



De's Dazzles – Top 10 Theater Terms

As Corning Opera House community theater actors prepare for a production of *Dearly Departed* on April 28 & 29, I thought this would be a great time to explain the Top 10 Theater Terms.

1. House has different meanings. One is the location, either the auditorium or the box office. Then there's "house seats", for special guests or Front of House manager, problem solver.
2. Proscenium arch separates the stage from the audience. For our auditorium, a small portion of the stage extends into the audience and has the original 1902 decorative wood symbolizing a picture frame.
3. Mezzanine is the second tier of seating or preferred seating for theater-goers because you are close to the action while taking in a more complete stage view. (Our horseshoe balcony.)
4. The balcony is the third tier of seating, located the farthest from the stage or more commonly known as the "cheap seats".
5. Peanut Gallery popular during vaudeville days, known for the cheapest and rowdiest seats, heckled performers and served the least expensive snack – peanuts. To show their disapproval of the performers these ticket buyers would throw peanuts at the stage.
6. Stage Directions, such as stage right or upstage are defined from the actor's viewpoint. Downstage is closest to the audience and Upstage is identifiable on our stage because people hike up the raked (sloped) floor.
7. Blocking starts with the first rehearsal. Blocking is the path the actors take onstage, such as what side of the stage they enter from, where they sit/stand. This is not changed without director approval.
8. Tech Rehearsal is an amazingly stressful part of the whole process. Typically, it runs for 6 to 10 hours in one day. Backstage crew learn when and where set pieces belong on the stage, lights and sound effects are added, and prop locations are defined. You never touch anyone else's prop (items that are held in your hands).
9. Strike means to take down the set pieces when the production has finished. Dismantle all walls, doors, windows, cupboards, wheels, nails, etc. & remove them from the stage.
10. Ghost Light is a single exposed bulb left on stage. For practical purposes, it allows a person to find light switches. Because theater is always moving furniture/equipment, the stage is never the same, so it prevents tripping. Some say it keeps ghosts away. You pick.

I hope this helps your understanding and hopefully we will see you in the HOUSE! Corning Opera House, that is!

Sincerely,

De Heaton, Executive Director 4/6/2023