

Stagecraft

History and Architecture of the Stage

Defining stagecraft:

- A unique adaptation of common construction techniques to the temporary and illusionary environment of the stage
- Relies on traditional and empirically tested methods
- Advances and adapts with changes in technology
- Economical in comparison to real-life items it represents

Requirements for effective scenery

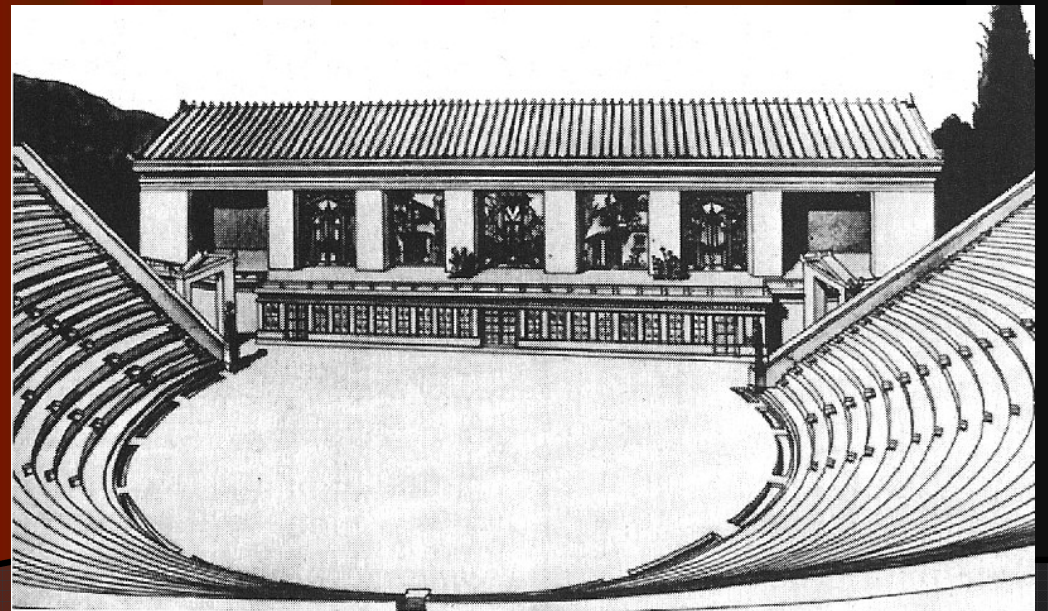
- Must be lightweight
 - Change between scenes quickly
 - Easily installed and removed from space
- Must be compact
 - Small enough to move/manipulate/store
- Must be simple to construct
 - Skill level varies (volunteer to union)
- Techniques must be adaptable
 - Limited only by imagination

Elements of modern scenery

- Flats
 - The basic unit of scenery. Used to create the illusion of walls.
- Platforms
 - The basic unit of temporary stages.
- Wagons
 - A wheeled platform used for rolling scenery and actors into and out of view
- Masking
 - Dark fabric used to 'shutter off' the view of the audience and focus their eye on the scene
- Drops
 - Painted fabric that depicts a location or conveys a mood
- Modular concept
 - The concept that states that all scenery should be easily interchanged for ultimate efficiency

