

## **GLOSSARY OF STAGE TERMS**

**ACTING AREA** Space on stage in which the action of a performance takes place.

**AMBER** Refers to the yellowish-orange transparency (*see gel*) used as a colour medium.

**APRON** The performing area in front of the main curtain (*mains*) or curtain line.

**ARBOUR** - (*also carriage, cradle*) A metal frame used to support counterweights in a system for flying scenery.

**AREAS** - For the convenience in direction, lighting and furniture and set placement, stages are usually divided into nine (fig.1) or six (fig 2) areas according to the performers left and right as they face the audience.

<b>UR</b> (up right)	<b>UC</b> (up centre)	<b>UL</b> (up left)
<b>CR</b> (cen right)	<b>C</b> (centre)	<b>CL</b> (cen left)
<b>DR</b> (down right)	<b>DC</b> (down cntr)	<b>DL</b> (down left)

fig. 1

<b>UC</b> (up centre)	<b>UL</b> (up left)	
<b>C</b> (centre)		<b>CL</b> (centre left)
<b>DC</b> (down centre)	<b>DL</b> (down left)	

Sometimes described as USL (up stage left), DS (down stage), etc.

fig. 2

**ARENA STAGE** - Performing area around which the audience is seated on all sides. Theatre in the round, no proscenium arch.

**ASBESTOS** (*abbreviation A.B. - also called IRON or FIRE CURTAIN*) Fire proof curtain (*no longer made of asbestos*) required for proscenium style stages. The IRON or A.B. slides in a metal trough or smoke pockets on either side of the stage and are located in front of the mains.

**ATMOSPHERE** - Mood of the scene, act or performance as perceived by the author or show director and expressed through the staging media of lights, colour, costumes and sets.

**BABY SPOT** - Usually a small, compact, low voltage spotlight. Now mostly Fresnel spot lights are utilised.

**BACK DROP** - Cyclorama (*cyc*), groundrow, backing, projection, drop, etc. See specific definitions.

**BACKING** - Scenery piece or flat; usually twofold or three fold flat or curtain, used to mask windows, doors, etc.

**BACKING LIGHT** - A lighting instrument used to light through an opening from off stage or backing.

**BARNDOOR** - Light spill control hinged metal doors at the sides of lighting instruments to block off and control the edges of the beam of light. Also called shutters.

**BATTEN** - 1) Permanent or semi permanent lengths of pipe tied to lines from the grid and used for flying curtains, lights or scenery. (*The verb to batten means to fasten scenery together with a batten*). 2) Wood, often 2X4, used to weight the bottom of a soft (*unframed*) flying piece.

**BLACK LIGHT** - Ultraviolet light used as a special, glow-in-the-dark effect. Paint, invisible under normal lighting, usually is used on the costuming and sets.

**BLACKOUT** - Complete darkness on stage accomplished by switching off all the dimmers or master switch.

**BLACKS** - Back drapes or drops - usually black velvets (*also soft blacks*). Also called Velours.

**BLOCK** - 1) A fixed pulley set at the top of the fly loft or gallery grid. Also floor blocks which are mounted in the floor for draw curtains. Head blocks - three or more pulleys mounted on a single axle. 2) (*Blocking*) To block or set moves for the performers in the performance area.

**BOOK** - 1) The script, prompter's copy, the spoken words, not the lyrics of a musical; 2) A hinged, two fold flat. (*book flat*)

**BORDER** - Cloth, scenery pieces, canvas or any material used to mask the upper portion of the stage area. Also called teasers or valances.

**BORDER LIGHTS** - Lights set in a trough with three separate circuits for various lighting colour effects. There are three basic types of borders: 1) open trough consisting of a long open reflector with separate coloured lights; 2) each lamp enclosed in a separate compartment with a gel frame for each; 3) lights with reflectors behind each and a heat resistant glass colour filter known as a roundel (*or rondel*). Often used to illuminate the *cyc*.

