

DRAMA DEPARTMENT

SKILLS and TECHNIQUES



RELATIONSHIPS

Work out what you want to show the audience about your characters relationship with the others on stage.



Are they close or distant?

Are there underlying tensions?

Do they know each other?

Do they trust each other?

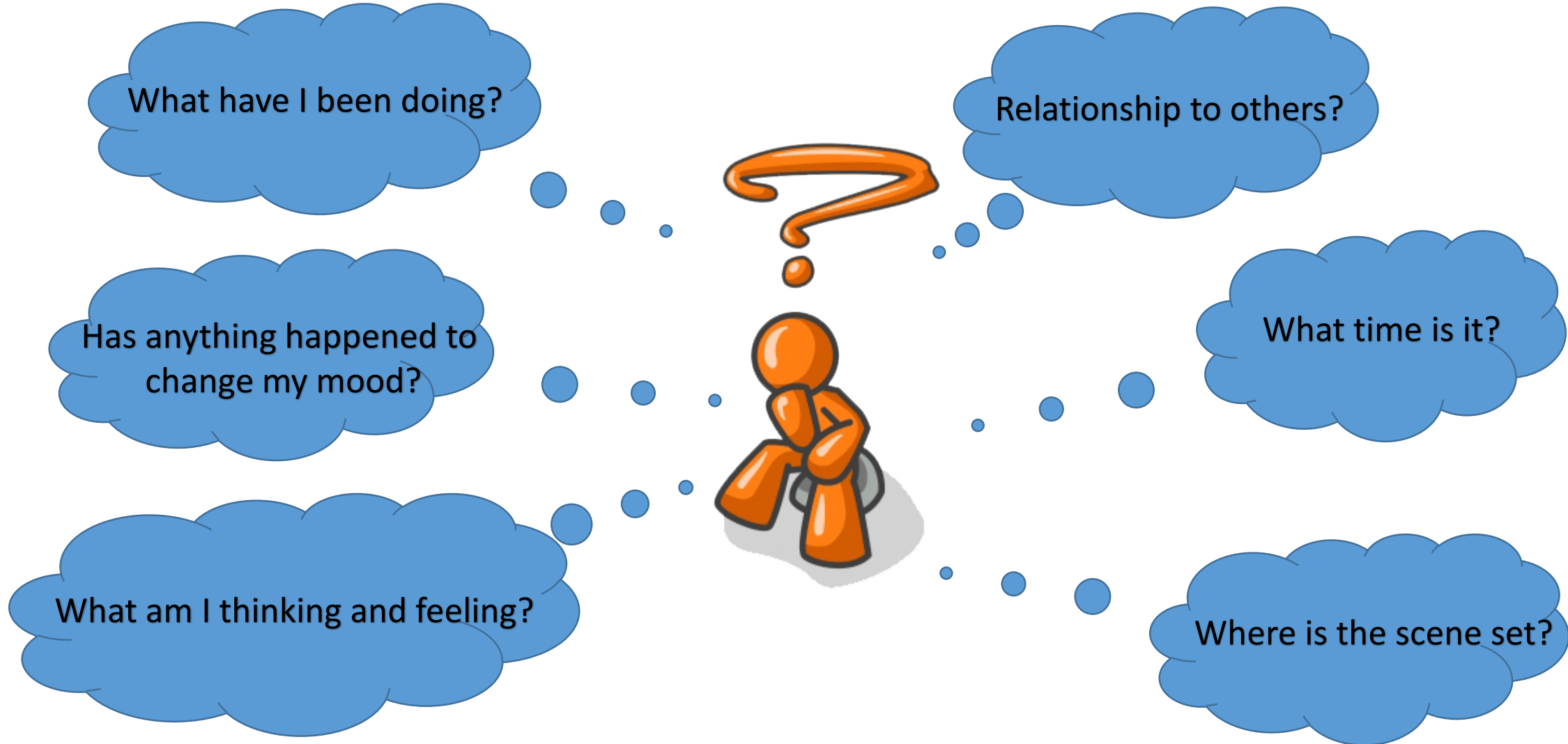
What are they thinking/feeling?

Which character has the most authority/status/power?

Are they happy/sad/angry/scared of/with each other?

CONTEXT OF THE SCENE

This helps build up a picture of how a character should be behaving on stage. Questions to ask:



THE BASICS

Use acting skills to portray the characters feelings, motivation and relationships.

Eye Contact
Movement
Proxemics
Body Language

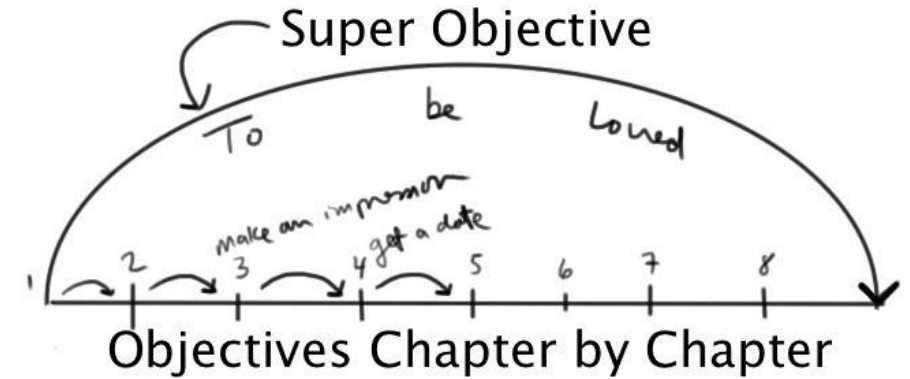


Gesture
Facial Exp.
Voice
Levels

OBJECTIVES & SUPER OBJECTIVES

OBJECTIVES: The point of a character in a specific scene. WHY are they there and WHAT are they doing?

SUPER OBJECTIVES: The point of a character in the whole play.



Why is this an important technique to use and how would an actor find it useful?