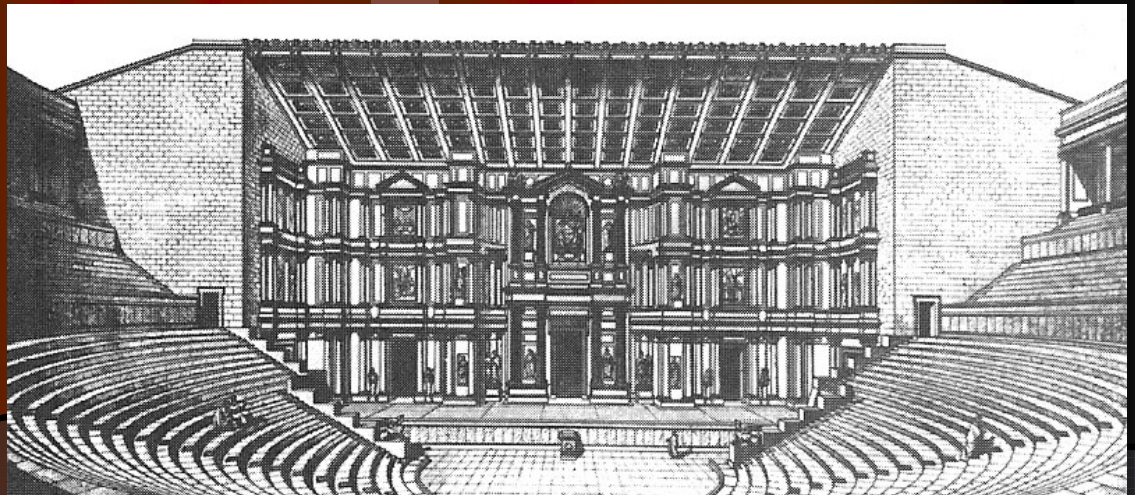
History of scenery

- Greeks
 - Amphitheater
 - Skene (façade)
 - Pinakas (panels similar to flats)
 - Periaktoi



Romans

- Improved on Greek ideas
 - Scaena (stagehouse)
 - Scaena frons (façade)
 - Periaktoi
 - Mechanical devices



Middle ages

- Mansions
- Pageant wagons
- Labor guilds
- Didactic



Italian Renaissance

- Birth of the modern stage
 - Wing and drop
 - Flying scenery
 - Sliding panels
 - Pole and chariot
 - Mechanical effects

These staging effects stayed in the forefront throughout the 1700's in Europe and America.