**BOX SET** - An interior set with three walls and sometimes a ceiling. Usually the only access or egress off or on the stage is through a practical set door.

**BREAKAWAY SCENERY** - Scenery designed to break or alter on cue and in full view of the audience.

**BRING IT IN** - To lower a light bar, pipe batten or scenery from the fly gallery.

**BUMP IT** - 1) Hit the floor forcefully with a piece of flown scenery in order to restore trim; 2) In lighting, to increase the intensity suddenly.

**CARBON ARC** - High intensity light created by a spark between two carbon electrodes. Used extensively in follow spots. Troupers and Super Troupers use standard 120 volt A.C. circuits. Most have controlled iris and multiple gel or colour frames (*colour boom or boomerang*).

**CATWALK** - Platform used to gain access to stage light equipment.

**CHEATING** - Appearing to be looking at a performer or action slightly up-stage but actually facing slightly downstage toward the audience to enable the audience to better see the actor's face or actions.

**CINEMOID** - British heavy, waterproof, colour medium for lighting instruments. Roscolene is U.S. equivalent.

**CLEAR PLEASE** - (*Often without the please*) An order to strike props, set or to get out of the way or a warning that a curtain, drop or flat is going out (*up*) or coming in (*down*).

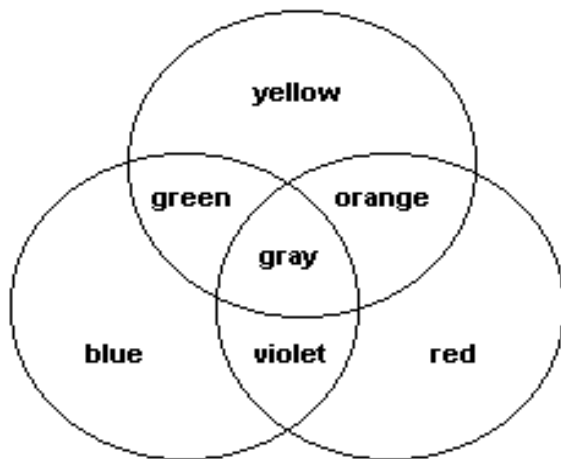
**COLOUR FRAMES** - (*gel frames*) Metal frames designed to fit in the troughs or holders in front of the light units.

**COLOUR PAINT AND LIGHTING** - 3 values - hue (*designation of colour*), value (*tone ranging from light to dark*), intensity (*degree of pureness or saturation*). Warm colours = Red-Yellow & Combinations; Cool colours = Blue-Green & Combinations

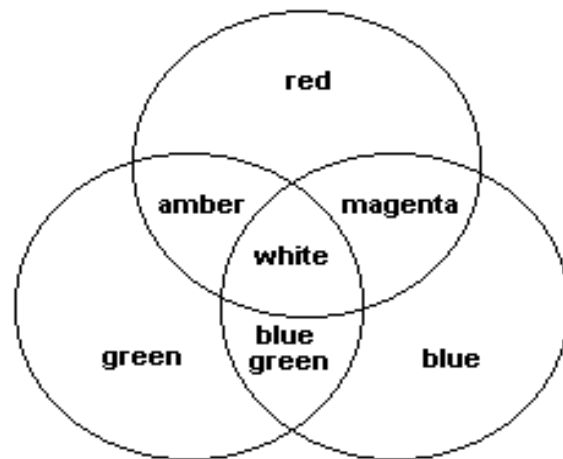
Fig. 3

**COLOUR WHEEL** - Wheel attached to the front of a spot-light with a variety of coloured gels in the openings. Sometimes motorised.

Pigment Primaries = Red - Yellow - Blue



Light Primaries = Red - Green - Blue



Pigment Secondaries = Orange - Green - Violet

Light Secondaries = Yellow - Blue-Green - Magenta

**CORNER BLOCK** - A piece of \_ inch ply-wood cut in the shape of a triangle, used to connect the stile to the rail on a flat. Also called a Triangle or a Corner.

