

N

ow it is time to think about taking your scene or play to the stage for rehearsal and production. In this lesson, you will be introduced to different types of stages and to the specialized language used in directing and staging a play. You will begin to see why acting requires a great deal of hard work, intense discipline, and years of training.

LESSON 3

Types of Stages

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- ◆ Understand performance space.
- ◆ Recognize basic types of stages.

Warm Up



With your acting company, discuss how the stages at your school differ from the stages illustrated in this textbook. Where are the stages located in your school? What other events take place in those spaces?

A play must have a performance space. This space should provide a **stage**, or area where the players perform, and a separate area where the audience watches. The stage in your school might be in a theatre or auditorium, or it might be part of the classroom. A performance space can be any area designated for acting that is set apart from the audience.

The Proscenium Stage

The most common stage in educational theatre is the proscenium stage. A **proscenium stage** is usually a raised picture-frame stage, or box stage (see Figure 9-1).

Figure 9-1

The Proscenium Stage.

stage

the area where the players perform; usually a raised platform.

proscenium stage

a four-sided stage built like a box with one side cut away, enabling the audience to view the play as if it were in a picture frame.

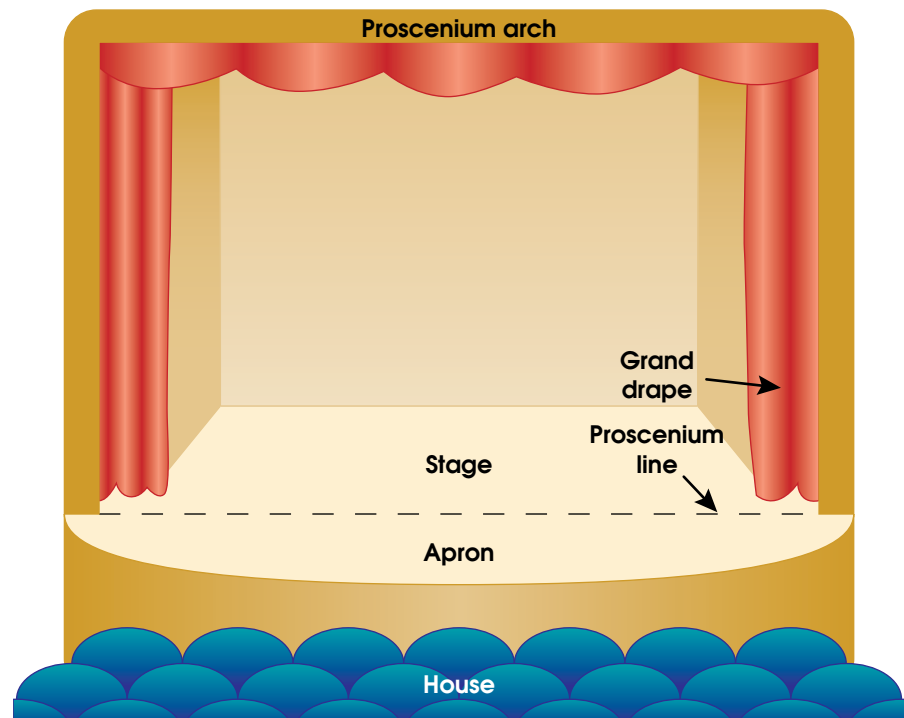
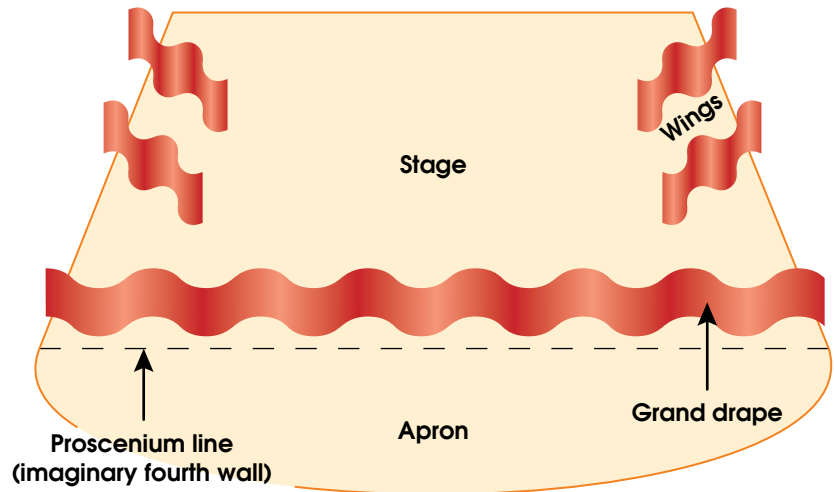


Figure 9-2

Overhead View of the Proscenium Stage.



grand drape

the draperies covering the proscenium opening (picture frame), separating the audience from the stage.

wings

offstage spaces to the sides of the acting area.

apron

the part of the stage extending past the proscenium arch toward the audience.

arena stage

a stage constructed so that the audience can sit on all sides; also known as “theatre-in-the-round.”

thrust stage

a stage that extends into the seating area. The audience sits on three sides of the stage.

A *proscenium arch*, or frame, surrounds the opening of the stage much like a giant three-sided picture frame. A **grand drape**, or curtain, hangs across the imaginary *proscenium line*, and can be opened to reveal the picture, or scene, to the audience.

Entrances onto the stage are made by the actors from offstage spaces to the right and left of the acting area called **wings** (see Figure 9-2). An actor making an entrance from the wings is hidden from the audience’s view by curtains or scenery.

Often in front of the grand drape is a portion of the stage extending past the proscenium arch toward the audience. This part of the stage is called the **apron** (see Figure 9-2). Scenes are sometimes played on the apron with the grand drape closed, often while scenery is being changed behind the curtain.

The Arena Stage

The **arena stage** is a stage constructed so that the audience can sit on all sides of the production. Often this stage is lower than the audience. Notice in Figure 9-3 on the next page that entrances and exits must be made through the audience. Staging of this type is also known as “central staging” or “theatre-in-the-round.”

The Thrust Stage

Another type of stage extends, or projects, into the seating area of the audience. This type of stage is called a **thrust stage** (see Figure 9-4). The audience sits on three sides of the stage. The thrust stage has qualities of both the proscenium stage and the arena stage.

Figure 9-3

The Arena Stage.

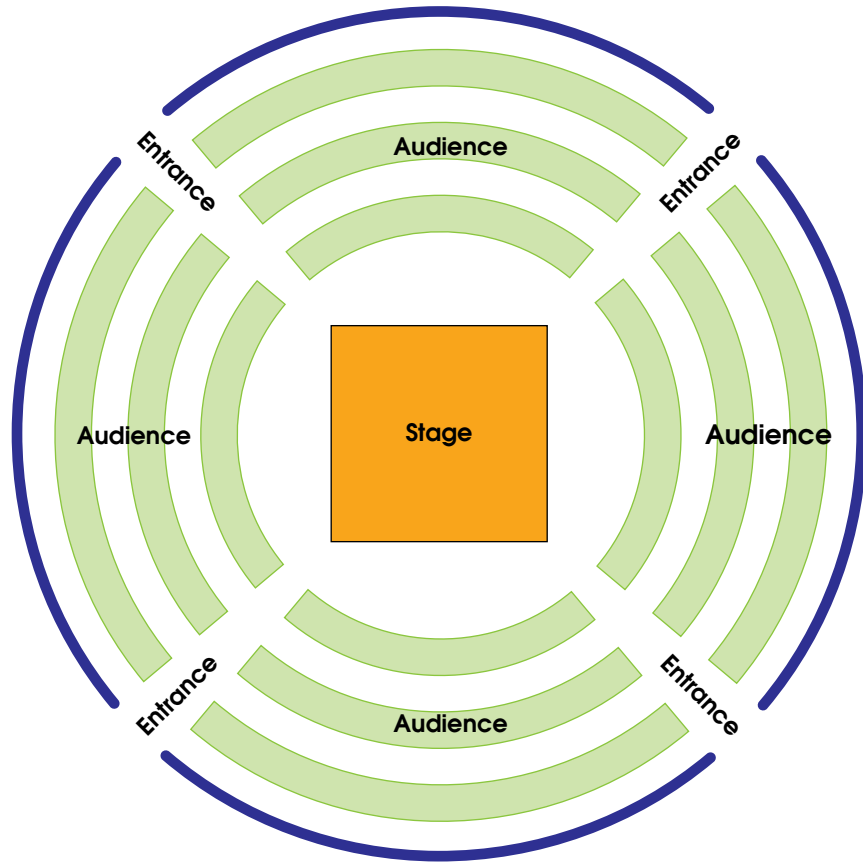
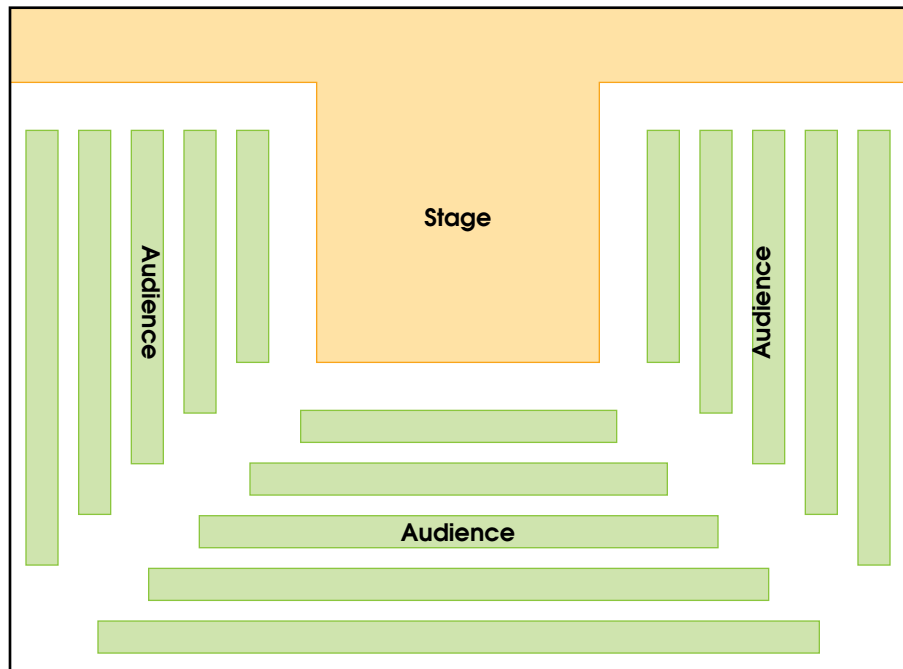


Figure 9-4

The Thrust Stage.



Flexible Staging

flexible staging

any stage not classified as proscenium, arena, or thrust.

When a performance space does not fit into one of the three basic shapes or categories, it is usually called **flexible staging** (see Figure 9–5). A current trend is to stage plays in spaces other than actual theatres. If your school does not have an auditorium or theatre with a stage, flexible staging might be used in a classroom, cafeteria, gymnasium, corridor, or band or choir room. Through the use of flexible staging, performances are often staged inside empty commercial buildings, libraries, shopping centers, and malls, as well as outside in parks and recreation areas. The many ways and places in which plays can be staged remind us of William Shakespeare’s words over 400 years ago—“All the world’s a stage.”

Figure 9–5

An example of flexible staging.



ACTION

- 1. Theatre Tour.** If your school has a theatre or auditorium, tour the facility. Based on the information in this lesson, determine the type of stage at your school.
- 2. Finding Flexible Staging.** Brainstorm with a partner or your acting company to think of other areas in your school or community that could be used as flexible staging for a play.
- 3. Creating Performance Spaces.** As a class, plan as many ways as possible to create a performance space in your classroom.