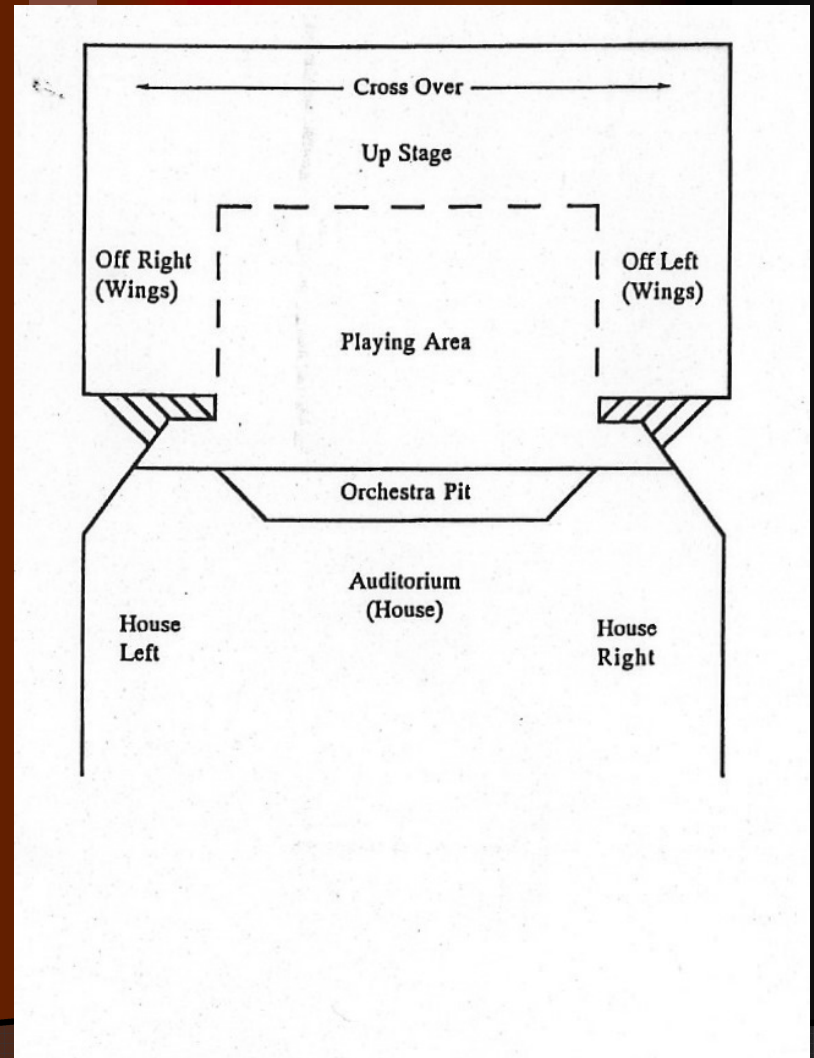
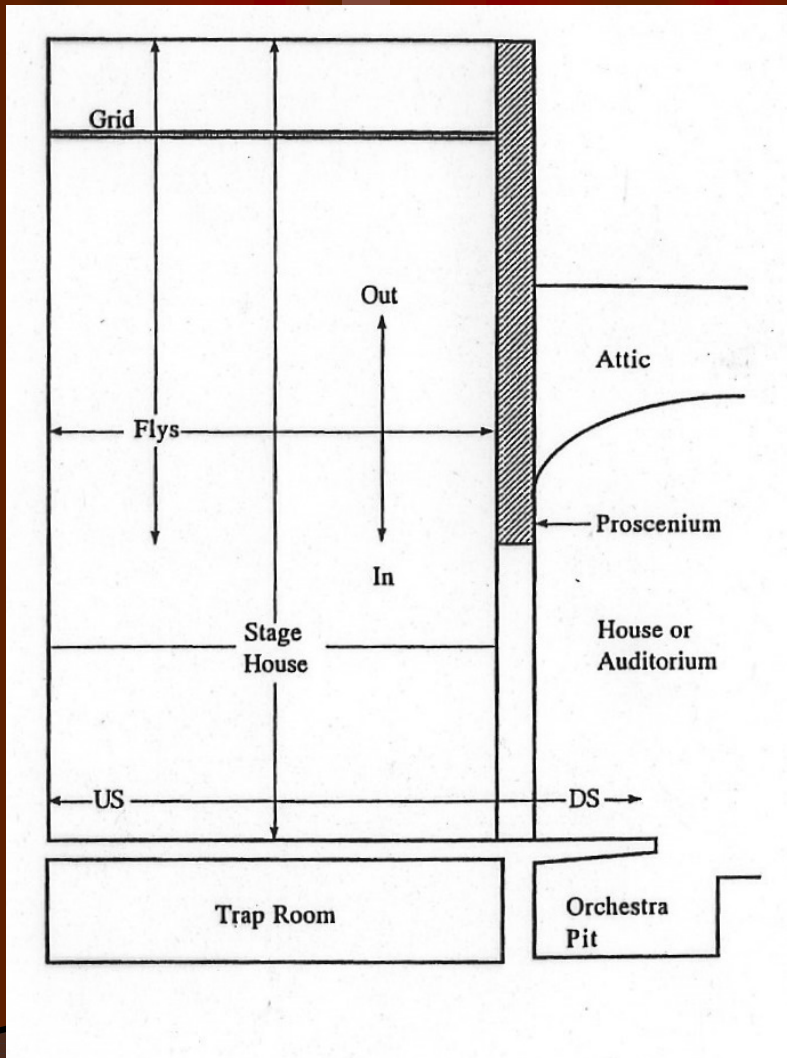
Late 1800's / Early 1900's

- Box sets
- Touring productions
- Regional "Road Houses"
- Trains take productions crossing the country
- Standardization of the "Proscenium" theater in America