MOTIVATION

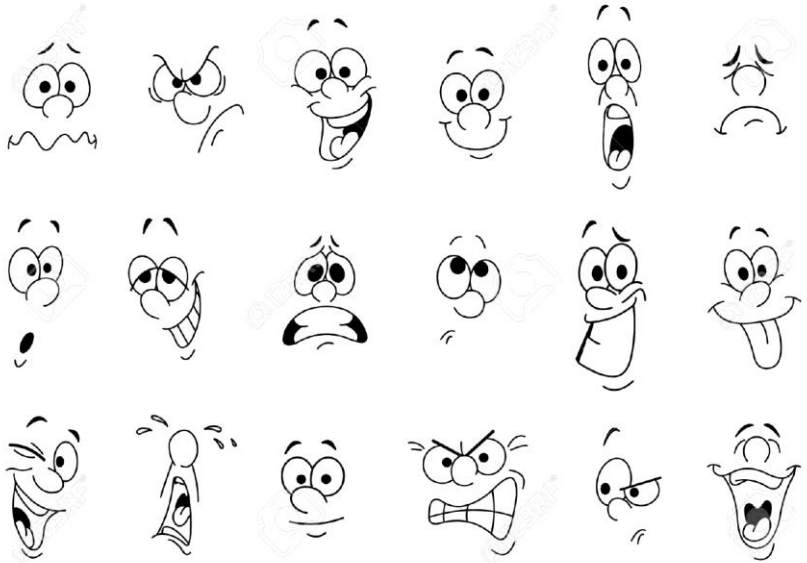
List all the things that could motivate someone to walk out of a room:



© 2010 David Endelman

The thing that makes your character say/do something in a scene. This gives them a **REASON** for doing something and will make the performance more believable and realistic.

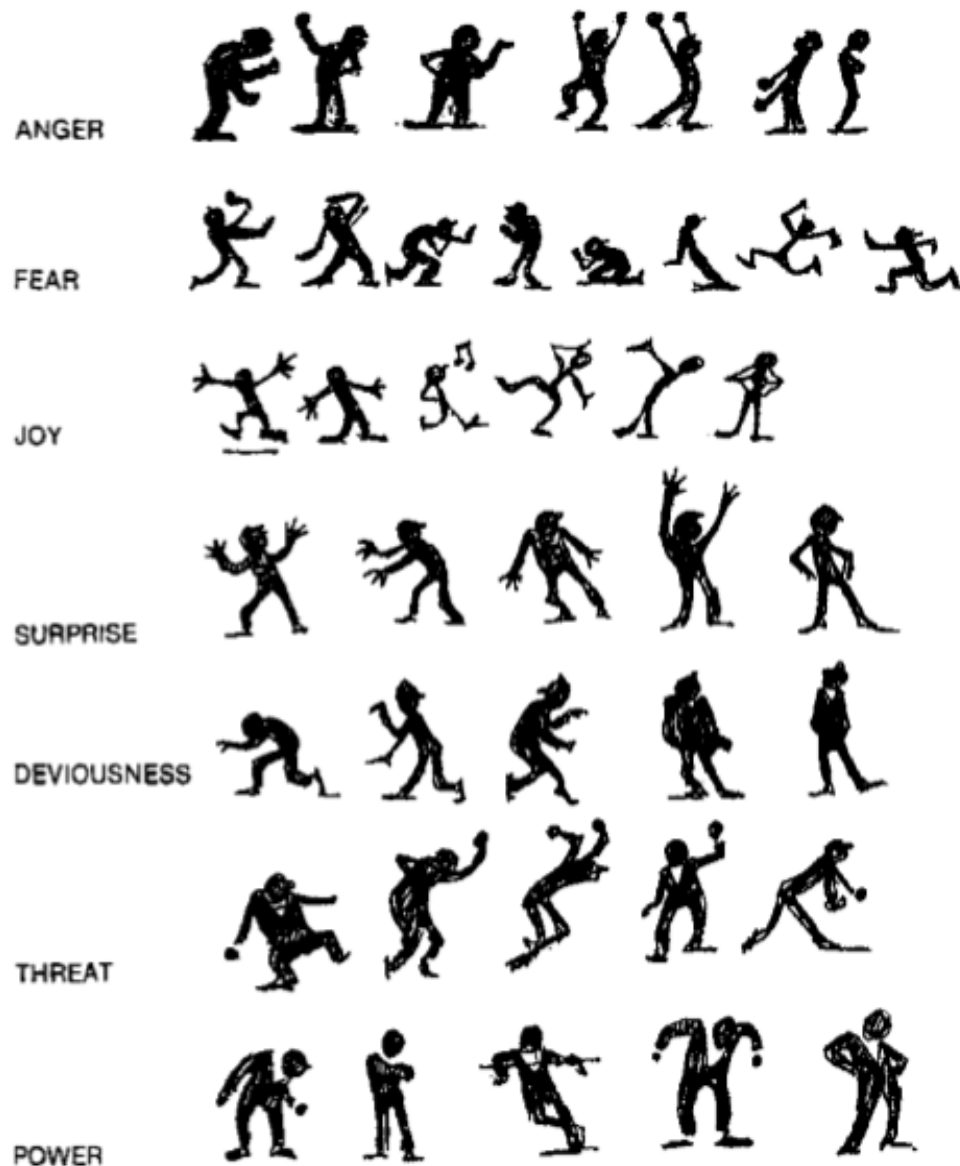
FACIAL EXPRESSIONS



Show the thoughts, feelings and emotions of the characters you are portraying. Make them larger than life so the audience can see what you are doing, especially if they are long way back in the auditorium.

Why would you use this in a performance?:

A large, empty rectangular box with rounded corners, intended for a student to write their answer to the question "Why would you use this in a performance?:".



BODY LANGUAGE

The use of GESTURE, STANCE, LEVELS to communicate the emotions/feelings of your character in a scene. This will communicate your characters personality, mood and situation.

