

APOLLO

EDUCATION

THE APOLLO THEATER STUDY GUIDE

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LET'S GO TO THE THEATER!



WHAT IS THEATER?

Theater itself is old as civilization, but the English word “*theater*” is actually much younger and its origin is Ancient Greek.

The word “*theater*” is derived from the ancient Greek words **theatron** “a place for viewing” and **theaomai** “to see, to watch, to observe”. Today, we use the word “theater” in a variety of ways. Here are a few common uses:

- Theater is a **form of art** that is **collaborative** by nature. Live performers present an experience (real or imagined) to a live audience.
- Theater is the **performance space** where live **performances** (plays, concerts, dances, etc.) happen. The space can come in many different shapes, sizes, and locations. It can be outdoors or indoors. It can be as minimal or as elaborate in size, decoration and functionality as required by the performance.
- Theater is a **profession** that takes hard work, determination, and many times requires special training or particular skill. The most common

areas are acting, directing, producing, stagecraft, or writing.

- Theater is a **spectacle** that is specifically prepared or arranged, often with stage display and pageantry, to help present the experience. The spectacle of the performance is what makes you say, “ooohhh,” or “ahhhh.”
- Theater is an **experience** shared between the audience and the performers.

Birthplace of Western theater

Ancient Greece, circa 5th century B.C. The city of Athens was the center of all things political, military, and cultural. Classical Greek culture was synonymous with theatricality and performance. Festivals, religious rituals, symposia, political and philosophical debates, athletic tournaments, and poetic competitions were an important part of the Greek citizen’s daily life.

For the ancient Greeks, drama was closely connected with religion. The religious festival honoring the Greek god **Dionysus** is considered the birthplace of Western theater.

Theater in the 5th century BC was a very different experience than today.

Plays were:

- Performed in outdoor theaters.
- Funded by the **polis** (a city-state in ancient Greece, its citizens).
- Performed as part of religious festivals in honor of the god Dionysus.
- Performed by a **chorus** and three actors (no matter the number of characters in the play).
- Performed using masks.

What did ancient Greek theater look like?

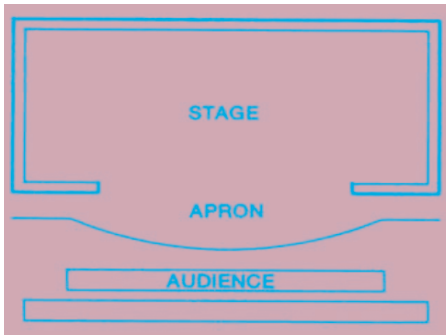
The core of any ancient Greek theater is the **orchestra**, the “dancing place” of the chorus and main performing area. The audience sat in the semi-circled **theatron** “viewing place”. Directly behind the orchestra was a covered and decorated structure or **skene** “tent” where actors stored masks and costumes and made quick costume changes.

Entrances and exits for the chorus, actors, and audience were made through the **parados** “passageway” on either side of the *skene*.

Theater structures today

Whether it was ancient Greece or today, all theater structures share a few basic elements. All theaters have a playing space for the performers, seating or standing place for the audience, and places through which the audience enters and exits. Today's theaters not only vary in size, interior, decoration, and location, they further distinguish themselves by arranging the stage and the audience in varying configurations.

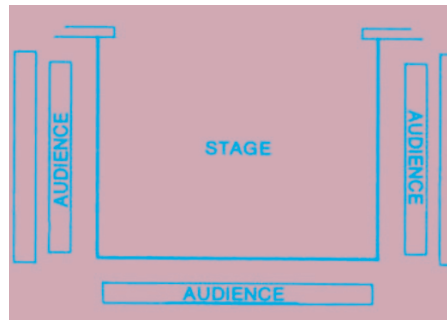
The most common types of stages today are:



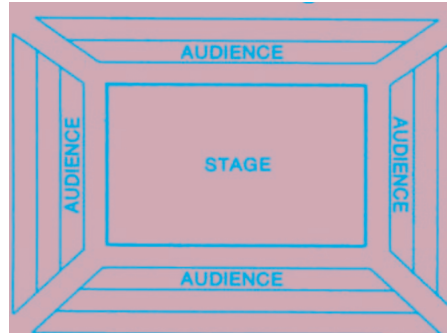
- **Proscenium** or “picture frame” stage. The primary feature is a large opening known as the **proscenium arch** – a horseshoed shaped structure over the front of the stage through which the audience views the performance and from which a curtain often hangs. The audience directly faces the stage and views only one side of the scene. This one side is commonly known as the invisible **fourth wall** of the scene.