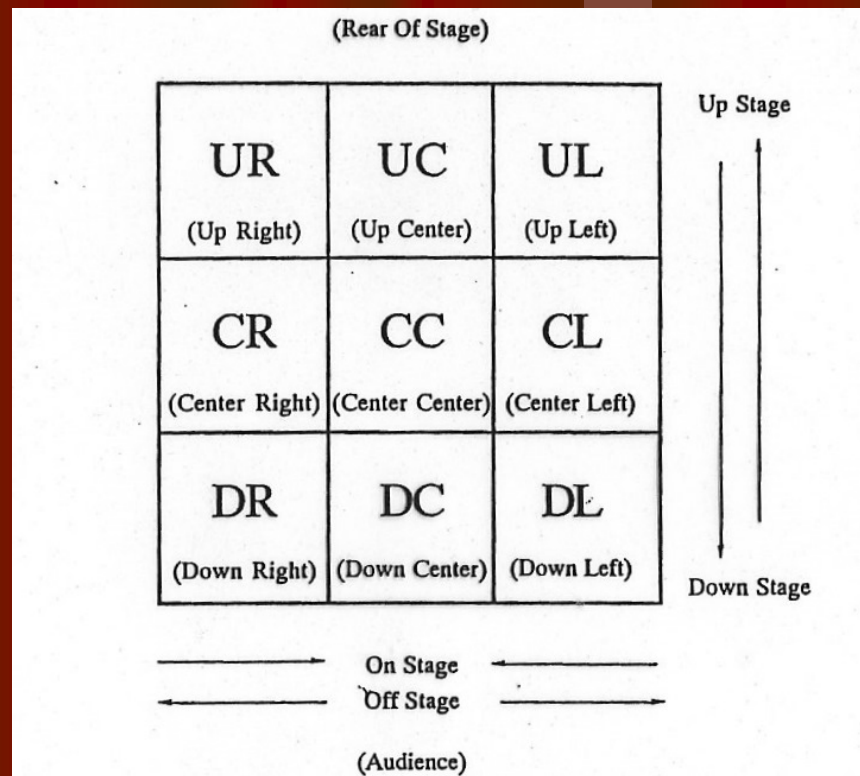
“Modern” period

- Mid-1900's
 - Less reliance on box-set
 - More emphasis on modern forms
 - More emphasis on abstraction
 - The set is no longer a “specific place”
 - Must function as a number of settings
 - Must convey information about theme, mood, etc.

The Stage Directions



The Stage Directions



Stage-right (SR) and stage-left (SL) are from the performer's view point when facing the audience.

In film and television, directions are commonly given as "camera right" and "camera left" which, being from the camera point of view, are exactly opposite stage directions.

Up-stage (US) is toward the rear of the theatre. Down-stage is toward the audience. Stages built before the 1900's were often "raked" or tilted higher at the rear; thus "up"-stage.

Four main types of Theater Architecture

- Proscenium
- Thrust
- Arena
- Flexible (Black Box)

Proscenium

- It's name comes from the Proscenium Arch that separates the stage from the audience
- The most common theater space in America
- Present in most Colleges, High Schools, Civic Auditoriums
- Maintains a face-to-face relationship between audience and actors

Proscenium



Thrust

- Keeps the relationship similar to Proscenium, but extends the forestage further into the audience
- Scenery must be kept to a minimum when used downstage to avoid obscuring action
- Some scenic elements may be taller in the far upstage

Thrust



Arena (Theatre-in-the-Round)

- Seating completely surrounds stage
- Scenery must be minimal, if at all
- Props, costumes and lighting do more to set the location, mood, tone, etc.
- Any character who enters the space does so in full view of the audience

Arena



Black Box (Flexible Space)

