**1**

**The Actor Within You:** Theater Vocabulary

**a cappella —** to sing without

musical accompaniment, origin:

Italian

**Actor’s Equity Association —**

union for professional stage actors

and actresses

**audition —** to try out for a role in

a play

**backstage —** the part of the stage

not visible to the audience

**bit —** a small non-speaking part,

or a routine developed by a

performer for his/her character

**blocking —** arranged movements

and positions of an actor on a stage

or in a performance space that

accompany the progress

of a play or scene

**“break a leg” —** an expression

used in theater to wish someone

good luck

**business —** (or stage business)

refers to any tasks or activities

an actor does within a scene

**call —** the appointed time when a

performer must be present at the

theater before a performance

**callback —** additional auditions

for a specific role in a single

production

**cheat front —** when an actor

improves his/her projection and

sightlines by changing the angle of

his/her body to the audience.

**choreographer —** the individual

who develops all dance steps for a

production

**cue —** a sign or line that signals it

is time for the actor to enter, exit,

or speak during a scene

**curtain call —** the time following

a play or performance when

performers take a bow

**dark —** when a theatre is closed or

at the beginning of a scene when

the lights are down (off )

**dialect —** a regional speech

pattern (southern, Italian, Irish)

**director —** the person who is

responsible for the overall, cohesive

vision of a production and directs

the actors towards that goal

**dressing rooms —** where actors

change into and out of costumes

**ensemble —** a cast or group of

performers working together to tell

a story

**focus —** when an actor draws the

audience’s attention to himself/

herself, in a positive way

**fourth wall —** the term that

refers to the imaginary space

between the performers on stage

and the audience beyond it; it is

the imagined fourth side of the

setting of the play

**gel —** the transparent, coloredplastic

that is placed in a theatre

light to tint the light on the stage,

helping to create depth

**go up —** when a play/

performance starts (referring to the

curtain “going up”); when an actor

forgets his/her lines

**green room —** where the actors

wait to be called for their scenes,

ready and in costume, until just

before their cue

**house —** the part of the theater

where the audience sits

**lights up —** refers to when the

lights go up at the beginning of

the show, the show begins!

**mark —** a specific space on stage

that a performer must stand on,

or hit, in the course of executing

his/her blocking

**masking —** drapes that cover the

wings of the stage (backstage)

where actors exit the stage or wait

to enter a scene

**monologue —** dialog performed

by one person, either spoken to

another character, him/herself, or

directed to the audience

**musical director —** the director

responsible for conducting

instrumental and vocal direction

during rehearsals and performance

**notes —** constructive comments

that directors give to the cast for

the purpose of improving the

next performance

**off book —** when an actor has

memorized his/her lines and no

longer is using his/her script in

rehearsal

**pace —** the energy and rate of

progression throughout a

performance

**pit —** where the orchestra is

located

**producer(s) —** the individual(s)

who handles the financial,

marketing, and commercial aspects

of a production

**projection —** the method by

which the sound of a voice is

pushed a distance; the display of a

filmed image used for scenic effect

**prop —** any object carried or used

on the stage by an actor during a

scene

**props mistress/master –** the

theatre technician in charge of

props placement, distribution,

preparation, and maintainance

**props table —** the table backstage

where props are organized and

maintained by the props mistress/

master in preparation for a

performance

**proscenium —** the front edge of

the stage, a stage that has a “picture

frame” opening onto the audience

**read through —** the very first

rehearsal where the play is read

aloud by the cast

**royalties —** the money a theater

must pay the author to produce

a play

**soliloquy —** a lengthy speech by

one performer that expresses that

character’s feelings or views to the

audience

**stage directions —** specific stageoriented

terms used by the director

and/or playwright to block the

play.

**stage manager —** the person who

notes all blocking, entrances and

exits, lighting cues, sound cues,

costuming requirements, and props

needed to rehearse and to perform

a play

**strike —** the time following the

final performance of a show when

the set, lights, costumes, props, etc.

are dismantled, cleaned, cataloged,

and stored, or returned to the

rental agency

**technical director —** the person

who manages all technical concerns

for a production (lights, sets,

costumes, makeup, props, etc.)

**warm ups —** exercises used to

improve physical movement, voice

quality, and mental focus and

energy for a performance or scene

**wings —** the areas on the left

and right of the stage where a

performer enters or exits