



Vocabulary of Acting Styles

Voice:

- **Articulation** – Emphasis on consonants or vowels
- **Pitch** – Continuum of high to low quality
- **Pace** – Continuum of fast to slow delivery
- **Pause** – Choice of breaks in speech and their length
- **Tone** – Choice of the mood or emotion of delivery
- **Inflection** – Choice of stress or emphasis
- **Volume** – Continuum of loud to quiet.

Movement:

- **Pace** – Continuum of fast to slow
- **Direction** – Up/down, side to side, backwards/forward
- **Size** – Continuum of big to small
- **Flow** – Continuum of free to restricted
- **Weight** – Continuum of heavy to light
- **Control** – Continuum of stable to unstable
- **Orientation** – Choice of where the body is facing

Non-verbal Communication:

- **Spatial Behaviour (proxemics)** – Physical distance between characters
- **Facial Expression** – Change in the face to communicate emotion
- **Gesture** – Movement of the hands to communicate an idea or give meaning or emphasis
- **Gaze** – Direction that a character is looking, including eye contact
- **Non-verbal Vocalisations** – Noise and sounds that do not include language
- **Posture** – The position of the body
- **Touch and Bodily Contact** – Physical connections between people



Vocabulary of Costume Design

Period: The costume design will often give a strong indication of time. This will be supported by other element of the production. The audience will make particular judgements about content, themes and ideas based on the historical period of the production. Some productions try to be 'timeless' to support themes and ideas. This could mean a mixture of periods has been brought together or there is an emphasis on neutrality. Neutrality can be achieved through simplicity, with the costume designer using colour, material and shape rather than historical features.

Garments: Items of clothing can indicate character, status and location.

Colour: Colour can communicate broad meaning for audiences. It can trigger subconscious associations that will inform how an audience feels about the content of the production

Material: This communicates meaning to an audience. For example, people often associate fabrics with different levels of wealth and status – especially in some historical or cultural contexts.

Fit and Shape: These give clues about characters, relationships and themes.

Hair and Make-up: These link to particular styles. For example, expressionist theatre often uses pale, white faces with black eyes. They can also communicate a character's control at particular points. Hair and make-up are closely linked with cultural ideas of status. Make-up could be used to reinforce an incident or injury.



Vocabulary of Lighting Design

Focus: Lighting is used to draw the audience's attention to particular parts of the performance. Characters set or props can be picked out precisely. The lighting design can give emphasis to important moments in the performance.

Intensity: This is how bright the audience perceives the light to be. The lighting designer uses a mixture of intensity to create particular effects.

Colour, Mood and Atmosphere: Colour is created using gels that sit in front of the light source. Modern lighting also uses LED technology to be able to shift more economically from one light colour to the next. The colours of lighting and their intensity can create mood and atmosphere for a scene.

Pattern & Shape: Plates or screens, called gobos, can be placed in front of a source of light to create patterns. Barn doors, on the edges of a light fitting and the shutter size in the light fixture can create different shapes. The edge-quality of these shapes can be hard or soft.

Position and Direction: This can have a big impact on the subject being lit. They can be:

- Frontlit
- Backlit
- Lit from a high angle
- Lit from a low angle

The light can come from either side. The position and direction of light can create shadows that affect mood and atmosphere.

Types of Lighting: Here is a basic selection of lighting (both halogen and LED) that is commonly used:

- Floodlight – Lights a large area with no edge. No lens means no focus
- ParCan – Light a large area with an edge. The lens allows for some focus
- Fresnel – Small fixture that gives a soft-edged spot of light. There is little flexibility in the size of the focus
- Profile Spot – Long fixture that gives a hard-edged spot of light. Very flexible in the size of focus
- Moving Heads – Automated lights that offer flexibility and variation



Vocabulary of Performance Style

Mask: Physical action and character are reinforced by masks as the main form of communication

Naturalism: The performance is realistic with a focus on human behaviour and psychology. Characters' motivations and actions are rooted in their environment. Conflicts are significant and life-changing, but are presented with everyday speech and movement

Realism: This is similar to naturalism, except characters' actions and motivations are rooted in individual choice rather than environment.

Expressionism: The set, props, costume, lighting and sound are created as if they are the imagination of a single character. These elements can often be distorted and dreamlike. The moods created and ideas presented can be more important than the plot. Movement and voice are heightened, with an emphasis on chorus and ensemble.

Symbolism: The actions, movements and voice are metaphorical and represent a deeper meaning. Mood and atmosphere link images and ideas that may otherwise lack a precise meaning.