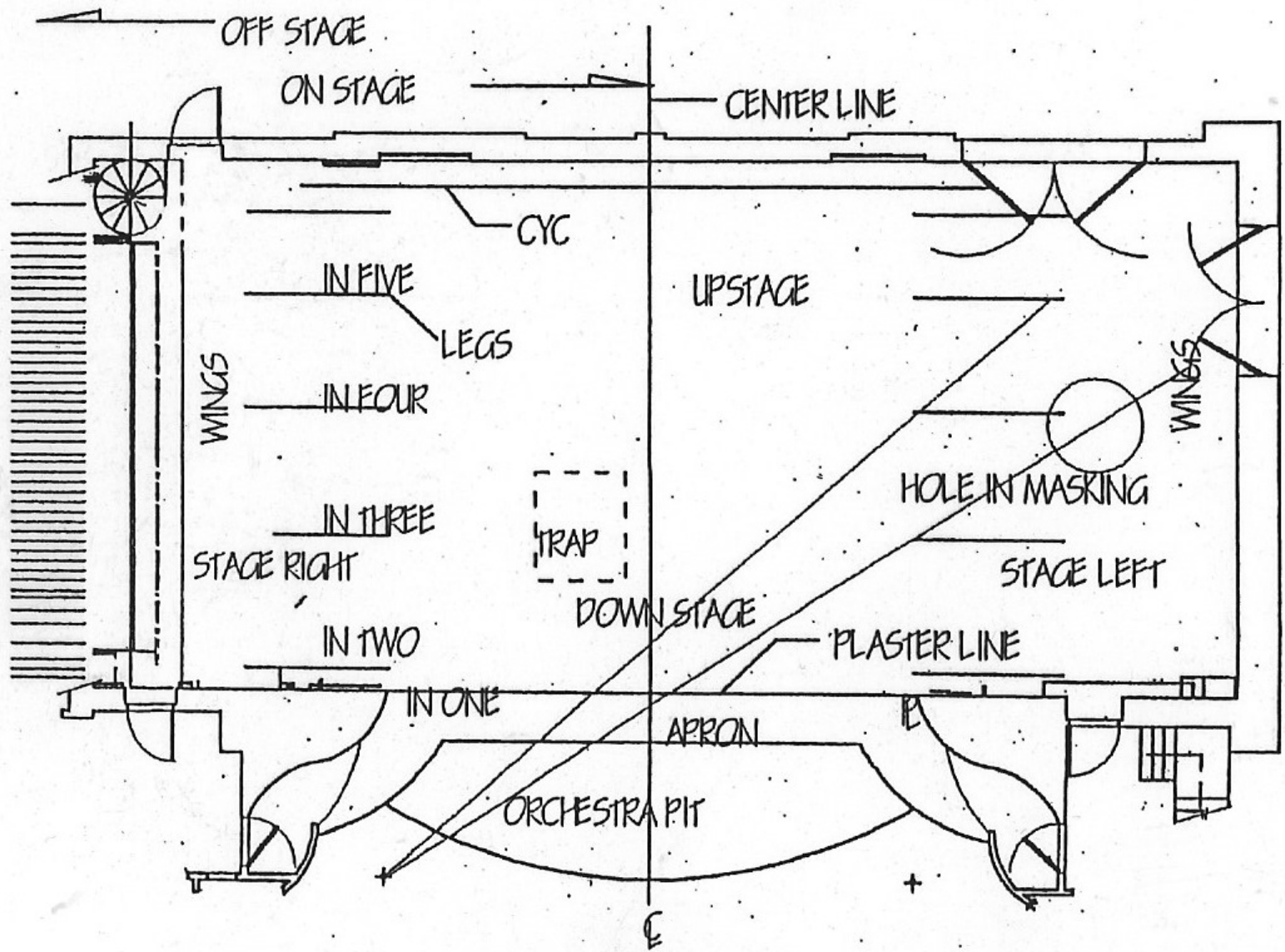
- Created from any space that can be used for performance, sometimes must serve a dual purpose (e.g., classroom by day, performance venue by night...)
- Popular on college campuses
- Stage and risers can be reconfigured to suit needs of production
- Pipes are usually hung for lighting and drapes to be easily re-configured
- Black Boxes are used to stage new or challenging productions that cannot draw mainstage-sized audiences
- Our Directing Studio is a black box where students can direct and design

