of complications and discoveries that create conflict.

**ritual:** Ceremonial actions representing a culture's spiritual and ethical values passed down from generation to generation.

**room filled with...:** Players move through a "room" which is filled from wall to wall and floor to ceiling with the leader's suggestions. Nonverbal activity with no touching. Suggestions: giant marshmallows, look for a giant ping pong ball among the marshmallows, molasses, soap suds, whipped cream, saw dust, feathers, fruit Jell-O, etc.

*Side Coaching:*

*"Move through the substance and make contact with it. Don't give it a name-it is what it is! Use your whole body to make contact! Feel it against your cheeks! Your nose! Your knees! Push the substance around. Explore it! You never felt it before. Make a tunnel! Move back into the space your body has shaped. Shake it up! Make the substance fly. Stir it up! Make it ripple."*

**run-through:** A rehearsal moving from start to finish without stopping for corrections or notes.

**satyr play:** In ancient Greek theatre a short comedy that poked fun at the theme or story presented in the tragedies.

**scaenae frons:** In Roman theatre, a high back wall of the stage floor, supported by columns.

**scene:** A short situation to be acted out, as in improvisation, with a beginning, middle and end; a subdivision of an act in a play.

**script:** The written text of a play.

**sculptor/sculpture (clay bodies):** Students form AB partners. A is the sculptor and B the clay/substance. All pairs working simultaneously, A moves or directs B into a chosen shape, one body part at a time. B stands silently frozen like a statue. Switch.

**sense memory:** Memories of sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and textures. It is used to help define a character in a certain situation.

**set:** Scenery, backdrops, and props used to create an environment for a performance.

**setting:** The locale of the action of a play.

**shapes:** On a signal (hand clap), players form two circles, one inside the other, so that the two circles share a common center. Players DO NOT TALK or give any sound cues. They concentrate and figure out how to make the shape just by looking at each other and cooperating. It may help to hold hands. Then they go back to walking. At the next signal (hand clap) ask them to form three separate triangles, etc. (Rectangles are easier than squares. Shapes become more complex as students become more capable.)

**shite:** The main actor who stars in the all male performance of Noh drama in Japan.

**sides:** These are sections of longer scripts often used at auditions.

**skene:** In ancient theatres, a building behind a stage used by the actors.

**soliloquy:** A character reveals his or her inner thoughts while alone on stage.

**sound collage/sound scape:** Students create the sounds of a setting using vocal and physical sound effects. Teacher directs students' participation.

**sound story:** an interactive storytelling technique. Teacher tells/reads short story and students provide sound effects where appropriate.

*Variation:*

*Players sit in a circle. The first player begins a story using sounds but no words. The story moves around the circle without skipping anyone. Players try to create a meaningful story using sounds only.*

**space bubbles:** A protective, imaginary barrier surrounding an actor. Other actors may not enter another's space bubble.

**spectacle:** Everything the audience sees including scenery, costuming, dance, pantomime, and swordplay.

**stage:** The area where actors perform.

**stage areas:** See Center Stage, Downstage, Stage left, Stage right, Upstage.

**stage crew:** The backstage technical crew responsible for running the show. In small theatre companies the same persons build the set and handle the load-in. Then, during performances, they change the scenery and handle the curtain.

**stage manager:** The director's liaison backstage during rehearsal and performance. The stage manager is responsible for the running of each performance.

**stage left:** The left side of the stage from the perspective of an actor facing the audience.

**stage right:** The right side of the stage from the perspective of an actor facing the audience.

**statue:** A frozen image created by a single actor.

**the "stew pan":** The balcony or gallery area was reserved for women, especially of the lower class in Spain.

**stock characters:** Established characters, such as young lovers, neighborhood busybodies, sneaky villains, and overprotective fathers, who are immediately recognizable by an audience.

**story points:** Main sequence of events in a literary work.

**story retelling:** Begin with a story, told or read by the teacher or all together by the students. At the beginning of the retelling process, go over the WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, and WHY of the story, having the children describe the traits of the characters (WHO), the setting (WHEN and WHERE), and the reason that the story is compelling (WHAT and WHY). Then have the students begin to retell the story. Start developing and sequencing the main story points with the whole

group contributing. Guide the process with questions such as: But what happened before that? Where were they when that happened? Why did he do that? And then what happened? Why did that happen?

When the main story points have been identified and sequenced, have two students come before the group and start retelling the story. Have them tell it first as a “gossip story,” gossiping about people they have never met but have only heard about. Then have two other students tell it as if it were the funniest story they have ever heard, and then two others as the most mysterious story (saddest, scariest, silliest, etc.) Experiment with having students take a minor character and tell the story from that character’s point of view.

Encourage them any way you can to “own” the story by telling it in their own voices.

**storytelling:** The art of presenting a narrative through theatrical techniques.

**style:** The distinctive and unique manner in which a writer arranges words to achieve particular effects. Style essentially combines the idea to be expressed with the individuality of the author. these arrangements include individual word choices as well as such matters as the length and structure of sentences, tone, and use of irony.

