

P

PA -- short for public address system

pacing -- rate of performance. Speed is not the only factor of pacing; equally important are intensity, precision, clarity, and frequency of new impressions.

pad -- add lines to a script

pageant -- any elaborate display, often outdoors dealing in a historical or religious presentation

painter's elevation -- a copy of the front elevation which has been rendered to indicate the color and painting techniques which are to be applied to the final set.

paint shop -- where scenery is painted and otherwise decorated

pan -- move side to side, as a lighting instrument or a camera

pancake -- base makeup put on with a wet sponge which does not require powdering

pantomime -- significant physical activity without words.

paper tech -- informal sessions scheduled with the set, lighting, and sound designers to discuss specific cues and desired effects. The stage managers should be present at these sessions.

paper the house -- a large number of tickets given out free or at reduced prices to bring in a large audience

parabasis -- a Greek word for the choral ode in which the audience is addressed directly

parabolic reflector -- the shape of a reflector found in striplight units and in spotlights which sends beams of light out from the lamp in straight lines to a point of focus

PAR can -- a very simple lighting instrument, basically an automobile headlight in a metal housing

parody -- a play which is a humorous or satirical imitation of a serious piece

partial set -- simple set pieces, fragmentary sets, screens or skeletal scaffolding in front of curtains, draperies, or the back wall of the stage

pas de deux -- dance for two people

passion play -- represents the passion of Christ

pastiche -- a dramatic piece imitating the work of another writer, usually as a parody

pastoral -- scenes or settings that take place in the countryside, which often is idealized, and is in general peopled by shepherds and country folk.

patch panel -- where electrical circuits are assigned to dimmers

patter song -- show tune which requires singing many words quickly

pentameter -- rhythm of verse with five stresses.

personal props -- props that are carried during a performance, such as guns, cigarettes, and letters

personification -- turning all kinds of things - death, time, war, love, animals - into persons, giving them human feelings and attributes.

perspective -- the artist's trick that makes a two-dimensional space look three-dimensional; the old "train tracks converging in the distance" thing

phony -- unbelievable, not genuine.

phrase -- 1) a group of words that contains a thought; 2) small part, typically two to four measures, of a melody; 3) small series of dance movements

physical activity -- the physical movement or business that the actor chooses to do in a scene.

psychological state of mind -- the inner feelings that force the character to behave.

pick up -- to speed up or shorten the time between a cue and the next line

picture rail -- a length of wood fastened between the rails at the back of a flat on which a screw is inserted to hang a picture

picturization -- the visual interpretation of a play by the audience in which actors are placed in such a way so as to suggest their mental attitudes without having to say anything to reveal their dramatic relationships to one another

pilot light -- a light on the outside of a control board indicating that a circuit is turned on

pin rail -- fixed beam of steel, placed in the fly loft or on the stage floor at one side of the stage, to which are attached the lines that are used to raise and lower scenery or drops

pinspot -- to narrow the beam of a follow-spot

pipe-ends -- lighting instruments hanging at the ends of electric cables; usually focused across the stage and used for side light

pit -- area immediately below the stage which is usually lower than the auditorium level; used primarily by the stage orchestra

places -- a call to the actors to get ready as the curtain is about to go up

plagiarize -- to copy the work of another writer and claim it as one's own

plant -- work, object, or idea deliberately set in to the action of the play by either the playwright or the director so that the audience is led to expect some further development from it later on

platform -- any horizontal playing surface, or a piece thereof

platform stage -- a stage raised above the audience area, which is placed at one end of a room

playbill -- a program usually containing information about the play, cast, crew, supporters, and advertisers

playing space -- the amount of room available onstage for the performance; does not include wing space, storage, or any part of the stage that is not visible to the audience

play up -- to emphasize some aspect of a play

playwright -- person who writes or adapts properties known as plays; in most traditions, the first and most creative artist of all those who collaborate to make theatre. It is the playwright's property that stimulates the impetus for a full-fledged production. In musicals, the writers include the writers of the music, the lyrics, and the book.