Epic Theatre: The production guides the audience from identification with characters and themes to a feeling of detachment. This is known as Verfremdungseffekt (V-effekt). It can be achieved by:

- Performers coming out of role
- Third-person narration
- The use of placards
- Several performers playing the same character
- Singing and dancing

Epic Theatre makes you think, debate and discuss the themes and issues raised long after the performance has finished. This can be achieved by:

- Minimal use of props, costume and set
- A sense of 'fun' that jars with the audience after the performance (known as Spass)
- Combining every element of the performance to communicate an overall political, social or moral essence (known as Gestus)

Forum Theatre (Theatre of the Oppressed): The performance challenges different forms of oppression in society by presenting a problem, which is later solved. Sometimes, the audience (spectators, or even 'spect-actors') are invited to give solutions and act them out.

Theatre of Cruelty: The production is **NOT** literally cruel in terms of bloodshed or pain. It is cruel because it aims to challenge and shock the audience and place them at the centre of the drama. This is not like traditional theatre performances.

Site-specific Theatre: The performance is a direct response to the space. The performance space is an important 'character'.



Immersive Theatre: There is no fixed order of events for the audience. The performance is a collection of small experiences and interactions for the audience. This interaction makes the audience a 'character' in the play. Meaning and narrative are not fixed. They are created by each individual audience member's experience.

Verbatim Theatre: All the words used in the production are taken from real life.

Physical Theatre: Dance and mime, physicality and movement are used to highlight more realistic aspects of the production

REMEMBER - Modern productions often mix styles to achieve particular outcomes for the audience. Therefore, the performance you see may use two three or many different styles.



Vocabulary of Set Design

Period: The time in history when the play is set. Elements of the production will reinforce the social, cultural, historical and political context of the play.

Colour: This works alongside lighting to reinforce mood and atmosphere. The colour of the set will also communicate meaning, especially when it contrasts with the colour of costume or lighting

Texture: This can be used to support key themes and ideas of a production. For example, a metallic texture will have a different meaning from earthy textures

Entrances & Exits: The position of entrances and exits, and how characters use them, can be significant. This is particularly true of historical productions when they have symbolic meanings. For example, the trapdoor at the Globe Theatre symbolises 'hell'. Modern productions still draw on these traditions: powerful characters enter from *upstage centre* or from a raised part of the stage.

Set Changes: These can take place alongside changes in the play and can give the audience clues about things like time, era or general mood.

Projection: This can be used to create a set or show film or images. The amount of projection can impact the style of a performance:

- It can have the distancing effect (Verfremdungseffekt) of Epic Theatre
- It can also create dreamlike world of the Expressionist style
- The audience should be able to identify the world created in the projection and how this differs from the rest of the play



Vocabulary of Sound Design and Music

Genre: The type of music that features in the production – for example rock, pop, classical, folk, hip hop, drum ‘n’ bass etc.

Mood and Atmosphere: Music and sound have a huge impact on the emotional experience of the audience. The sadness of a scene can be increased with the use of sad music. But the same scene performed with upbeat music can have a different impact.

Sound Effects: These punctuate the narrative, action and all aspects of live performance. The effects can literally be any type of sound.

Live or Recorded: Music and sound can be created live or pre-recorded and played digitally. Live music can be performed by musicians separate from the acting company or it can be played by the actors themselves. Live music can be amplified through speakers or played without speakers.

Pitch: This relates to whether a sound is high or low

Volume: Volume is carefully controlled by the sound designer when developing the play. Sudden high volume can jolt an audience a sustained sound will be uncomfortable for the audience.

Direction: Speakers and live musicians can be positioned anywhere within the space. The direction of sounds and music can impact on an audience. Sound effects that appear to come from behind an audience in a proscenium arch theatre immerse the audience in the action.



Vocabulary of Stage Space

End-on-Stage: This is often found in a studio theatre where the seats face the stage space at one end. There is no proscenium arch.

Promenade and Immersive: These can be found spaces or non-theatre spaces. Audience members walk through the space to experience the performance.

Site-Specific Theatre: These spaces are chosen as a key part of the production. The performance links directly to the space that it is performed in.

Traverse: The audience are positioned on two sides of the space with the performance taking place in the middle.

In-the-Round: The audience are seated all the way around the performance.

Thrust: The performance space thrusts out into the audience. The audience sit or stand on three sides of the stage space.

Proscenium Arch: The audience sit facing a stage at one end. The stage is framed with a proscenium arch. More and more traditional proscenium arch spaces are adding small thrusts to break the divide between audience and performance space.

Amphitheatre: The audience sit in a large and steep half-bowl shape with a circular stage at the bottom. The Olivier Theatre at the National Theatre is designed as an amphitheatre.