

# GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

## KEY ELEMENTS OF THE STAGE MUSICAL

**Protagonist** - The main character within a narrative or story.

**Antagonist** - The character who opposes or is hostile towards the protagonist. This helps to create conflict within the story or play.

**Narrative** - The story or sequence of events.

**Acts** - A sequence of scenes that establish a major part of the narrative. In most musicals, there are two acts, separated by an interval.

**Backstory** - Events that have happened to the characters before we meet them on stage, often employed to lend depth and believability to the story and its characters.

**Genre** - The category of a piece of theatre or literature, for example musical theatre.

**Style** - The way in which a piece of theatre is performed, using commonly established theatrical conventions.

**Musical Comedy** - A genre of theatre that uses both music and humour to tell the story.

## DIRECTING

**Super objective** - The character's overarching goal in a scene, why they are there and what they are trying to achieve.

**Objective** - What the character wants or is trying to achieve from line to line within a scene. Characters must always be actively pursuing their objectives and can employ a range of actions to achieve these objectives.

**Actions** - Transitive verbs allocated to each line of a scene to guide an actor's vocal delivery and help them achieve their objective. For example, 'I WARN you' or 'I FLATTER you.'

**Status** - The level of power or influence a character has relative to another character in their scene.

**Characterisation** - Vocal, physical or gestural choices used by an actor to help define their character.

## ACTING TECHNIQUES - VOICE

**Tone** - The mood or emotional quality of the voice which helps to colour an actor's dialogue and vocal choices.

**Pitch** - How high or low a character's voice is.

**Pace** - The speed at which a single actor speaks or at which dialogue flows between multiple actors.

**Pause** - A moment of silence within a scene, often used for dramatic effect.

**Projection** - The act of making your voice louder and clearer so that everyone in the audience can hear, regardless of their proximity.

**Emphasis** - The stress or weight an actor puts on a particular word or phrase within a sentence to indicate importance.

**Accent** - A way of speaking and pronouncing words specific to a particular region or group.

**Dialect** - A form of language specific to a particular region or group.

## ACTING TECHNIQUES - MOVEMENT

**Physicality** - The way a character moves onstage.

**Gait** - The manner in which a character walks or moves their body as they pass through a space.

**Posture** - A character's physical alignment.

**Gesture** - Movements of the hands and arms to communicate meaning or attitude.

**Centre of gravity** - A hypothetical point around which the force of gravity appears to act on any given character which helps to define characterisation.

## MUSIC

**Leitmotif** - Commonly used within film music, leitmotifs are intentionally repeated, recurring aural themes associated with a particular person, idea, or action.

**Diatonic** - Music that uses notes from a particular scale with no deviation from this scale. For example, using only notes from the C Major scale within a piece that is written in C Major.

**Tempo** - The speed at which a piece of music is played.

## THEATRE DESIGN - LIGHTING

**Lanterns** - The technical term used for stage lights

**Cues** - The moment at which the lighting changes from one state to the next. Lighting operators will use a 'cue sheet' to guide them through the show, instructing them when to transition the lights from one state to the next.

**Direction** - The direction from which the light is illuminating the actor. For example, light originating from behind the actor will create a silhouette.

**Practicals** - A light source that is on the stage and is therefore part of the practical environment of the show, for example table or wall lamps that form part of the set.

**LEDs** - Light Emitting Diodes, a modern and low energy form of stage lighting which is increasingly replacing traditional filament lanterns.

**Moving heads** - A type of intelligent lighting which is not fixed, but can move and rotate. Lighting designers can programme these lights to move automatically to different areas of the stage within a performance.

**Spotlight** - A type of lantern with a hard edge used to illuminate specific characters or elements on the stage and direct audience focus.

**Slow fade** - A gradual increase or decrease of the intensity of light.

**Blackout** - The absence of any light on stage.

**Cross fade** - Moving gradually between two lighting states.

**Floods** - Lanterns with a wide angle that flood the stage with light.

**Gobo** - A metal disc with a stencil pattern cut into it. When placed in front of a lantern, the shape of the gobo is visible on stage.

## SET

**Sightlines** - An imaginary line between the eyes of the audience and the actors. Designers will consider sightlines in their stage design, to ensure that the audience can see the actors regardless of where they are sitting in the auditorium.

**Scrim/gauze** - A coarsely woven piece of material which can appear translucent or opaque depending on how it is lit. It can be used to create shadows or to reveal something behind the screen to the audience.

**Colour** - The colour of the set, which can often be used to create symbolic meaning.

**Condition** - The condition of the set or furniture (for example, an item of scenery may be distressed or pristine) which can often imply important information about the setting.

**Scale** - Using size, angle and positioning to alter the audience's sense of perspective. For example, a designer may alter the size of an object to make it seem closer or further away.

**Revolve** - A turntable built into the stage on which two or more sets are constructed. This can speed up scene changes as the stage revolves and the new set is revealed.

**Wings** - The areas at the side of the stage that allow actors to enter and exit.

**Projections** - Image or videos projected onto surfaces or screens within the set.

**Set dressing** - Small items added to a set to make it appear more real or 'lived in'.

## COSTUME

**Colour palette** - A selection of colours that are put together by the costume designer for the actors' costumes. Effective colour palettes can often be used to complement the overall look of the show or suggest information about the character wearing them.

**Shape/silhouette** - The outline that the costume gives to the actor wearing it.

**Fabric** - The material the costume is made from.

**Texture** - The quality of the fabric. For example, smooth silk or coarse hessian.

## SOUND

**Sound effects** - Live or pre-recorded sounds within a performance.

**Diegetic** - Sound that is within the context of the story and that the characters can hear. For example, a doorbell or a song on the radio.

**Non-diegetic** - Sound that is not heard by the characters but has been added to enhance the atmosphere or create meaning for the audience.