STAGE DIRECTIONS TYPES, AND POSITIONS VOCABULARY

• **Proscenium Stage**- A traditional stage that includes a proscenium arch. The audience sits on one side.
• **Arena Stage**- A theatre in the round. The stage is in the center with the audience sitting on all sides.
• **Thrust Stage**- A theatre where the front part of the stage juts out into the audience, similar to a runway. Audience sits on three sides.
• **Flexible Staging**- A theatre that can be changed to meet your needs, typically a black box theatre, but could include theatre in unconventional places.
• **Stage Directions**- Directions of where to be and go onstage. Always given from the point of view of the actor.
• **Stage Positions**- The position of the actors body in relation to the Audience
LESSON OBJECTIVES:

The Student will:

• Be able to identify all types of stages.

• Respond to stage directions appropriately.

• Choose and execute all body positions for the appropriate effect.
A proscenium stage is what most of us think of when we think of a stage. It includes a proscenium arch which creates the 4th wall. This is the invisible boundary that separates the performers from the audience. The audience only sits on one side of the stage.
Arena stages have people sitting on all sides of the stage. It creates an intimate space but creates problems for actors and the creative team because it is hard to control the sight lines, or what the audience can see. Why do you think this would this be a problem?
With a thrust stage the audience is seated on three sides of the stage, kind of like a runway. This space is generally considered more intimate than a proscenium stage, because the performers are closer to the audience. A thrust still has a backstage area attached to the stage unlike an arena stage.
Flexible Staging can take place at any location. You could choose to direct a play in a classroom, a mall, or a park. Most often you will see this kind of staging in a black box theatre, which is a room that is generally painted or draped in all black. This type of space can be turned into any type of stage the director and technical director can imagine.
THINK ABOUT IT!

Why are there so many types of stages?

If you were directing a play what kind of stage would you want to use and why?
## ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

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<tr>
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<th>Proscenium</th>
<th>Arena</th>
<th>Thrust</th>
<th>Flexible</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advantages</strong></td>
<td>Can accommodate large houses</td>
<td>Audience feels closer to the action (more intimate)</td>
<td>Still intimate but with a backstage area</td>
<td>Allows creative freedom</td>
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<td>Creates a distinct world of the play</td>
<td>Requires creative staging and design</td>
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<td><strong>Disadvantages</strong></td>
<td>Audience can feel removed</td>
<td>Sight lines can be problematic</td>
<td>Sightlines can still be an issue</td>
<td>Generally will not accommodate a large house</td>
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<td>It becomes necessary to “cheat things out”</td>
<td>No wings to mask actors, technicians, and set</td>
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When directors give you blocking they will use stage directions which are based on combinations of the following 5 terms: *upstage*, *downstage*, *stage left* and *stage right*, and *center*.

Stage directions are always given from the perspective of the actor onstage looking into the house. These typical stage directions are used in almost all theatres except arena stages, where other terms must be used, such as north south east and west or directions based on the hands of a clock.
A cross means to walk to the specified part of the stage. So, if I say cross to down left, that means walk from where you are to downstage left.

A counter means to walk the opposite way someone else is crossing. So if someone is crossing down left and I asked you to counter, I want you to cross the opposite direction so you will be out of the other actors way.
When you are onstage it is important that the audience can see and hear you. In order to choose the positions that are most appropriate for each moment onstage you must first be familiar with all of your options and the proper names for each position. When we talk about positions we are using a proscenium theatre as our reference point, as well as assuming that you are in the audience facing the stage, and the actors are onstage.
This is considered a strong position. Crusher is fully "open" to the audience. He can best be seen and heard by the audience. To "open" is to face toward the audience. Depending on the intent, this can mean to turn a little bit toward the audience or to face the audience in the "full front" position.
These positions are fairly open, and are also strong positions, though not as much as the full front position.

When two performers "share" a scene on stage, this is generally the position they will take. If they faced full front and talked to each other while looking straight out to the audience it would not look "natural". If they turned and faced each other directly (profile) they would look "natural" but they would not be seen or heard very well by the audience. So when two actors "share" a scene, they will usually assume the 1/4 position.

Although this position does not look totally natural, it is a theatre convention readily accepted by the audience. The trick is to be open enough to still be seen and heard well, but to be turned enough toward the other performer to appear to be looking at each other.
Profile is not a particularly strong position because the audience members in the far left or right of the audience area will only see the back of the performer who is facing away from them. They will also have a harder time hearing and understanding them.

Unless there is some specific dramatic reason you need to be in profile, you should strive for more "open" positions.
These are generally weak positions that should be avoided. Hardly anyone in the house can see the performers' faces decently and the performers are talking upstage into the wings. This makes it hard for the audience to hear the dialogue the performers spent weeks memorizing and rehearsing.

However, there are times when this position is affective.
This is by far the weakest position. No one can see the performers' faces and their lines are being said to the back wall. Unless you have a strongly compelling dramatic reason for the back wall to see and hear you, AVOID THIS POSITION.

This is only used for very specific reasons that apply to the particular show or scene.
These next few slides have pictures of people in the body positions we just reviewed. Can you name them?
At this point you should be able to answer:

- **Stage Types Essential Question:**
  What are the major differences in the construction of the 4 types of stages?

- **Stage Directions Essential Question:**
  When responding to stage directions, what is important to remember?

- **Stage Positions Essential Question:**
  What positions help open you up to the audience, and why is this important?
STAGE TYPES, DIRECTIONS AND POSITIONS PROJECT CHOICES:

Diorama
Create a diorama (model) of one of the types of stages. Make sure your presentation addresses the strengths and weaknesses of that type of stage.

Skit
Prepare a skit that uses each of the body positions and utilizes each of the parts of the stage. Your blocking must be written on your script in the appropriate stage directions.

Game
Create an original game that will help your classmates to remember stage directions/positions.

Be sure to include evidence of understanding by answering the essential questions!