DO NOW

Create your own theater, with a proscenium stage and arch. Choose a name and design the proscenium arch. What symbols will you use to represent your theater?



- **Thrust** is a stage that extends beyond the proscenium arch, usually surrounded on three sides by the audience.



- **Arena** is a performance space surrounded on all sides by the audience.

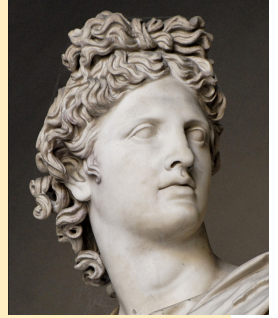
The Apollo and theater traditions from around the world

New York City is a major arts and cultural center and is home to many theaters of all sizes: large, small, and everything in between. The Apollo Theater is located in Harlem. It presents a variety of shows, from those that feature musicians and singers to shows that feature actors and speakers.

When audiences experience a show at the Apollo they are having an experience influenced by theater traditions that are as close as 42nd street, as far away as Europe and West Africa, and as recent as the early 1900s and as long ago as the 5th century B.C. These influences create a unique entertainment experience that is now world-famous and known as the **Apollo Experience!**

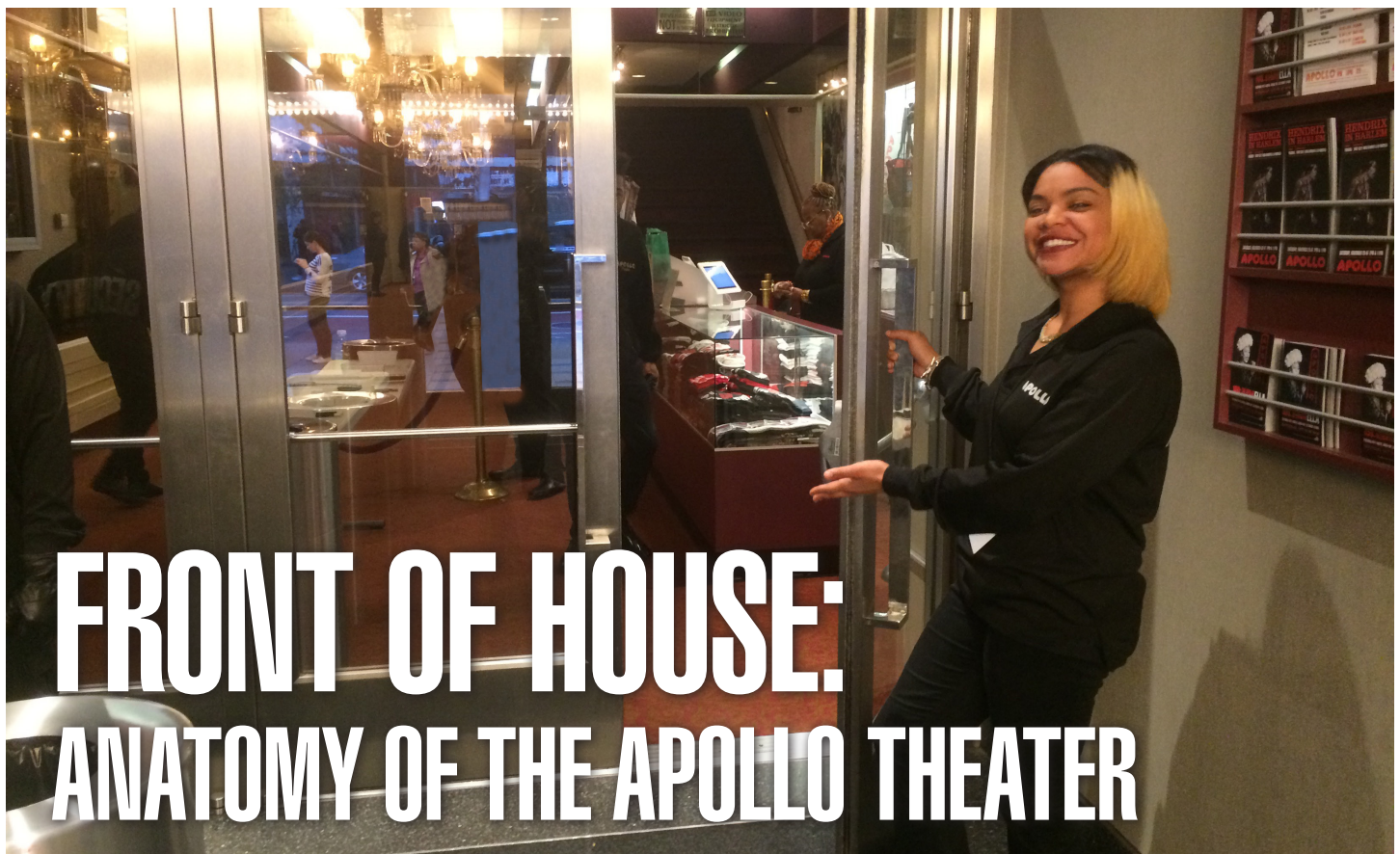
DID YOU KNOW?