**COUNTER WEIGHT SYSTEM** - A system of flying scenery that allows weights to be added to the system to offset the weight of the scenery.

**CROSS** - To cross the stage in one direction or the other - to make a cross (*e.g. cross from stage L to down stage R*).

**CROSS FADE** - Cross fade one light or sound source with another so that the outgoing sound or light overlaps the incoming sources.

**CUE SHEET** - Stage Manager, sound, lighting board, and follow spot operators, etc., notes on sound cues, light changes, special effect cues, performer exits and entrances, etc. Usually prepared by and "called" by the Stage Manager.

**CUE-TO-CUE REHEARSAL** - A rehearsal in which all the sound, light, special effects, entrances and exits, special props and other technical cues are rehearsed. Usually performers will participate by progressing from one technical cue to the next skipping all dialogue or music in which no technical cues are required. All light positions, intensities and mic positions and levels, props or technical considerations will be checked.

**CURTAINS** - Five types of MAINS: roll, contour, tab, drop (*not pictured*), and the most common the draw. (*see fig 4*)

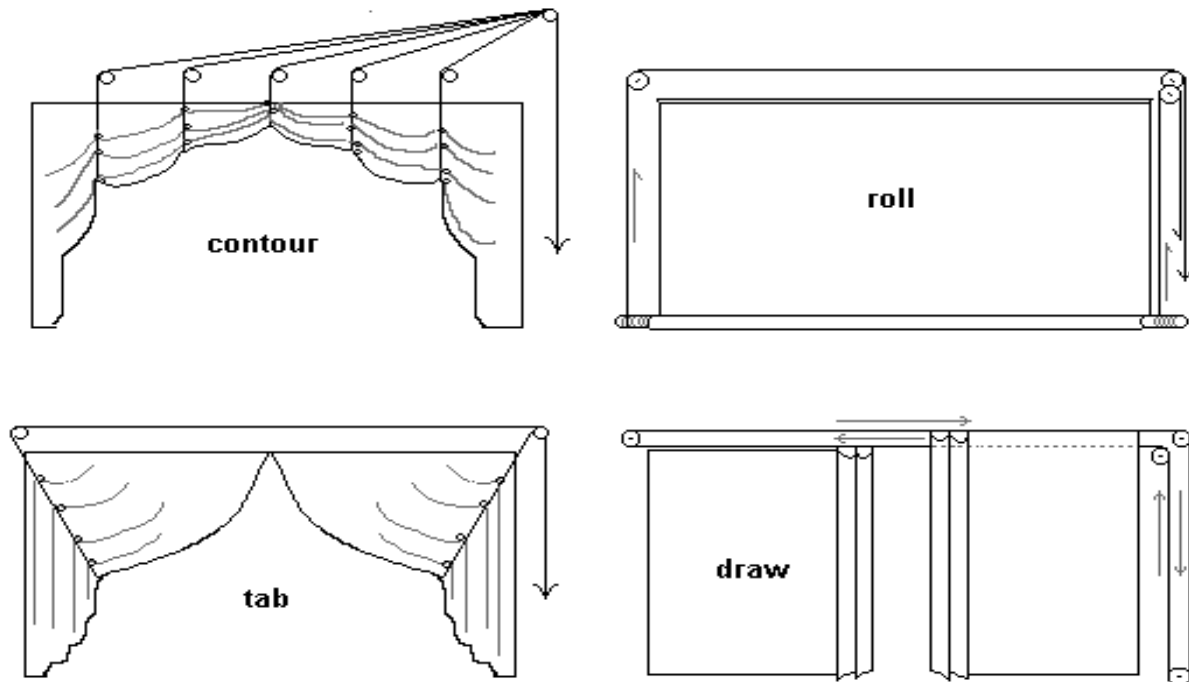


fig 4

**CURTAIN LINE** - The line marking the position of the curtain when closed.

**CYCLORAMA** or **CYC** - A sky backdrop, usually a sky blue colour. The cloth is drawn taut, in both the vertical and horizontal, to provide a smooth surface.

