

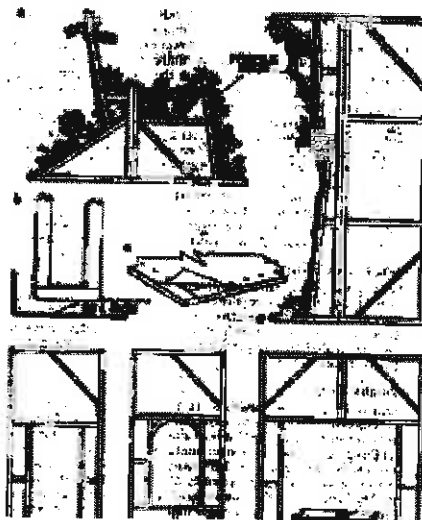
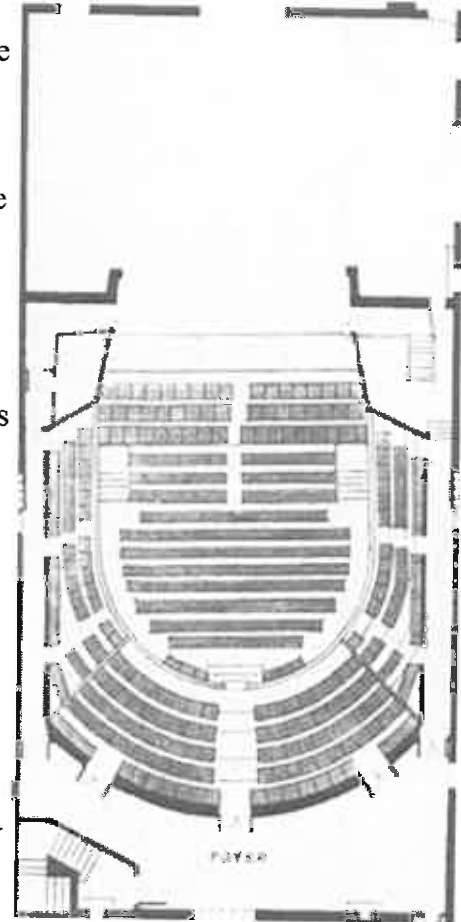
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Theatre Spaces, part 2

Proscenium theatres, also known as picture frame stages, developed during the Italian Renaissance. The audience experiences the theatrical event by looking through the "picture frame" of the proscenium arch. All audience members are seated on one side of the arch, like in a movie theatre, and all actors and scenic spectacle are framed within the arch or just in front of it. The proscenium theatre's primary advantage is that it hides or "masks" the actors and scenery used for other scenes and the machinery needed for scenic spectacles. Areas above, below, and to the sides of the stage are hidden from the audience's view by the frame of the proscenium.

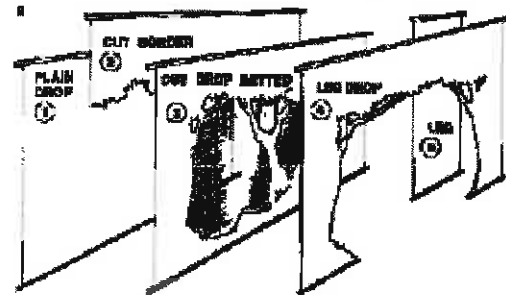
The area of the stage floor in front of the proscenium is called the **apron**. Descriptions of regions of the stage are given from the perspective of an actor facing the audience: thus **stage right** means in the direction of the actor's right, but the audience's left. Upstage and downstage are terms that date from the Renaissance, when the stage floor was built on a **rake**, or slope, to aid audience sight-lines and the illusion of perspective painted on the scenery. The back of the stage was higher than the front in these old theatres, and we still refer to stage areas farther from the audience as "upstage".


Most theatres have **traps**, or areas of the stage floor which can be removed for lowering and raising actors and scenery through the stage floor. In some theatres, the apron lowers to form an orchestra pit used in musical comedies. To each side of the stage, hidden from the audience by the proscenium, are the **wings**, where scenery is stored, lights are placed, and actors await entrances. Above the stage is usually a **fly loft**, where more lights are placed and where scenery, such as painted backdrops, can be suspended and then lowered to the stage floor or raised out of the sight of the audience.



Some of the basic scenic and lighting elements placed above in the fly loft, off-stage in the wings, or in the stage traps are flats, drops, platforms, wagons, trees, and battens. **Flats** are usually made of canvas stretched over a wooden frame, and are painted to look like interior or exterior walls, trees, or other relatively flat objects.

Drops are large pieces of fabric suspended from pipes and usually painted to resemble a landscape, building interior, or other location. A scrim and a cyclorama are each similar to drops in that




 they are large, suspended pieces of fabric, but each has a special property. A **scrim** is made of loosely woven fabric, which, when lit from the front appears opaque but when lit from the back appears translucent or transparent. A **cyclorama** is used in conjunction with lighting instruments; since it is white, any color light can be projected onto it to change the color and pattern of the scenic background. **Platforms** are usually constructed of wood and placed at various heights; they may represent the second floor of a house, a higher deck of a ship, or simply a different place from the scene on the stage floor but that the audience needs to see simultaneously. A **wagon** is simply a platform on wheels or in a track that can then move on the stage. Lighting **instruments** are typically hung above the stage, over the audience in front of the stage, and/or in the wings from the sides of the stage. Horizontally placed **pipes** for lighting instruments are called **battens** and vertically placed pipes are called **trees**.

A variety of curtains called **teasers** are commonly used to hide all of these structures from the audience's view. **Legs** are long black curtains in the wings that hide objects in the wings. **Borders** are hung from pipes in the fly loft to mask objects hung above. A combination of two legs, a border and the stage floor echo the shape of the proscenium arch. Theatres typically have three sets of teasers between the proscenium arch and the upstage wall. Actors and scenery can thus enter in any of four gaps on either side of the stage. These gaps are numbered from down to upstage; for example an actor entering the stage from **right-one** would enter from stage right between the proscenium arch and first leg. The large curtain that is often down as the audience enters is called the **main drape**; in some theatres it is highly elaborate, with painted or woven images.



The audience's area of the theatre is called the **house**. In this space, directions are given from the audience's perspective when facing the stage; thus house right means to a seated audience member's right. In the United States, the lowest area of audience seating is called the **orchestra**, and orchestra seats are normally the most expensive. Larger theatres usually also have at least one **balcony**, and many older theatres will have **boxes** along the sides the theatre on the balcony level(s).

 boxes in 1766 built theatre

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