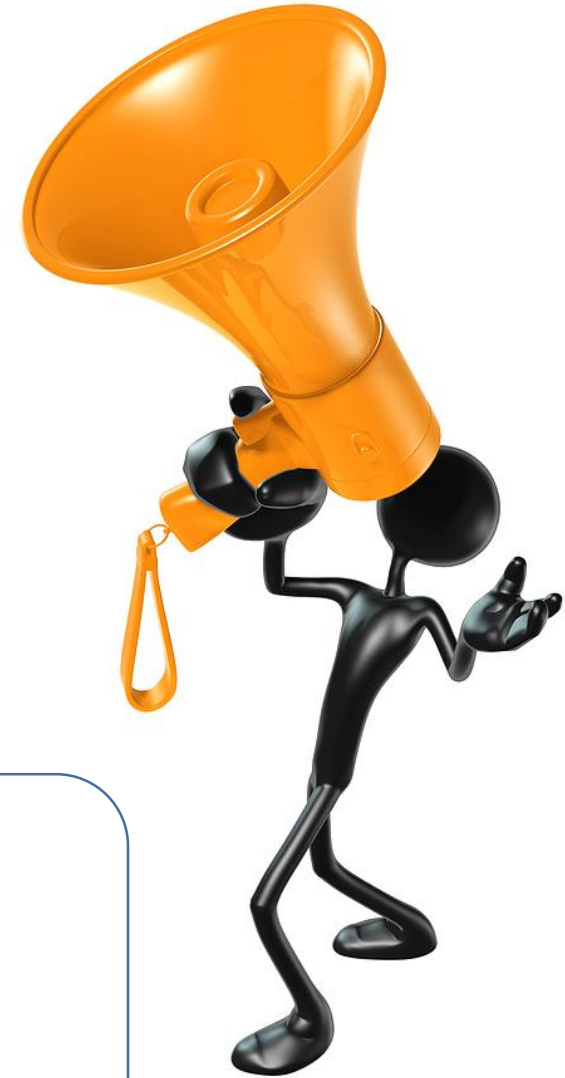
Why would you use this in performance?

Fig. 2 "A Micro-Dictionary of Gestures" Will Eisner, *Comics and Sequential Art: Principles & Practice of the World's Most Popular Art Form* (Tamarac, Florida: Poorhouse Press, 2004): 103

VOICE

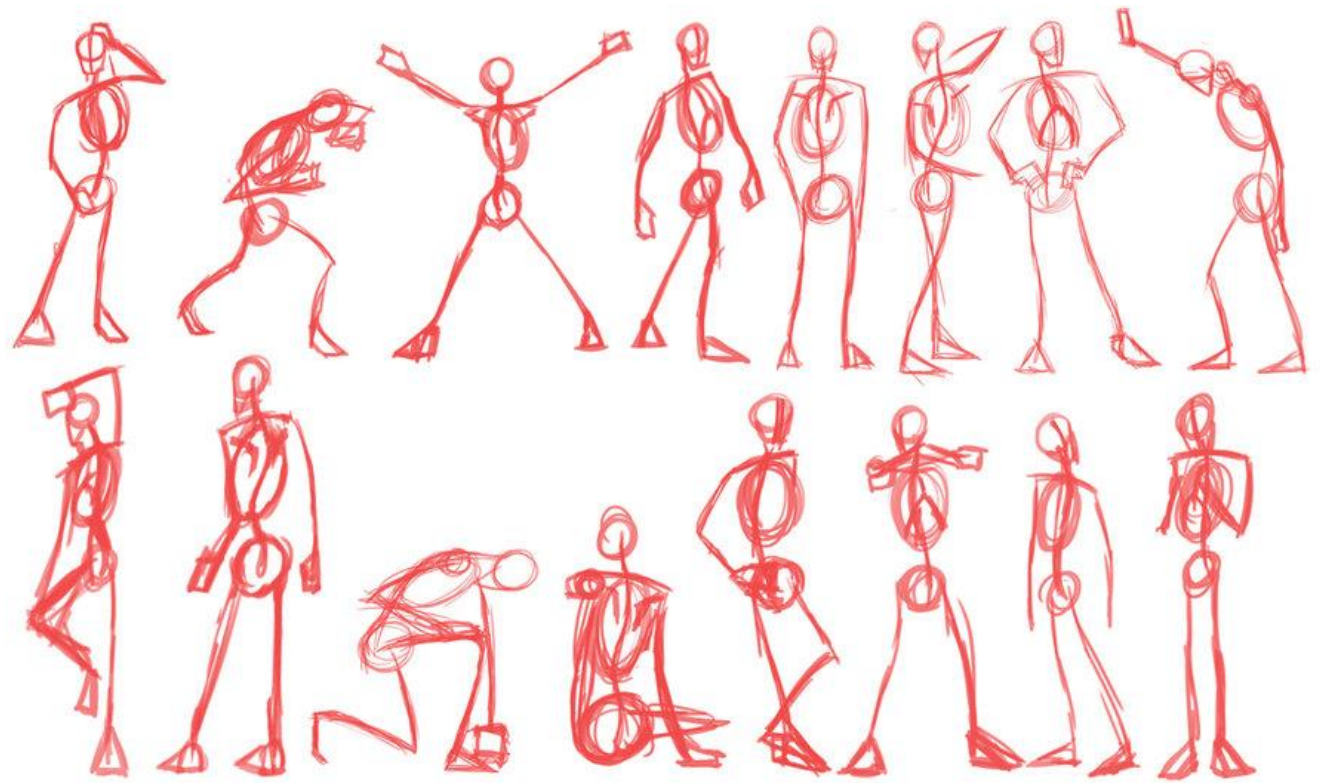
Hold your audiences attention by making yourself interesting to listen to. Speak slower and louder than normal using pauses, emphasis and variety in TONE, PITCH, RHYTHM and VOLUME. You need a stage voice which is CLEAR for an audience.