**DEAD SPOT** - Badly lit or unlit performance area or set area.

**DEUCE** - A two thousand watt fresnel spotlight.

**DIFFUSED LIGHT** - Soft, unfocused light, spread over a wide area, which is shadowless or nearly shadowless. Usually produced by border or floodlights.

**DIM** - A low light intensity. The act of dimming the lights up or down. The cue e.g. is "Dim up", "Dim down".

**DIMMERS** - Electronic devices on the lighting control board that controls the intensity of the lights.

**DOWNSTAGE** - Towards the audience (*see fig 1 & fig 2*).

**DRESS PARADE** - Costume check on-stage. Should be called immediately preceding or following dress rehearsal.

**DRESS REHEARSAL** - Final rehearsal(s) of the performance prior to opening. All technical, costumes, props, special effects, lighting, sound and other design elements should be ready and in place. The director should allow enough time after the dress to give final notes and allow for any last minute "touch ups" to all elements.

**DRESS A SET** - To add all the necessary elements such as furniture, pictures, greenery, props, aging, etc. that are required.

**DROPS** - Large, unframed material suspended from a batten and usually weighted by a batten or chain at the bottom, painted or plain.

**DUTCHMAN** - Strip of material, approx. 5 inches wide used to cover the space between two flats and blended and painted to match. Can be canvas, masking tape or scenic cotton.

**EFFECTS** - (*FX or SFX for sound effects*) Sound, special, light or other visual effects.

**ENTR'ACTE** - Intermission or skits or other special presentations presented in front of the main curtains.

**FADE IN/OUT** - (*sneak in/out*) Gradual dim up or down of lights or fade up or down of sound.

**FEEDBACK** - A high or low level squeal caused by the output of a sound monitor feeding back into the system via an open mic.

**FILAMENT IMAGE** - Shadow caused by the projection of the lamp filament image on a performer or stage area. Correct by widening the focus or using a frost gel.

**FILTER** - Colour medium in front of a light. Commonly called a gel (*gelatine*).

**FIRE CURTAIN** see ASBESTOS CURTAIN.

**FLASH POT (BOX)** - A special effect apparatus used to create a smoke & flash explosion.

Usually powdered potassium nitrate and magnesium are used. **NOTE:** Make sure you know what you are doing before utilising combustible effects on stage and check with your local and theatre FIRE CODE regulations before proceeding with these potentially hazardous effects.

**FLAT** - A scenery unit usually made of 1" X 3", flat or on edge, and covered with scenic cotton or veneer or other suitable material and painted or decorated to the design plan.

**FLOOR POCKET** - Electrical receptacle recessed in the stage floor and protected by a metal cover.

**FLOWN SCENERY** - Scenery raised in the flies (*fly gallery*) by means of ropes and counterweight system.

**FLY IN/OUT** - To raise scenery into the fly gallery or lower scenery onto the stage.

**FLY GALLERY** - (*rail - fly rail - fly floor*) Area used for tying lines, loading counter weights and sometimes operating the fly lines during the show.

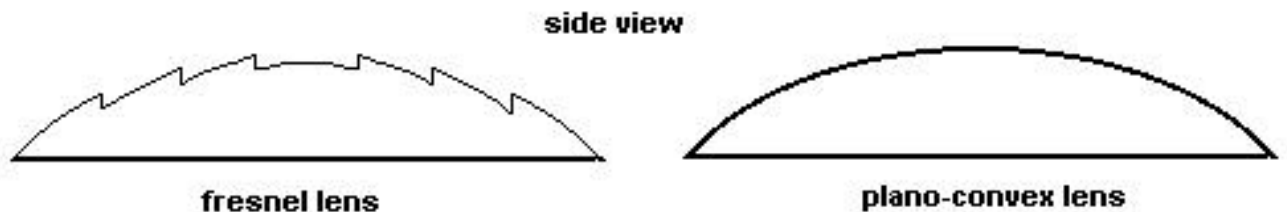
**FLYMAN** - (*flyperson*) The stagehand that handles the fly ropes. Generally takes cues to fly in or out from the Stage Manager.

