



KeyWords

(Drama Specific Language)

Key words and terms - listed alphabetically - which will help in your understanding of all things dramatic!!!

Accent - particular sound made in pronouncing words which suggests the place or background of the speaker.

Agitprop - theatre where the main function is to make a political point, to address a perceived social wrong, or to create a change in society through influencing large numbers of people. The name "agitprop" comes from the words "agitation" and "propaganda". It was linked with the "Workers' Theatre Movement" in Germany and Russia in the late 1920s and 1930s and had very specific intentions for its audience. It wanted to move away from traditional play audiences, the rich and the comfortable, and to reach the masses of the workers. Its intention was to give a more robust and realistic view of life and of social issues. It went out to its audiences, whether they were on the street corner, in the park or in their workplace. It had a very direct approach to the audience so that they felt a part of what was happening, and that the actors understood they were suffering.

Allegory - a story or picture in which the meaning is represented through symbols.

Attack - term used informally to describe strong delivery of speech on stage.

Black comedy - gets its humour from the macabre and gruesome.

Blocking - organization of movements on the stage.

Brecht - drama practitioner (playwright) who rejected Stanislavski's viewpoint as being a means of hypnotizing the audience, taking away their capacity to think and act, and not allowing them to make up their own minds. Brecht was of the opinion that the audience should view what was happening as a spectator, remaining detached, looking on rather than looking in. His audience should sympathize but not empathize: understand but not become involved.

Character - part being played in a drama / a role created by an actor or writer as part of a presentation, which will be exemplified by external physical features and internal motivation. The character may be defined by, for example, his/her status, class, beliefs, personality, history, job and attitude.

Chorus - one or more characters who comment on the action.

Comedy of manners - gets its humour from observation of the way characters behave. It is usually set in a historical period when there may have been strict rules of social behaviour.

Commedia dell'Arte - mainly improvised drama (developed in Italy in the 16th century) which has stock characters and uses masks. It also involves tumbling and other skills of a physical nature.

Designer - the person who creates an overall "look" for the piece of drama, including consideration of set, costume, lighting, make-up, sound, props and furniture.

Dialogue - any speech on stage.

Director - the person with overall guidance of a piece of drama towards its conclusion in performance.

Documentary theatre - drama which looks at historical events, significant people from the past and issues of the day that may cause comment or concern. This style of drama sometimes uses authentic press cuttings, perhaps people's speeches, and genuine factual information to develop dialogue and design elements.

Duologue - speech between two characters.

Dramatic irony - refers to the audience knowing something that the characters do not.

Dynamic - relationship between two or more things or people.

Empathy - sense of being able to "put yourself in someone else's shoes".

Emphasis - added strength given to a word, sound or action.

Evaluation - reflection about the success of a piece of work.

Entrance/Exit/Exeunt - point or place where an actor enters or leaves.

Exploration - development of ideas through questioning and trying out possibilities.

Fourth wall - the invisible wall between the stage and the audience. The audience can peep in and see what is going on on the stage but the actors do not take any notice of the audience and do not acknowledge their presence in any way.

High comedy - sophisticated and usually set in high social class situations, where the comedy comes from detail of characterization, the cleverness of the language and use of wit.

History plays - plays which tell a tale of or from a historical period.

Hot-seating - technique whereby actors are questioned in role about their behaviour etc.

Improvisation - developing drama from initial stimulus, usually without script.

Interpretation - particular belief/decision about the way a text should be performed.

Low comedy - in this type of drama there is a reliance on the vulgar and the coarse; the comedy is unlikely to come about through clever wit or detailed characterization, but through obvious means like clowning and crude jokes.

Melodrama - highly- stylized and sentimental drama/ comedy where the actors over- act and shout and declaim, and no-one really takes it seriously.

Mime - non-speaking movement work.

Minimalist - drama with few props and little set or scenery.

Monologue - single speech by one character.

Montage - a series or collection of stage pictures, often used when showing a series of events where the spectacle is as important as the characters, or as the plot, if there is any.

Narrative - story or plot.

Physical - relating to body or movement work.

Pace - speed

Pitch - level.....high or low as in music

Plot - story or narrative.

Polished Improvisation - when a piece of improvised drama has been rehearsed several times over, each time trying to improve the outcome, and is then ready for presentation.

Promenade Theatre - a type of staging where the audience walks around from one set to another, or follows the actors as they move from one location to another ... often outdoors.

Prop - object used on stage.

Prose - continuous text.... not verse.

Restoration plays - plays from the era of King Charles II which have very specific features, usually related to the comedy of manners (see above).

Ritual - presentation developed over time of religious or cultural concerns.

Romantic comedy - although usually applied to plays where the subject is love and it all ends happily, it can also be applied to plays where sentiment is at the core, and even to plays that have high imaginative content.

Satire - the use of ridicule, irony or sarcasm to expose foolishness or wrong-doing, or to send up or make fun of an individual. It is often used to make fun of political characters.

Sight lines - view from various angles of the stage or the actors.

Soliloquy - single speech by one character to themselves or god.

Stage directions - notes for actors or directors regarding where and when the cast enter, leave etc.

Stanislavski - drama practitioner (playwright) who wanted his audience to identify with his characters. He wanted his audiences to see the play as a snapshot of real life. The expression "the fourth wall" is often used to describe this concept (see above). The drama is devised so that the audience empathizes with what is going on - they are able to identify with the characters, feel what they are feeling, cry when they cry.

Status - level of power.

Story board - set of drawn images used to describe a story.

Stress - emphasis on sounds or words.

Symbol - object which suggests or represents an idea or set of ideas.

Tableau - group of performers creating a frozen picture.

Theatre in the Round - sometimes known as "Arena". A method of staging where the performance space is in the centre of the audience and is surrounded by them on all sides. The shape may be circular or square - indeed any shape.

Thrust stage - stage surrounded on three sides by audience.

Tragedy - drama that has a serious subject, with a sad, unhappy or disastrous ending/ classically a story in which a great person is brought down by a fault in their character.

Verse - lines laid out as poetry; as opposed to prose.