- Apollo Theater takes its name from the ancient Greek god **Apollo** associated with music, the sun, healing, and **prophecy**. It's no wonder why Apollo audiences expect and receive experiences that last a lifetime.
- The Teatro Farnese, which is located in Parma, Italy, was built starting in 1619. It was the first theater to have a proscenium stage. Proscenium stages vary in size and decoration. The Apollo's proscenium arch (shown below) features elegant symbols of golden wreaths and horses.



DID YOU KNOW?

A **black box** theater is a simple performance space. It is usually square with black walls and floor, and can be transformed through stage and set design for many different types of performances.



MARQUEE Walking down 125th Street in Harlem on your way to the Apollo one of the first things you will see is the marquee. This is the sign over the entrance to the Apollo that displays the titles of the shows being presented at the theater.

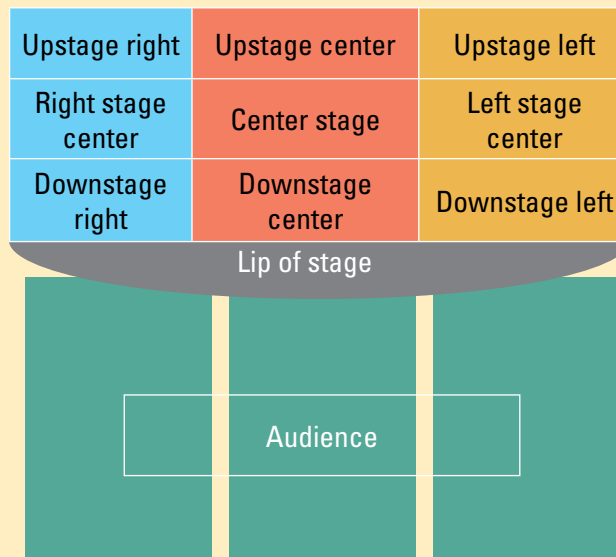
BOX OFFICE Under the marquee step up to the window of this small booth enclosed in glass where you buy tickets. Try to get the best seats in the house!

LOBBY Once you enter the lobby, you may get sidetracked by the gift shop. Here is where you can buy t-shirts, caps, mugs, and other souvenirs. Look up and admire the decorative chandeliers. They were shipped all the way from Italy. To the right you see murals filled with pictures of famous artists that have performed at the Apollo.

HOUSE Pass through one of the three sets of double doors.

THINK ABOUT IT!

Below is a diagram of the stage positions a director uses to tell an actor where to stand. Are “right” and “left” determined by the actor or the audience?



DID YOU KNOW?

The terms “upstage” and “downstage” come from the time when stages were raked or tilted. The higher end was “up” at the back and slanted “down” toward the audience. Imagine how hard it was for dancers!

You are now in the seating area for the audience known as the orchestra section. The center large area, center orchestra has 18 rows of plush red seats. House right and left each has 21 rows of seats, each section of seats is separated by long aisles that lead to the stage. If you look up to the right or left of the stage, you’ll see **box seats**.

MEZZANINE Take a walk down one of the aisles and take a moment to look up and around. You will see two levels of balconies. They are called the upper and lower mezzanines.

THE SEATS

on either side or closest to the stage are called **box seats**. They are separate rooms that typically seat up to five people. Historically these are the most prominent seats in the house. Why do you think people would want to sit there? Think about it, would you want to sit there?