List all the emotions that you could communicate to the audience through your voice:



GESTURE

Make your performance visually interesting. The types of gesture you use; aggressive, authoritative, nervous, will send messages to the audience about your character's personality, mood and situation.



How have you used this?



The way you hold your posture on stage will portray your character's age, personality and mood.

Your character's stance may change according to what situations they are in.

Compile a list of all the characters that you can think of who would need a specific stance:

STANCE

REACTING



The audience is always looking at you, even when you're not speaking. You are not on the radio, so show how your character is reacting to what others are saying and doing through the use of body language and facial expressions.

What happens when you DO NOT react to other actors? When and how have you used this in performance?

Give as many examples as you can where this technique would highlight a relationship between characters:

The audience will get a sense of your relationship with other characters by how close you are standing to them and the direction they are facing.

PROXEMICS



LEVELS (Status)

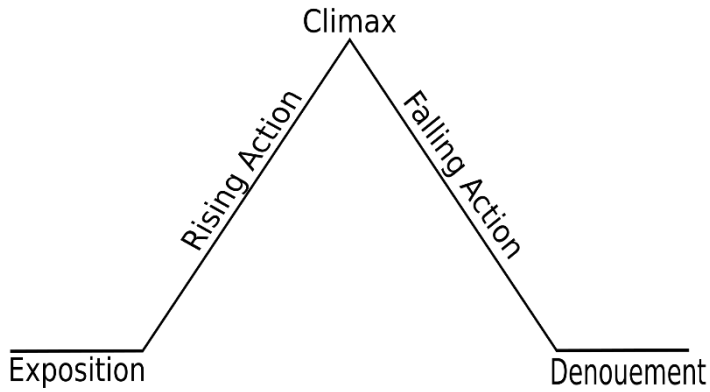


Use levels to help indicate status. One character may be on a higher piece of staging or platform, or it may simply be that one character is standing and another is sitting.

It is usually easier to play the dominant, more powerful character if they are on a higher level.

Give examples of characters who have STATUS (Power) over other characters e.g. teacher & pupil:

CLIMAX



The main **MOMENT** that the play/story has been building to. In an action film, this is often the moment when the good guy and the bad guy finally come face to face and have a fight.

Describe the best climax to a film you have seen:

The main or central character in a story.
The action revolves around them or their journey.
They are usually the hero of the story.



PROTAGONIST

List as many PROTAGONISTS from TV, FILM,
BOOKS or PLAYS that you can:



ANTAGONIST

The character who acts in opposition to the PROTAGONIST.
Their aim is to stop the protagonist from reaching their
OBJECTIVE.
They are usually the Villain of the story.

List as many examples of ANTAGONISTS that you can think of from TV, FILM, BOOKS or PLAYS:

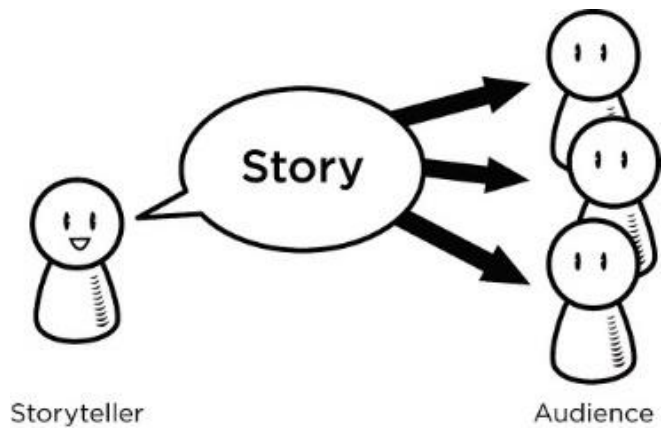
Complete the script below:



DUOLOGUE

A conversation between two people.

Teacher: So, John, could you explain to me how the window was smashed?
John: It was an accident, honestly sir. It wasn't meant to happen.



Someone who talks **DIRECTLY** to the audience, telling them the **STORY**.

Narrator

How have you used a narrator this year? Was it a helpful technique?



A long speech to an audience or another character onstage. It focuses on a characters **THOUGHTS, FEELINGS & OBJECTIVES**. They do not tell the story. This is the role of a **NARRATOR**.

MONOLOGUE

Write a monologue for a character you have created this year in drama:



MASKING

Standing in front of another actor,
obscuring them from the view of the
audience.

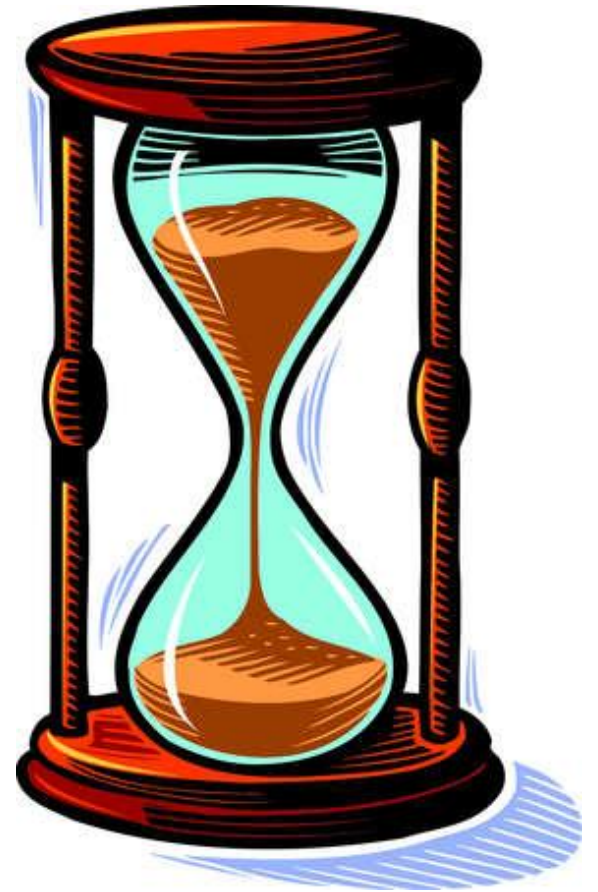
Why is it important NOT to mask. Give examples

REDUCED PERFORMANCE

Acting your WHOLE play in ONE minute or LESS!

This technique helps you concentrate on the story you are trying to perform. It allows you to HIGHLIGHT the KEY moments from the play.

The Reduced Shakespeare Company are a group of actors who use this technique in performance. Often taking a 3 hour play and performing it in just 30 minutes.



CAPTURING THE ESSENCE

Pick the 10 most important LINES in the play and turn them into your own 10 Line Play. This can be done in or out of sequence (Linear/Non linear). This will help you work out WHAT the play is really about.



1:
2:
3:
4:
5:
6:
7:
8:
9:
10:



In character, improvise a 'missing scene' which is NOT in your play. This deepens your understanding of the character and their relationships with other characters.

List some scenarios/locations that could be used to do practically explore this technique e.g. waiting to see the doctor.

HOT SEATING



In role, answer questions about your character.

This helps you flesh out the character and think about their life OUTSIDE of the play you have created.

It can often give you to information that you hadn't thought about in relation to your part.

Questions you could ask (add to the list):

- 1: How old am I?
- 2: Where do I live?
- 3: What do I like/dislike?
- 4: What am I most afraid of?
- 5: Who is my best friend?
- 6: What is your biggest secret?
- 7: What regrets do you have?
- 8: What is the best thing ever to happen to you?
- 9: If you were an animal what would you be and why?
- 10:
- 11:
- 12:
- 13:
- 14:
- 15:
- 16:
- 17:
- 18:
- 19:

THOUGHT TRACKING



Whilst rehearsing (or performing), freeze the action on stage. The characters on stage have to say what their character is thinking or feeling at that moment. This deepens the actor's understanding of their character's thoughts and feelings. It also ensures that the actor is communicating the right emotions at that point in the play.



MIME

Mime your play or scene in one minute. Try miming dialogue with a movement, gesture or facial expression for every line. This will help you concentrate on the visual aspects of the performance.

Charlie Chaplin is possibly the most famous example of a MIME artist. He won 3 Oscars during his acting career.

He was even KNIGHTED by the Queen of England aged 86 years old.

One of the most controversial roles he played was of Adolf Hitler in the film "The Great Dictator".

INFO

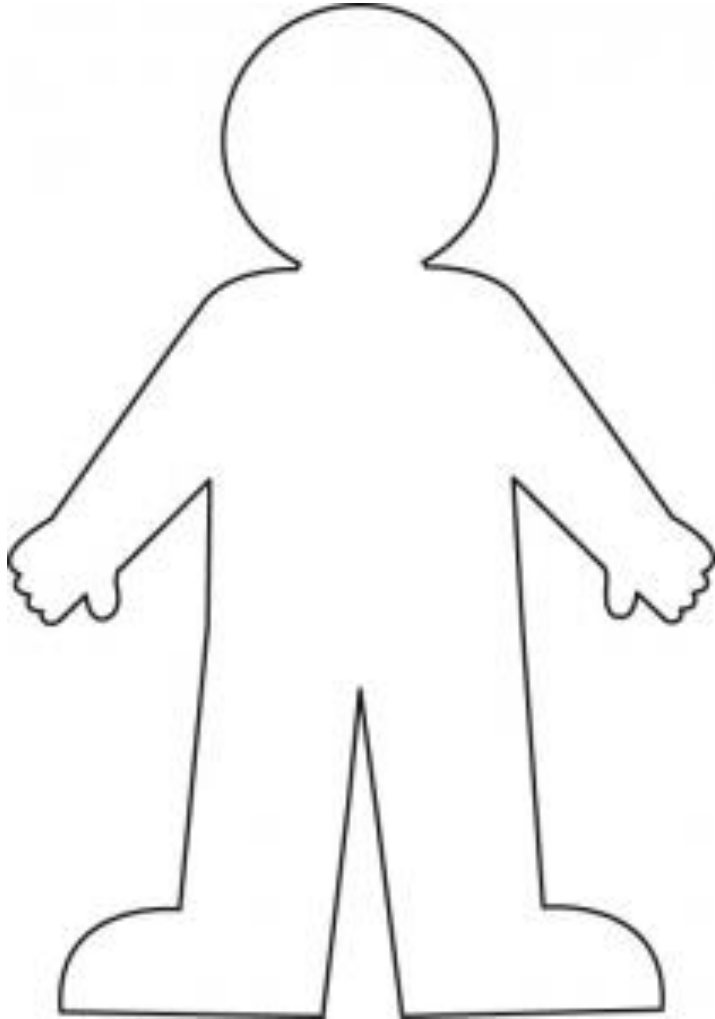
GENRE – SPLICING!



Perform a scene the way it wasn't intended – try it out as a love story, a horror story, thriller, murder mystery, western, sci-fi etc. This helps you discover a subtext you did not know was there, as well as bringing fun back into the rehearsal.

List all the different styles you could use to perform your work:

ROLE ON THE WALL



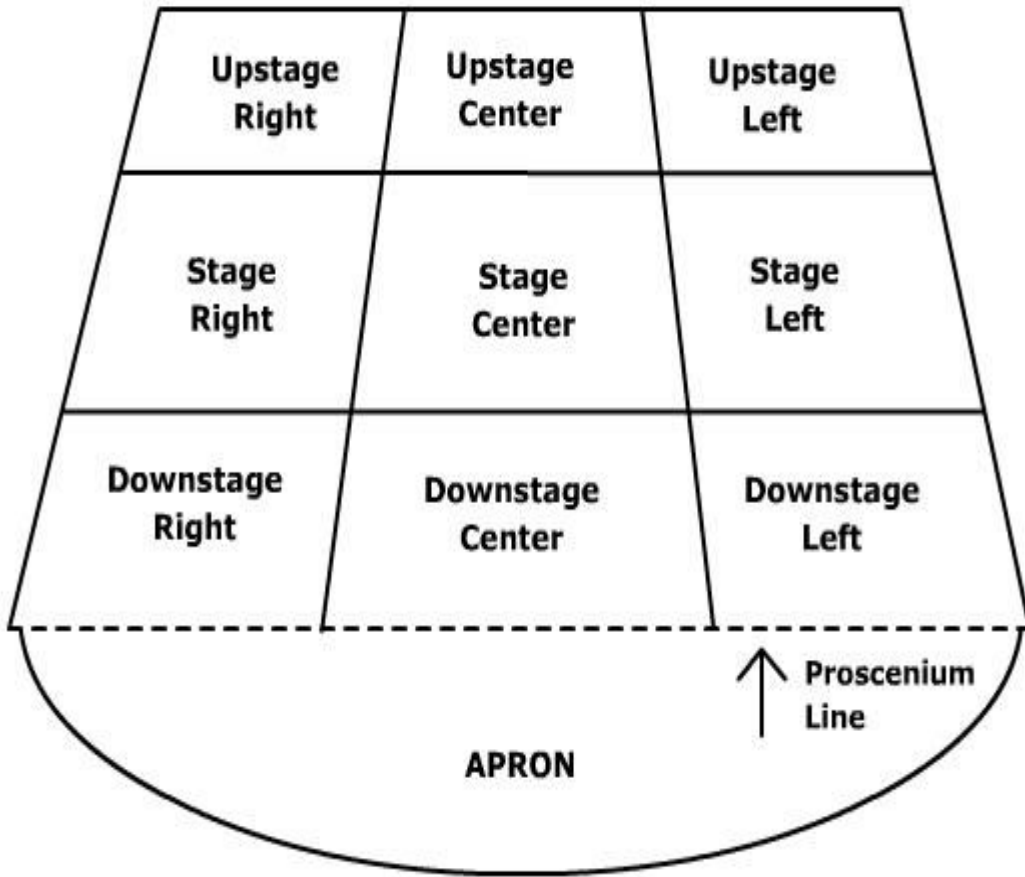
Draw an outline of your character and put it on the wall/floor. During rehearsals add pictures, statements, thoughts and ideas about the character. This helps you build a deeper understanding of a character.

Do this for the next MAJOR project:

A large empty rectangular box with rounded corners and a scroll-like border, intended for notes or a project plan. The box is designed to look like a scroll or a piece of paper that can be unrolled. It has a vertical scroll on the left side and a horizontal scroll on the top side, both with small circular handles. The interior of the box is empty, providing space for writing or drawing.

STAGE POSITIONING

The stage is labelled according to the actor's left and right: downstage is closest to the audience and Upstage is furthest from the audience.



AUDIENCE

Some interesting facts:

- Centre Stage is usually the MOST important position as it is the area of CENTRAL focus.
- Downstage is closest to the audience making intimacy easier.
- Upstage is a position that allows actors to do things which characters in front of them cannot see.

STAGE TYPES

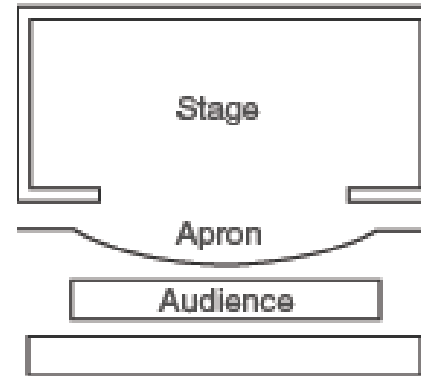
These are the four most POPULAR types of stage types used in the theatre.
The school hall has a PROSCENIUM ARCH stage.

Something to try:

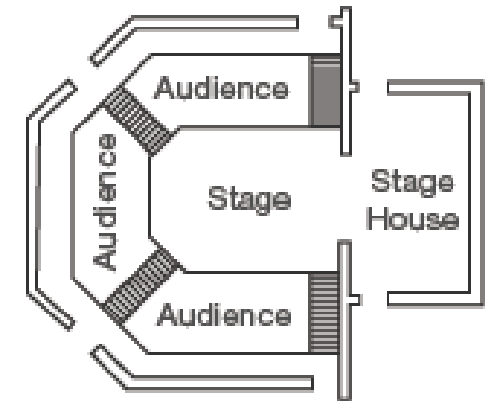
Next time you create a play, think about performing it on one of these 4 stage types and see what difference it makes to the audiences experience.

Four types of stage

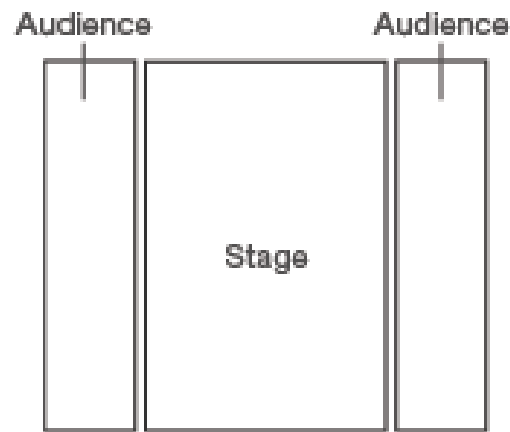
Proscenium arch



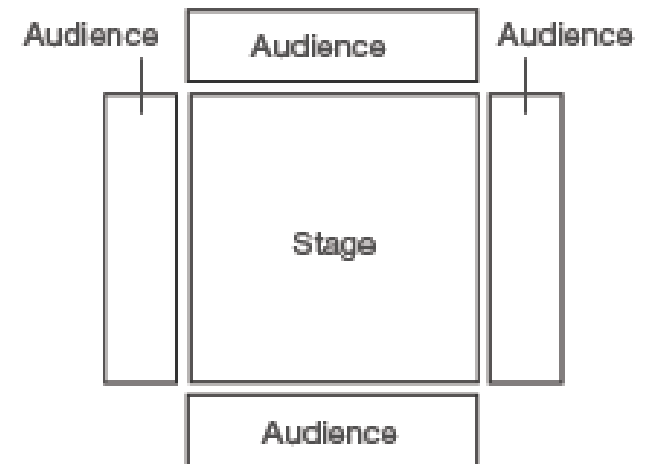
Thrust



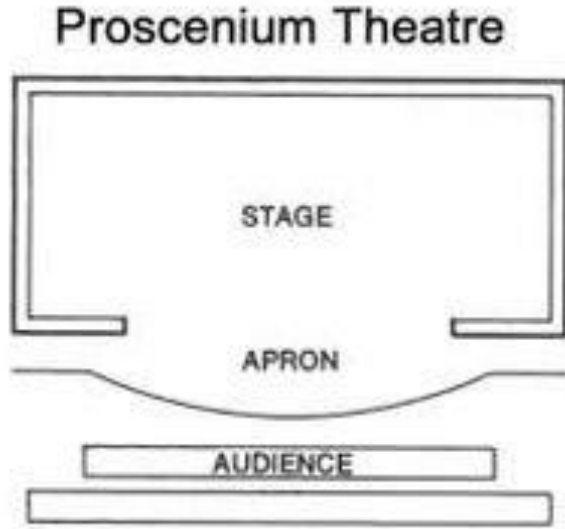
Traverse



In the round

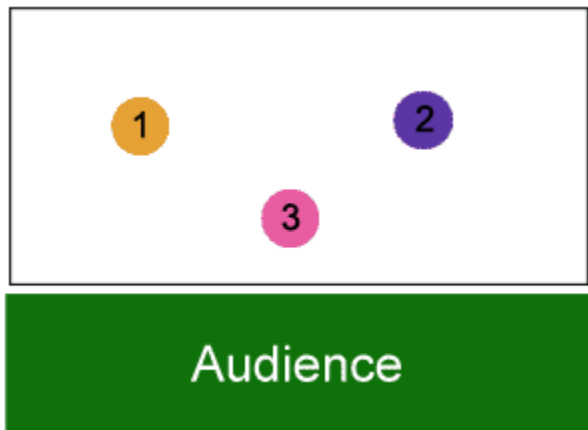


PROSCENIUM ARCH/END ON



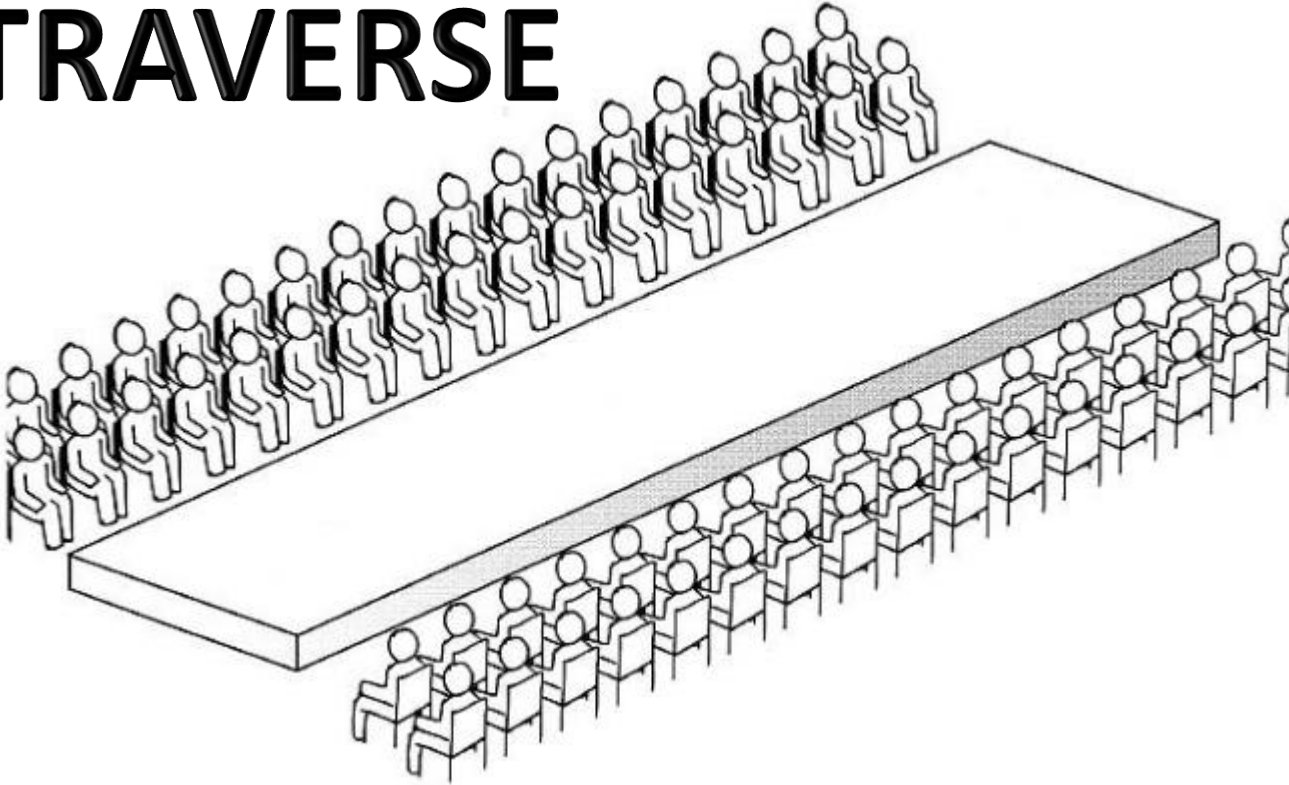
Proscenium Arch is the most common type of staging in Britain. Large offstage areas allow this type of theatre to have complex sets, large casts and numerous scene changes. The audience sits on one side of the stage as if looking through a window into another world.

