Setting the Stage
Episode 1: Break a leg! An introduction to stagecraft.

SC Grades 2–12
NC Grades 2–8
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SOUTH CAROLINA STATE STANDARDS

Setting the Stage Episode 1 is an introduction video for basic theater direction and will prep the students for the subsequent videos in the series. **If you use these videos for science standards,** this video should be used for the sole purpose of introducing the series to your students. **If you use this video for an introduction to theater,** Episode 1 meets the following South Carolina State Academic Standards for Theater:

*Indicator T.P NL.4.1, T.P IL.4.1, T.P IM.4.1, T.P IH.4.1, T.P AL.4.1, T.P AH.4.1*

I can show the difference between performance and audience spaces. I can identify stage geography. I can explore levels in the stage picture. I can identify the roles of members of the production team.

*Indicator T.P IL.4.2, T.P AH.4.2* I can define the purpose of different performance and audience spaces. I can identify between parts of a stage.

*Indicator T.C AM.8.2, T.C AH.8.2* I can identify specific careers in theater. I can identify specific skills required for various careers in theater.

**Assessment:**
Choreograph a dance demonstrating the parts of a stage. This can be done alone or with a small group. Use the rubric [here](#) to guide you.

NORTH CAROLINA STATE STANDARDS

Aesthetics Essential Standard

*AE.1:* Understand how to design technical theatre components, such as costumes, sets, props, makeup, lighting, and sound.

*A.AE.1.2:* Use the knowledge and skills associated with technical roles, such as lighting operator, prop master, or stage manager, in an appropriate and effective manner.
PART I - VIDEO WORKSHOP

CLICK THE IMAGE ABOVE TO WATCH THE WORKSHOP

With a passion for the theatrical arts that goes back to grade school, Colin Skinner has been following his passion professionally for nearly twenty years. As the Head Carpenter for the Gaillard Center, Colin brings expertise to the stage in the form of carpentry, rigging, and various other technical aspects of entertainment production.
PART II - TYPES OF STAGES

What are the types of theater stages? There are multiple types of stages listed below. The stage Colin outlined in the video is the Martha and John M. Rivers Performance Hall at the Charleston Gaillard Center; it is a proscenium stage.

Proscenium stages
Proscenium stages have a frame known as the proscenium arch. The stages are deep and sometimes raked. Sometimes the front of the stage extends past the proscenium into the house. This is known as an apron or forestage. Theaters with proscenium stages are known as proscenium arch theaters and often include an orchestra pit for live music and a fly system for the movement of scenery, lighting, and sometimes people, as Colin mentioned.

Thrust stages
These “thrust” into the house with the audience sitting on three sides. The thrust stage area is not always square but may be semi-circular or have any number of sides.

Theaters-in-the-round
These have a central performance area enclosed by the audience on all sides and the actors enter through aisles between the seating.

Arenas
Arena theaters are large-scale halls or coliseum spaces and have a central stage area with audiences on all sides, similar to theaters-in-the-round.

Black box theaters
These are a single room painted black, with the floor of the stage at the same level as the first audience row. Seating is mobile and can be arranged in multiple ways.

Platform stages
These usually consist of a raised rectangular platform at one end of a room. The audience sits in rows facing the stage.

Hippodromes
Hippodromes are similar to circuses and have a circular arena surrounded by bleachers for seating.

Open-air theaters
These are outdoor theaters that do not have a roof, although sometimes parts of the stage or audience seating will be covered.

Site-specific theater
Site-specific theater is usually performed in a non-traditional theater space such as a home or warehouse, often reflecting the history, atmosphere, or experiences of a particular location.

Promenade theater
This involves the audience moving from place to place following the actors and performance.
PART II - TYPES OF STAGES

The Martha and John M. Rivers Performance Hall at the Charleston Gaillard Center is a proscenium theater. Proscenium theaters are named for the frame or arch over the stage. The arch is like a picture frame, framing the action on stage. It also provides space on each side of the stage that is hidden from the audience. This space can hide machinery, props, or the actors.

Here's a little history of the proscenium stage according to Encyclopedia Brittanica:

“Just before 1500, Italian amateur actors were performing classical comedies on stages with no decoration except for a row of curtained booths. By 1589, complex painted scenery and scene changes were being featured in production in Florence. And by 1650, Italy had developed staging practices that would dominate European theatre for the next 150 years.

In terms of staging, several medieval-type mansions were clustered to form a single large unit. There were, however, two elements not found previously. One was that the mansions were probably framed by decorative columns. This was the first movement toward the framework that would develop into the proscenium arch—the arch that encloses the curtain and frames the stage from the viewpoint of the audience. (The first permanent proscenium was built in the Teatro Farnese at Parma, Italy, in 1618–19, a temporary one having been constructed by Francesco Salviati 50 years earlier.) The second innovation was that the mansions, by being linked, were treated as components of a general city street. In 1508 at Ferrara a background painted according to the rules of perspective was substituted for the mansions; the scene included houses, churches, towers, and gardens.”

PART II - TYPES OF STAGES

As Colin and Riley demonstrated in the video, stage directions are necessary for the actor and the crew to know where to go on the stage. The illustration below shows the name for each portion of the stage. No matter which way you are facing, the stage directions stay the same. Colin and Riley also explained the stage in relation to the house. When referring to the house in theater, you are talking about the part of the theater where the audience sits for the performance.
Setting the Stage is presented in part by: