

## The Performance Space

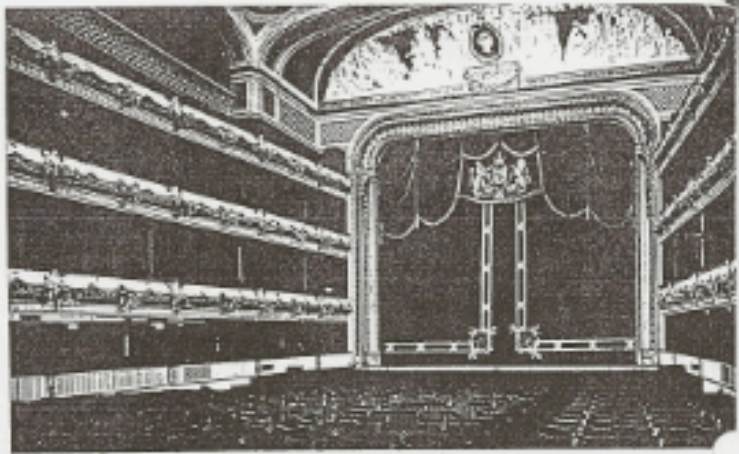
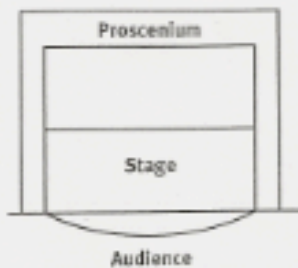
One of the first and most important steps in your training as director or producer—or as an actor, designer, technician, or writer for the theatre—is understanding the nature of the performance space.

Theatre is defined by three things: a story to tell, performers to tell it, and an audience to respond to it. That means theatre can happen any time or any place those three things come together. In fact, the times and places where theatre happens vary widely, as illustrated here.

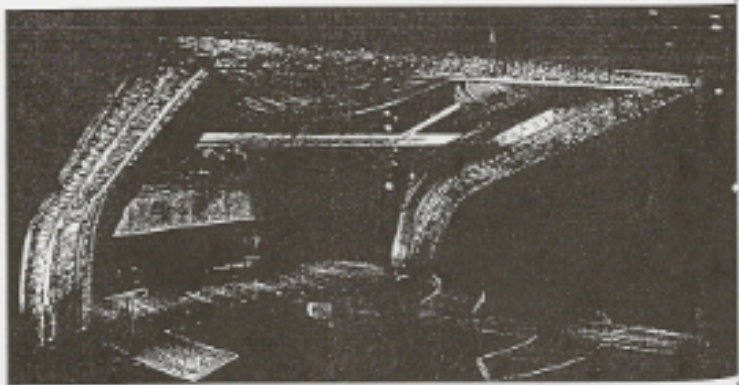


## Types of Stages

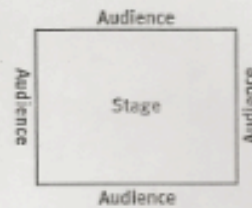
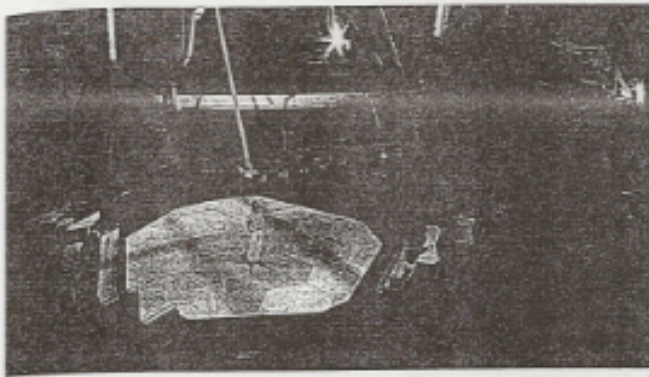
The performance space influences practically all decisions made in the production of a play, including the selection of the play to be produced. As a director or producer, you must be aware of the performance space that you have to work with, of its potentials and limitations. You must know, in addition, something about performance spaces in general. Ordinarily, they are classified according to where the audience sits in relation to the performers.



A **proscenium stage** is like a picture frame. The audience sits on one side to watch the action through the frame. Often, curtains hide the scenery until the play begins.



A **thrust stage** is a combination of the proscenium and the arena stages. The audience sits on two or three sides of the acting area, which projects, or thrusts, into the audience area from a rear wall, which has some kind of scenery. The actors enter and exit through the audience, as in an arena stage and also through doors in the rear-wall scenery.