Black Box

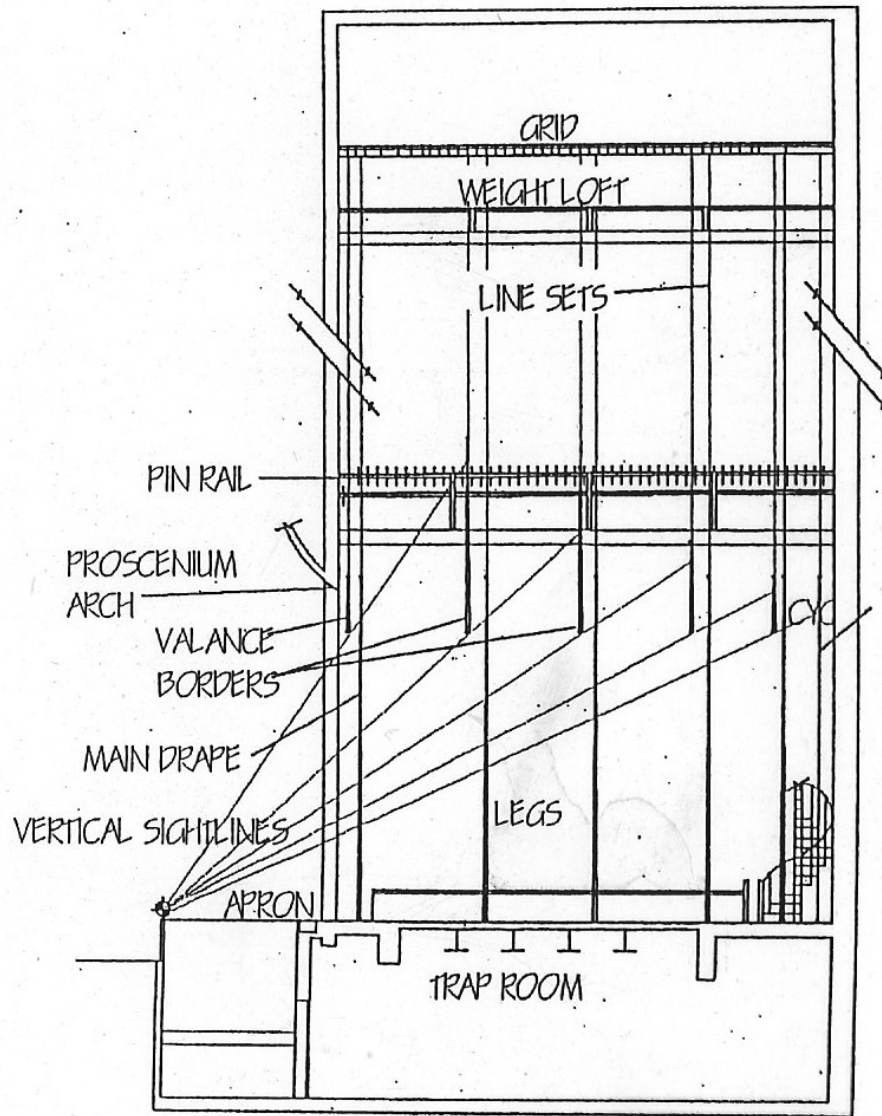


Stage Vocabulary

- Stage house – the structure which houses the stage
- Auditorium/House – where the audience sits
- Centerline – an imaginary line that divides Stage left from Stage right. Theater drawings often include a Section view, meaning a side view based off the center line
- Plaster line – an imaginary line, just upstage of the Proscenium arch, that separates the stage house from the auditorium
- Fly house – the part of the stage house that is OVER the actors' heads, where the fly system operates from
- Wings – areas created by drapes hanging at the side of the stage, used for entrances and exits, also to draw the eye inward
- Apron/forestage – the part of the stage downstage of the proscenium, sometimes removed for an orchestra pit
- Sightlines – imaginary lines drawn from the eye of the audience toward the offstage areas, used to determine to what extent the audience can see backstage



PLAN VIEW



SECTION VIEW