**stylization:** The application of a certain manner of performance in a production.

**subtext:** Information that is implied by a character but not stated by a character in dialogue, including actions and thoughts.

**tableau(x):** A silent and motionless depiction of a scene created by actors, often from a picture. The plural is tableaux.

*Variations:*

*1- A frozen image or picture made with actors.*

*Create an audience space and a performance space by grouping all participants in one area, an “audience” area focused on an empty “stage” area. The audience explores the stage area with their eyes and their imaginations. They may then enter the area, one at a time, to create a tableau representing a concept. It could be drawn from the theme of a story they have read together, or from a history lesson, or from a topic you would like them to think about (family, hunger, birthday, first love, etc.). Some of the participants should remain in the audience so you have “performers” and “observers.”*

*You may isolate certain performers in the tableau by taping them on the shoulder or identifying them by name. Ask them to remain frozen which the others sink slowly to the floor or move slowly away from the picture on a count of five. While they are out of the tableau they should not make eye contact with the observers,*

so ask them to focus upstage, away from the audience. Ask the observers to explore the new relationships created by isolating certain members of the tableau.

2 – Partner work.

With a partner, players create a frozen picture (tableau) of characters relating to one another (teacher/student, clown/child).

3 – Beginning, middle and end.

In small groups, have students create tableaux of the beginning, middle, and end of a familiar story they have just read. Every group member needs to be a part of the tableau (person or object). Have them perform their tableaux for the rest of the class, telling the class to put their hands over their eyes before and between each separate tableau so they do not see the transitions. The class may then guess which story it is, or which scenes of the story have been portrayed.

Put your open hand, palm facing the audience, over a character in the tableau and ask, “If my hand were a word bubble in a cartoon, what might this character be saying?”

4 - Show each group a photo or painting of a dramatic moment and have them create a tableau of what they imagine went before the scene pictured, a tableau of the scene itself, and a tableau of what might have followed the scene. Have the class describe the story they have seen and discuss what might have been the topic or theme of the story.

5 – Have students create a frozen image of an environment/setting, such as a beach setting with animate or inanimate elements.

**technical artists:** The persons responsible for the design and execution of the physical components of a stage production, for example: lighting design, sound effects, music, scenery, props, costumes, makeup, etc.

**technical theatre:** The physical aspects of a stage production such as lighting, sound effects, sets, props, costumes, makeup, media effects, etc.

**television exercise:** Four or more players (a director, a cameraman, and actors). Director casts his actors and gives them a scene to enact. There should be a definite where; scene should be simple and should not be longer than three or four minutes. A camera can be simulated with a flashlight; it must be able to be turned on and off. Cameraman follows the scene with his light, moving in for close-ups, back for long shots, etc. Student audience can tell what shots have been taken only by where the light falls. Players go through a dry-run rehearsal

without camera. Director makes a few changes here and there. Cameraman moves in and out to warm up. Then the room is darkened, the camera lights up, and they are on the air.

**text:** The printed words, including dialogue and the stage directions for a script.

**theatre:** The imitation or representation of life performed for other people; the performance of dramatic literature; drama; the milieu of actors, technicians, and playwrights; the place where dramatic performances take place.

**Theatre of the Absurd:** Theatrical movement beginning in the 1950s in which playwrights created works representing the universe as unknowable and humankind's existence as meaningless.

**theatre games:** Noncompetitive games designed to develop acting skills and popularized by Viola Spolin.

### **theatre idioms/expressions:**

1 - BREAK A LEG: A saying that means "Good luck," usually said to an actor before a performance.

2 - CAMEO: A brief role played by a famous actor.

3 - GOING UP ON YOUR LINES: Someone has forgotten his lines.

4 - GREENROOM: This is a backstage lounge for actors.

5 - HAMMING IT UP: This means someone is overacting, often for laughs.

6 - OVER THE TOP: An actor is playing the role with extreme exaggeration.

7 - PICK UP YOUR CUES: This means to begin your line sooner following the other actors' lines.

8 - ROUND OF APPLAUSE: Clapping at the end of a performance.

9 - RUN LINES: Rehearse lines with another person to memorize them.

10 - STEAL THE SHOW: To give the most memorable performance in the production.

11 - STRIKE THE SET: To remove the set at the end of a production.

12 - THE SCOTTISH PLAY: It is considered bad luck to say the name of the play "Macbeth" in a theatre; it is referred to as "the Scottish play."



13 - UPSTAGING: Standing so that other actors on stage must face away from the audience.

14 - WALK ON: A small role, often with no lines.

**theatrical experiences:** Events, activities, and productions associated with theatre, film/video, and electronic media.

**theatron:** The seating area in Greek theatres, usually stone benches in tiers surrounding the playing area in a horseshoe.

**theme:** The basic ideas or purpose of the play. It ties together all the characters and events; what the play is about as opposed to what happens in it.

**thespian:** An actor.

**Thespis:** Earliest known playwright and actor who won the first dramatic competition in Greek theatre.

**this is not a...:** Players stand in circle as leader gives an object (prop) to a player who says, "This is not a (e.g., pencil). This is a..... and uses the object as if it were a different noun (e.g., flute). Students pass object around the circle without repeating a noun.

**tone:** The writer's attitude toward the material and/or readers. Tone may be playful, formal, intimate, angry, serious, ironic, outraged, baffled, tender, serene, depressed, etc.

**tongue twister:** A verbal exercise consisting of a series of words that are a challenge to speak clearly. (e.g., She sells seashells by the seashore or toy boat, toy boat).

**transformation:** The actor's gradual changing of the body from one state of being to something or someone else.

**translator:** Two players enter the stage, and one "tells a story" in gibberish. The other one "translates" the story into English. Neither one prepares ahead of time, so the gibberish partner needs to adapt his/her body language and tone of voice to the translation and vice versa.

**traveling show:** A theatre production that moves from one location to another. The set, costumes and props are usually stored in a vehicle, such as a wagon. (19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> Century), train, truck or bus and set up in various locations throughout the United States.

**universal:** Pertaining to an idea or character recognized in multiple cultures.

**upstage:** Used as a noun, the stage area away from the audience; used as a verb, to steal the focus of a scene.

**vaudeville:** A variety show featuring many acts, including trained animals, singers, acrobats, dancers and comedians.

**verbalizing the where:** Two or more players. Where, who and what are agreed upon.

Part A: Players sit quietly on stage. Without leaving their chairs, they go through the scene verbally, describing their action and relation to the where and to the other players.

Example: Player #1: I carefully sneak across the still wet grass toward the large elm tree. The grass feels cold under my bare feet. When I get to the bottom of the tree, I shine my flashlight into the thickest branches.

Player #2: I stick my head out of the tree house to see who's bothering me. The light is shining right into my eyes so I can't see very well. (And so on.)

Part B: When the players have finished talking through the scene, they get up and actually play the scene through.

**vocal projection:** See projection.

**vocal projection exercise:** A/B partners in a setting which demands projected dialogue. Where should be a setting in which the players must, of necessity, call to each other across a wide distance. Example: A is lost in the forest; B is looking for A.

**vocal quality:** The characteristics of a voice, such as shrill, nasal, raspy, breathy, booming, etc.

**volume:** The degree of loudness or intensity of a voice.

**vomitorium:** In ancient Roman theatre, the doors in each section of each level of the auditorium. So named because they spit out or "vomit" spectators from the seating areas.

**walkabout:** Simultaneously and individually, students move through the space without touching or making vocal sound. Teacher guides in various ways according to theatre lessons. While walking, tell them to focus on the way their bodies move through space, the way their weight shifts from the back of the foot to the front, the way their toes push off the floor, the way they carry their heads, shoulders, arms, etc.

*Variations:*

1 - *setting (use five senses, e.g., jungle "What do you smell, taste, etc...)*

2 - *character (e.g., old person, teenager, villain, hero, teddy bear, fish), with emotions and reasons for motivation (ex, angry old person because someone stole his/her money, excited teddy bear because he has a new home)*

3 - *as if room is filled with (ex. marshmallows, jello, flowers, spiders).*

**what's beyond?:** Single player. Player is either to leave or enter a room (or both). Stage is used only to walk through; no action is to take place other than what is necessary to communicate to the audience what room he has come from and what room he is going to. (Suggest that the stage is simply an empty hallway leading to and from doors.)

Example: A character comes walking on stage, yawning and stretching. As he walks across the stage, he is slowly unbuttoning and easing out of what seems to be a loose-fitting garment. He rubs his tongue over his teeth as he exits out another door.

**what's inside? (magic box or magic bag):** Players sit in a circle. An empty bag or imaginary box is given to player who reaches into it, pulls out an imaginary object, uses it, replaces it, and passes the bag to the next player. This is a nonverbal activity, and objects should not be repeated. It is not a "guessing" game.

**where game:** Player goes on stage and shows where through the physical use of imaginary objects. When another player thinks he knows where the first player is, he assumes a who, enters the where and develops a relationship with the where and the other player. Other players join them, one at a time, in a similar fashion.

**whisper script:** In sculptor/sculpture or a machine, invite the audience, one at a time, to add dialogue to the picture by coming forward and whispering in the ear of one of the performers a word or phrase that would suit the character or the mood of the stage picture. Tell the performer to repeat the dialogue occasionally, when it feels right.

**who started the movement?:** Players are standing in a circle. One player is sent from the room while the others select a leader to start the motion. The player is then called back. He stands in the center of the circle and tries to discover the leader, whose function it is to make a rhythmic motion-tapping foot, nodding head, moving hands, etc.-and to change motions whenever he wishes. The other players copy these motions and try to keep the center player from guessing the leader's identity. When the center player discovers the leader, two other players are chosen to take their places.

*Variation:*

*Use music to encourage rhythmic movements.*

**wings:** Off-stage areas out of view on stage left and stage right that may be used for exits, entrances and set changes.

**word bubble:** In a tableau, place your hand over the head of an individual character. The hand is a word bubble in a cartoon, and actors fill in with words or phrases that the character might be saying or thinking.

**zanni:** A comic servant in a commedia dell'arte play.