An **arena stage** is sometimes called **in-the-round** because the audience is all around it. The actors enter and exit from the aisles or sometimes from tunnels under the audience.

## Theatre Space Layout and Terms

No matter what the type of stage, most of the terms used for the stage and audience areas are the same. To be able to communicate effectively and efficiently as a director or producer, you must understand the general layout of the entire theatre space and the terms that describe it.

### The Lobby

This is the area where the audience gathers before and after performances and during breaks. The **box office**, where playgoers can buy tickets, is usually located in the lobby. Theatre business personnel often have their offices attached to this part of the theatre.

### The Auditorium/House

The auditorium, or the area where the audience sits—no matter how it is arranged—is called the **house**. In many theatres, the down-front seats nearest the stage are called the **orchestra**. The **orchestra pit** is the area for musicians; it may extend underneath the stage. In some theatres, there are one or more **balconies**, projecting upper floors, with more audience seating. A lower balcony is often called a **mezzanine**.

At the rear of the house or the top of the balcony may be located a **light booth** or **sound booth**, or both, to house the technicians who control the lights, music, or special sound effects. In many theatres, these controls are in the backstage area.



## SUMMARY: TYPES OF THEATRICAL SPACES

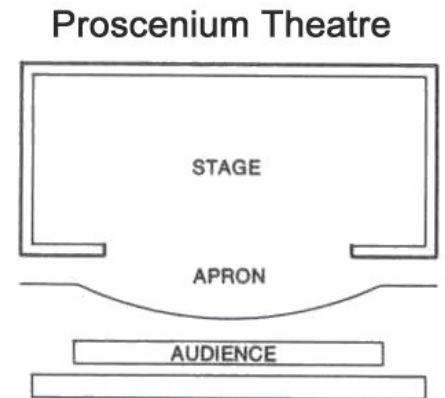
The type of theatre space influences the staging of the play.

### PROSCENIUM STAGE

The proscenium stage is like a picture frame a curtain may be used for scene shifts audience sits on one side.

Actors use stage right (SR) stage left (SL) and upstage areas (UL, UC, UR) for entrances occasionally this stage has a small apron.

This stage works well with both multiple sets and unit sets. Multiple sets are easier to shift or fly on this stage the stage can handle a larger cast.

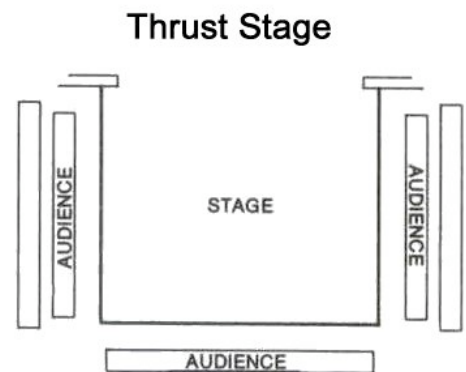


### THRUST STAGE

Downstage (D) area expands the apron so audience sits on three sides. Stage area includes both expanded apron and upstage (U).

Actors may enter from the same aisles the audience uses as well as UL, UR, and UC.

This stage offers both an intimate style and flexible stage. Multiple stage sets are possible and cast size may be large or small.

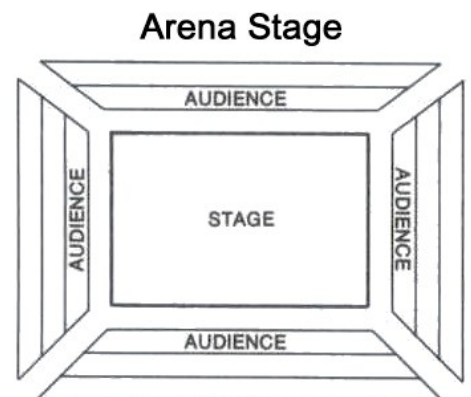


### ARENA STAGE OR THEATRE IN THE ROUND

Audience sits on all four sides of the stage. Actors enter down the same aisles the audience uses

This stage works well with an intimate feel, a smaller cast, and a limited number of set pieces.

Scene changes for this set are usually limited because it clutters the stage and blocks the audiences' view.



### FLEXIBLE OR ENVIRONMENTAL STAGE

Can take many forms

The audience and performers can remain separate or be intermingled

The configuration of the stage can change during the course of the performance

Source:

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