**FOCUS LIGHTS** - To set and adjust the focus, iris and direction of the light throw as required to light predetermined areas of the stage.

**FOH** - Front of House - refers to the light location (*cat walk over the audience or side rails*) or auditorium. e.g. FOH lights.

**FOLLOW SPOT** - A high intensity light unit, usually carbon arc but often can be a less intensive incandescent light, mounted on a swivel base which allows the operator to follow the performers. Generally with colour boom, iris and shutters.

**FOURTH WALL** - The invisible wall between the performer and the audience usually the proscenium opening.



**FRESNEL** - (pronounced furnel) A lens reduced in thickness by making curved sections into concentric rings and stepping them back towards the plane. (*see fig 5*)

Fig. 5

**FROST** - Translucent gel used to diffuse and soften light. Useful in blending area lights and softening harsh light edges.

**FULL** - (*or Full-Up*) Refers to maximum intensity of light unit or sound system.

**GAIN** - Volume control on amplifier.

**GELATIN** - (*gel*) Thin, transparent sheet of colour medium used for stage lights. Used to be made from animal jelly and dye, hence the name gelatine. New heat resistant plastic gels are almost exclusively in use now as they are thicker, last longer, are more resistant to fading and will not "bake" and crumble.

**GENERAL LIGHTS** - Border lights, strip lights, etc., used for toning and blending and to establish the basic mood of the production.

**GO** - The action word that initiates the cue. e.g. "Standby LQ number 36 .... LQ number 36 ... GO". (*LQ is the short script form for "lighting cue" - as SQ would indicate "sound cue", etc.*). The warning or standby cues are usually given 15 to 30 seconds prior to the "go" cue.

**GOBO** - A metal cut-out used in front of a spot light to project a light pattern on a cyc or other set piece.

**GRID** - (*gridiron*) Structural framework of parallel beams that are located near the top of the stage structure and supporting sheaves, head blocks, cable ropes necessary for flying scenery and lights bars.

**GROUNDROW** - A low silhouette or painted cut-out representing hills, mountains, distant horizons, city outlines, etc., that stands independently usually between the cyc and the upstage performing area.

**HAND PROPS** - All properties carried and handled by performers.

**HOT SET** - A set that is ready for rehearsal or performance. No set piece or prop should be touched and persons, not involved, should not be allowed on the set.

**HOT SPOTS** - An area on stage that is hotter or brighter than others due to the uneven distribution of light.

**HOUSE LIGHTS** - Lights used to illuminate the audience area.

**INKY** - A low wattage (*about 100 watts*) fresnel spotlight or lens spotlight.

**INTENSITY** - Degree of purity or saturation of colour. Brightness of light from any given piece of equipment in any given area.

**IRIS** - An adjustable assembly of flat, overlapping leaves in a frame mounted at or near the internal focal point of the lens-lamp reflector system of an ellipsoidal spotlight to provide control of the area illuminated with minimum effect on the level of illumination within that area.

**JACK** - A triangular brace hinged or screwed to a flat or other set piece as a support and for extra rigidity.

**"K"** - Abbreviation for the prefix kilo: meaning 1000:

1K = 1000 watt Fresnel spotlight

2K = 2000 watt Fresnel spotlight

5K = 5000 watt Fresnel spotlight

10K = 10,000 watt Fresnel spotlight

**KEY LIGHT** - The principal source of light which establishes the character, atmosphere and mood of the scene and the performers.

**KEYSTONES** - 2 inch plywood or veneer piece used to connect the stile to the toggle bar on a flat.

**KILL** - To turn off the lights or sound. To delete a line or word from a script. To strike a prop from the scene.

**KLIEG LIGHT** - A high intensity, carbon arc light. The trade name of spotlights manufactured by Klieg Brothers. Sometimes used as a synonym for any bright lights.

