

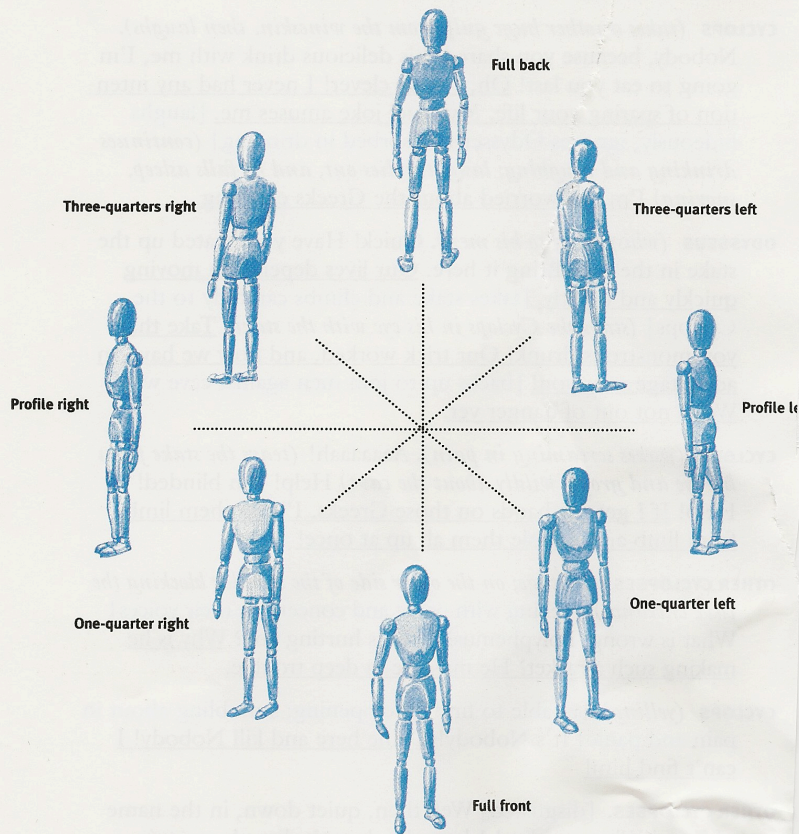
## Stage Movement Basics

Once you have developed a character, you need to be able to move your character effectively around the performance space. Movement onstage consists of a few basic actions: entering, exiting, standing, sitting, reclining, gesturing, turning, stopping, and **crossing**—or moving from one place to another.

To master the craft of acting and, ultimately, to connect with the audience, you need to learn some guidelines for stage movement. Keep in mind that these are only guidelines; your director or the needs of your character may require you to ignore them.

## Body Positions

As you prepare for work onstage, you will come to realize the importance of how your body is positioned in relation to the audience. This is especially challenging on a proscenium stage, where a specific terminology is used to identify conventional body positions.



## Focus and Body Positions

A strong body position can be used to instantly draw the audience's attention to a particular character. Full front is the most dominant stage position because the audience can see the actor's face. Three-quarters back is a weaker position since the audience sees little of the actor's face. In creating a stage picture remember how the actors' body positions influence audience focus.

Also remember that there are no absolutes in creating a stage picture. Many factors, including your experience and intuition, may influence your decisions about what is most effective. A play's style, for example, affects actors' body positions. Because realistic plays emphasize portraying an illusion of truth, they demand a more natural approach to stage pictures. In a realistic play a character at the center of action who maintains a full-front position may seem artificial or fake to the audience. In a less realistic play, such as those by Shakespeare, or a musical comedy, audiences don't expect to see real life. Because of such demands as singing or talking directly to the audience, more nonrealistic positions are acceptable.



The full-front position here in Molière's *Illusions* is accepted as a convention of plays written at the time.



## Dominant Stage Areas and Positions

Awareness of your position relative to other actors onstage is just as important as awareness of your position relative to the audience. The most dominant positions onstage are usually those that are the most open, such as full front. Certain stage areas also have dominance: center and downstage positions are strongest. A character framed by a doorway, window, or archway is also in a dominant position, as are those who are positioned at a higher level than others. When you are playing a scene, be conscious of what your position implies about your importance in the scene and about your relationship with the other actors.



## Sharing the Stage

One position commonly used for brief scenes between two actors onstage is the **shared position** in which one actor mirrors another actor's body position—usually at a one-quarter position. Both actors should be about the same distance from the audience, not one upstage of the other. When one actor is upstage of another on a proscenium stage, it is called **upstaging**. Upstaging forces the downstage actor to turn away from the audience to communicate with the upstage actor.



George Farquhar's *The Beaux' Strategem* (above), and Neil Simon's *Proposals* (left) each demonstrate use of the shared position.