End On



What are the advantages and disadvantage of using this stage type?:

TRAVERSE

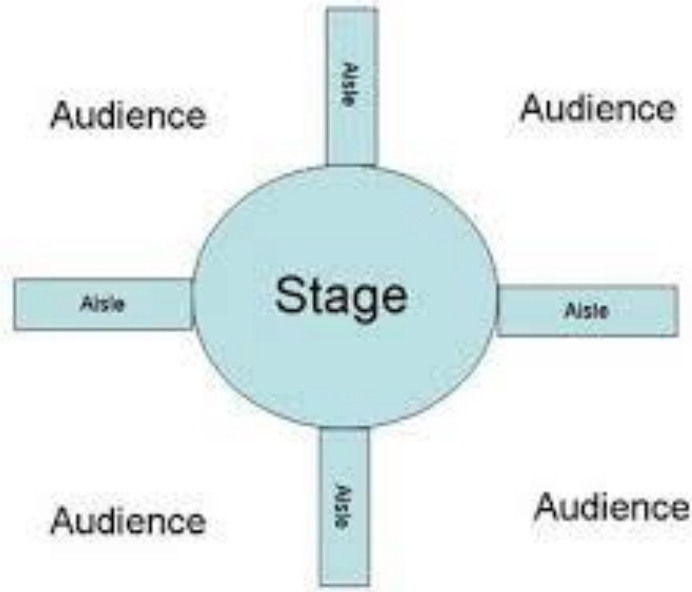


Traverse is the most unusual type of staging. Various scenes can be set up simultaneously to allow movement instantly from one scene to another. The audience can see each other's reactions as they are sat on opposite sides of the stage.

The two ends of the stage are the most **COMMANDING** positions of this stage type as these are the only areas where the actors can face the whole audience

What are the advantages and disadvantages to using this stage type?:

THEATRE IN THE ROUND

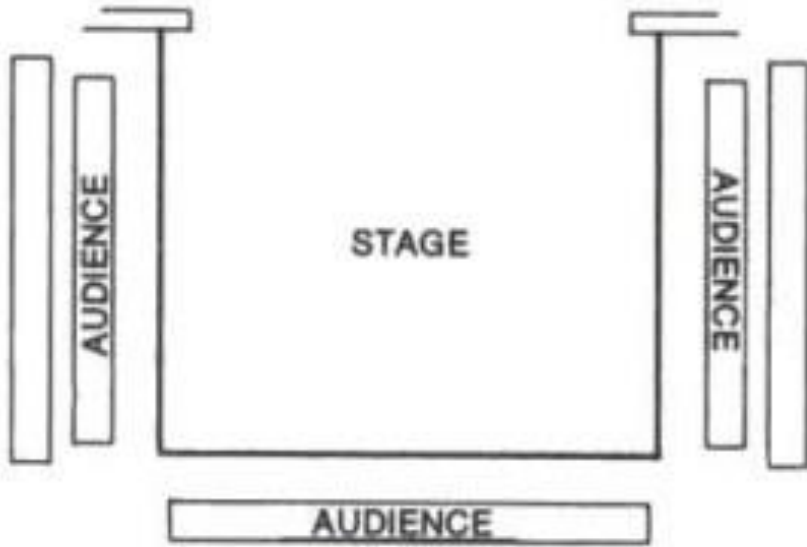


Theatre in the round is commonly used in the circus and smaller venues. Although it is called 'in the round', it is often a square shape. The audience surrounds the stage which is an excellent way to create an intimate atmosphere and to allow for interaction or entrapment.

Staging and furniture must be low level or kept to an absolute minimum to avoid obscuring the audiences vision. Careful attention to movement is required as the actors will always have their back to one part of the audience.



THRUST



Thrust staging is very popular in modern theatres. Complex scenery and ambitious set designs can be created using levels, backdrops or painted flats. The audience is close to the stage sitting on three sides thus creating an intimate atmosphere. It combines elements of both the Proscenium arch stage and Theatre in the Round.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of using this stage type:

STAGE LIGHTING – The Basic ones!



FLOODLIGHT:

This is one of the simplest lanterns. It does not have a lens and cannot be focused. As a result, it provides a general wash of colour and is normally used for 'flooding' the stage in light.



PAR CAN:

This cannot be focused and is one of the cheapest lanterns. Often used in concerts, these lights throw a harsh, strong beam of light creating a dramatic effect.

STAGE LIGHTING – Slightly Better ones!



PROFILE:

This provides a strong beam of light that can be focused on specific areas of the stage. They are often used to project gobos.



FRESNEL:

This used to create a general wash of the stage and can be focused. The light produced has soft edges. Barn doors can be added to determine the spill of light.



FOLLOW SPOT:

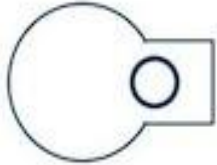
This light sits on a stand and is designed to follow a performer around the stage. It come equipped with colour magazines and an iris.

LANTERN SYMBOLS

SYMBOL KEY



Profile Spot
(black dot = gobo)



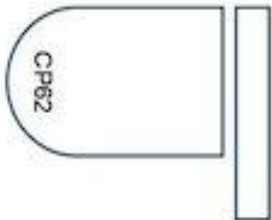
Profile Spot
(circle = iris)



Fresnel



Barndoors



PAR Can
w/ CP62 lamp

Rectangle
denotes scroller
colour changer

MARKUP KEY

Area A Warm

L103



B4

Purpose

Gel No.



Circuit

<http://www.onstagelighting.co.uk>



Flood Light

Use these symbols when drawing
a lighting design plot.

LANTERN EXTRAS

GOBOS:

These are small discs that are placed in Profile lanterns and project an image onto the stage.



BARN DOORS:

These are placed on the front of a Fresnel lantern and allow you to focus the light on a specific area.



IRIS:

This device is fitted into a Follow Spot and allows you to change the size of the light projected.