**LAMP LUMENS** - The amount of light which is radiated by a lamp.

**LASH** - To fasten flats together with a lash line or rope.

**LASH CLEAT** - Hardware used on the back of flats to secure lash lines to flats.



**LASH LINE** - No. 8 sash cord (*\_ inch*) used to lash flats together.

**LEGS** - (*or TABS*) Section of narrow draperies, at the side of the stage, area, masking the wings from the audience.

**LIBRETTO** - Book or text of a musical.

**LIGHT PORTAL** - Tall, narrow slot in proscenium or auditorium walls, where spotlights can be hung.

**LOBSTERSCOPE** - A disk attachment for a spotlight, used to produce a flicker of light. Used for fire or fireplace effects.

**LOFT** - Space between grid and roof of the stage structure or house.

**MAIN CURTAINS** - (*or MAINS*) Drapery separating the stage from the auditorium. (*see fig 4*)

**MARK IT** - To write down the lighting board dimmer positions and the volume control reading on sound control boards for music or sound effects or mics.

**MASK** - To obscure from the audience view.

**MASKING** - (*or MASK*) Common name for a flat, drape or groundrow or set piece used to mask area of the stage from the audience.

**MIC** - Abbreviation for microphone.

**NON-DIM CIRCUIT** - A circuit supplying power through a switch rather than a dimmer control unit.

**OFF STAGE** - Area outside the performance area such as the wings.

**ON STAGE** - 1) Performance area visible to the audience. 2) A call to come on stage.

**ORCHESTRA** - Refers to entire lower floor of the auditorium.

**ORCHESTRA PIT** - Sunken area immediately in front of the apron, intended to accommodate an orchestra. Frequently can be raised or lowered.

**PARABOLIC REFLECTORS** - A reflector designed to reflect light from its focal point into parallel rays.

**PIN RAIL** - A rail in which belaying pins are set for tying fly lines.

**PIN SPOT** - A spotlight set as a special purpose light with focus narrowed to cover a small area.

**PLANO-CONVEX** - (*p.c.*) Light lens flat on one side and convex on the other. Gives sharp or hard edged light. (*see fig 5*)

**POOL** - An area covered by light from an overhead spotlight.

**POT** - (*short for potentiometer*) A small, variable resistance control similar to a radio volume control used with some lighting and sound systems. Most new systems use slider controls rather knobs.

**PRACTICAL** - Any set piece, prop, capable of being used. e.g. light switch, telephone bell, door, window, etc.

**PRESET** - 1) Set-up of scenery and/or lights prior to start of the show; 2) set-up behind a masking piece prior to being used by the performer or seen by the audience; 3) a method of setting light intensity levels for one or more scenes in advance.

**PROPERTIES** - (*props*) Stage furniture, set dressing; all articles used by performers (*hand props*).

**PROSCENIUM** - (*proscenium arch*) The frame separating the stage from the audience.

**QUARTZ-IODINE** - (*quartz-halogen*) A small, long life lamp.

**RAILS** - Top and bottom cross piece on a flat.

**RAKE** - to set a prop or set piece at an acute angle to the edge of the stage.

**RISER** - An elevation or platform.

**ROUNDEL** - (*rondel*) A round, heat resistant glass, coloured filter for certain types of strip or border lights.

**RUN** - Length of time a show is performing.

**RUN THROUGH** - An uninterrupted rehearsal of a scene, a reading or an entire show.

**SAND BAG** - Canvas bag filled with sand, varying in size and weight, used to weight unused fly lines, jacks or other scenery pieces.

**SATURATED COLOUR** - Undiluted hue or pure colour.

**SCENE** - A division of a play or subdivision of an act usually indicating a time lapse or location change or both.

**SCOOP** - A large, soft flood light with spun aluminium, parabolic reflectors and no outside housing or lens. Usually uses 300 to 500 watt lamps.

**SCRIM** - A loosely woven material somewhat resembling cheese cloth and used on stage as a special effects drop. If light is shone on the front and no lights are up behind it, the scrim becomes opaque. When lights are up behind it and out on the front the scrim becomes transparent. Also called Gauze or Bobbinet.

**SET PIECE** - Any free standing scenery.

**SHEAVE** - (*pulley*) The grooved wheel of a block used to on a grid for flying scenery.

**SIGHT LINES** - Lines of vision from the extreme positions in an auditorium to the stage.

**SMOKE POCKETS** - Metal groves or troughs in which the fire curtain slides.

**SNOW CRADLE** - A long piece of slotted canvas or muslin with battens on either side hung in the form of a sling on two sets of lines and filled with snow material. Pulling on one set of lines releases the "snow" which falls through the slots in the canvas.

**SPECIAL** - A spotlight set for a specific purpose or area.

**SPIKE** - To mark a spot where a particular prop or set piece will be placed.

**SPIKE MARKS** - Marks on the floor to give exact position of furniture, props or set.

**SPILL** - Stray beams of light striking stage or auditorium.

**SPOT** - 1) Abbreviation for spot light. 2) To focus a spot light or follow spot on a performer or other element.

**STAGE BRACE** - An adjustable piece of stage equipment that fits into a brace cleat to support scenery.

**STAGING** - The direction of a performance including, lights, sound, props, set, performers moves, etc.

**STAND** - (*standard*) A pipe or metal base used to support light instruments.

**STILE** - The vertical side pieces of a flat.

**STRAW** - Straw coloured gel.

**STRIKE** - To remove a set piece (*strike the chair*) or to remove the entire set and props from the stage.

**STRIP LIGHTS** - Trough of lights usually with three different circuits and with gel frames or glass roundel filters.

**TABS** - Drapery legs used as wings.

**TEASER** - Border or draperies, hung in flies downstage, forming (*with tormentors*) an inner frame for the stage or simply masking fly bars and equipment.

**TEASER BATTEN** - First pipe or first border. Pipe batten hung close to teaser and act curtain (*mains*) and used for lighting instruments.

**TECH REHEARSAL** - (*technical rehearsal*) First rehearsal during which lights are set and focused and light and sound levels are determined, and scene changes and special effects are rehearsed and timed, etc.

**THROW** - Distance between the lighting instrument and the subject or area to be lit.

**TORMENTOR** - 1) A masking piece used to terminate the downstage wall of a set on each side of the stage; 2) or to form an inner frame (*inner proscenium*) so that the action can be set further upstage.

**TRAVELLER** - A track used for hanging draw curtains (*curtain often referred to as a traveller*).

**TRIM** - The height to which a piece of scenery or stage equipment will be flown.

**TURNTABLE** - A revolving stage or stage piece.

**UPSTAGE** - That part of the stage closest to the back wall or cyc. (*see fig 1*)

**UPSTAGING** - When a performer moves upstage forcing other performers to perform with their backs to the audience; also refers to scenic effects or pieces that upstage the performers due to their colour, brightness, or action, usurping the attention of the audience.

**VALANCE** - A border or teaser on stage.

**VELOURS** - Curtains hung both to mask the back stage area and to shape the on stage area. Also called Blacks.

**WASH LIGHT** - Lighting instrument used in a wide focus for general coverage and to provide fill light.

**WINGS** - 1) Off stage area, out of sight of the audience; 2) flats or drapes on either side of the stage, running parallel with the apron and used to mask off-stage areas.

**WORK LIGHTS** - (*works*) Light controlled independently of the dimmer board used for rehearsal or for working backstage when an audience is in the house and the mains are close.

**XENON LAMP** - A very high intensity arc lamp.

**X-RAY** - Large, compartmentalised border lights, using 300 watt to 1000 watt lamps and equipped with gel frames. Also called First border, teaser border or concert border.

**YOKE** - U-shaped hangers for spotlights, which bolt to the spotlight housing on each side.

**ZOOM FOLLOW SPOT** - Century Strand 1000 watt tungsten-halogen lamp follow spot on a swivel for throws of up to 80 feet.

Contributed by Elie Savoie, 2002