plot -- the story line of a play developed through a logical unfolding of a series of events; also indicated a very detailed layout of lighting, properties, etc.

poetic drama -- written in verse form providing a greater economy than prose in utilizing imagery

polishing rehearsal -- a rehearsal that concentrates on pacing: the perfection of timing (the overall rate and speed in handling lines and business) and tempo (the rhythm) of a production

portal -- the archway formed by two legs and a border

practical -- able to be operated, like a window or a faucet; also used to describe a "real" lamp or other lighting fixture on a set

pratfall -- fall on the buttocks

pre-casting -- selecting actors for parts before auditions are held

premiere -- first official public performance of a show

preproduction -- the time period before actors have rehearsal and before the shops have begun to build the show

presentational plays -- plays which are presented to the audience as the actors work directly to the crowd much of the time with little attempt at illusion

preset -- on a manual lighting control board, a row of sliders that controls all of the dimmers; also used to describe the position of a prop at the beginning of a performance

preview performance -- special performance aimed at helping the director to judge the response of the audience once the play is open to the public. Usually, audience members are especially invited to preview performances, however, some commercial theaters attract preview audiences with reduced admissions.

prima donna -- any conceited or temperamental performer

principals -- those playing the lead and principal supporting roles in a play

producer -- practical visionary of a theater company (like a chairman of the board or president of a corporation) whose primary responsibility is to secure rights to the script, establish the budget for the production, raise money, lease an appropriate theater space, and draw together the artistic leadership. Working with the producer is a legal counselor and an accountant.

production -- the time period during which the actors are rehearsing and the shops are building the show

production manager -- the person in charge of the technical side of the production; generally, the technical director and the stage manager report to this person

production meeting -- a meeting of production staff to discuss items of mutual interest

production number -- large showtune with lots of singers and dancers, spectacular scenery, beautiful costumes and effective lighting

production rights -- permission granted to perform copyrighted pieces of dramatic literature

profile left -- performer faces left with his/her profile (that is, the right side of the body) to the audience

profile right -- performer faces right with his/her profile to the audience

progression -- a play moving forward toward its final climax

project -- the process of intensifying speech and actions so that everyone in the audience can clearly understand the action of the play

projected scenery -- projection of film, slides or television pictures onto a surface to serve as part of the scenery

projection -- actor's technique for making voice, movements, and gestures clear to all parts of the house

prologue -- speech or a short scene preceding the main action of the play that sets a mood and defines or defends the script

promenade theater -- theater space where there is no designated seating space but where the audience moves to whatever position allows them to follow the action, which is also moving. It is designed to create a feeling of drama as a community experience.

prompt book -- copy of the script in which all information, including the blocking, is recorded that is essential for the production of the show

prompt corner (Stage Manager's desk) -- downstage left or right stage from which the stage manager □calls□ the show

prompter -- person who holds the prompt book offstage during rehearsals and performances and provides lines to forgetful performers

prop carpenter -- the shop carpenters who build furniture and other props

prop designer -- the person who selects, designs, and finds the props

prop list -- the master list of all items that could be considered props

prop room -- a room backstage where the props are stored

prop table -- the table backstage where handheld props are put when they are not being used onstage

property/prop -- article or object that is carried by performers or is used on the set

props crew -- the people backstage who get the props in the right hands at the right times during the performance

proscenium arch -- wall forming a picturing frame separating the stage from the auditorium

proscenium stage -- □peep-hole□; picture-frame acting area with all of the audience sitting and facing the stage

prose -- all language not in verse; used typically for comedy, madness, low status characters, letters and proclamations; what is typically considered normal speech.

protagonist -- the main character or hero of a play

public domain -- an opera, play, musical, song, etc., that is not under copyright

pulled -- costumes taken from existing stock which may be used "as is" or remade according to the designer's specifications.

pun -- wordplay; when a word has two or more different meanings the ambiguity can be used for comic or serious effect.

punchline -- line that should get a laugh

purchase line -- in a flying system, the rope that the operator uses to move the scenery or lighting unit up and down during the performance