BEHIND THE SCENES: WHO WORKS IN A THEATER?

Before any performance hits the stage, there is a team of people working behind the scenes to bring the show to life. The **producer** oversees all aspects of the show's production from start to finish. This may include choosing the script, the performance's date and time, and hiring a team of people who can assist in making the performance happen.

Working to develop flyers, brochures, websites, and other materials to advertise the event is the **marketing team**. They know exactly what to say to grab people's attention and entice them to buy tickets for a show. How will people know and why should they come to the theater unless we tell them something wonderful and exciting is happening?

In addition to collecting money from tickets sold, a theater may have a **fundraising team** to help raise extra money for the theater. The fundraising team may also create strategies that encourage people to visit the theater more often, such as a membership program.

Finally it's the night of the performance. The Apollo experience begins as soon as audience members are greeted by one of the Apollo **ushers**. The ushers are very important to the Apollo team. They are the first face of the Apollo experience. Their job is to greet every audience member, scan each ticket, give each person a program for the performance, and direct audience members to their seats.

After the show, if you're lucky, there might be a discussion with the performers. If so, then one of the theater's **educators** will likely lead the conversation and call on people in the audience who wish to ask the performers a question. Sometimes educators will hand out study guides that have been created to help you further learn about and explore what you've seen.

DID YOU KNOW?

No theater experience is complete without the expertise and work of the technical staff. As the name suggests, the **technical staff** is responsible for the operation of all the technical elements in a show. Some members of the technical staff are lighting and sound technicians, spotlight operators, carpenters, and wardrobe assistants.

The stage manager leads the technical staff. The stage manager brings the Director's vision to life; she or he oversees the whole production and coordinates the many moving parts. The all seeing and all-knowing stage manager schedules and coordinates technical rehearsals and also calls the show's **cues** during a performance so that the technical elements happen at the right time and in the right place.

Everything seen or heard during a performance happens as a result of the stage manager calling cues. With the help of technology, headsets, and monitors a stage manager can run a show from backstage, from the house, or from a control booth far from the stage.

SPOTLIGHT ON: Laura Greer

Apollo Theater Associate Producer



An Early Passion

As the Apollo's Associate **Producer**, Laura Greer's passion for the arts fuels her work. Involved in creative endeavors since childhood, Laura discovered in middle school that she adored being the key person to make sure everything got done behind the scenes for a show to be a success. This combination of artistic creativity and excellent organizational skills makes her perfect for the Associate Producer job—taking performances from an idea to dazzling completion.

Start at The End

Surprisingly, you start at the very end when you begin planning a show. Right off, you sit down to visualize (see in your mind's eye) exactly what you want to unfold on stage in 15-30 minute segments for the lights, sound, stage sets, and any visuals. As Associate Producer, Laura gets to think backwards from the end product to beginning instead of the other way around!

The Work Begins

Okay, got your vision? The very next step is hiring a superb production manager who will serve as your key communicator between you and the technical staff who work with the lights, sound, and stage design, everything related to what you want the performance to look like. The production manager will also be the person who handles communication between you and the artists. It would be impossible to get anything done if you had to deal with all these people simultaneously.

But Laura's job isn't just about what you'll see on stage. There are endless business aspects of producing a show. Laura has to determine the show's time and dates, set the ticket prices, and work with the marketing department to plan the best way to get the word out to the right people for a particular show. And there's arranging the artists' fees, transportation, hotels, food, props, costumes, and rental of any special equipment they might want. Keeping track of all this, and the budget to pay for it, is a fascinating juggling act for anyone who enjoys doing more than one thing at a time.

The Show Must Go On

So let's say the big day arrives and you've done absolutely everything right. Yet, sometimes something totally unplanned occurs. Laura recalls one hair-raising night when a severe snowstorm started shortly before show. She had to decide whether or not to cancel. A saying in the theater is, no matter what, "the show must go on!" And so it did. Luckily, the loyal Apollo audience showed up and the show was a huge success.

Expecting the unexpected is all part of Laura's job, and she loves the intricate process of bringing to life what a performing artist wants to express, and thrives on being part of a creative community, always exploring and innovating.

Theater terms and traditions

Break a Leg Why in the world would you tell an actor "to break a leg"? The term is actually used to wish a performer "good luck" and is thought to have come from the French 17th century court of King Louis XIV. If the king was pleased by a performance, he would call the actors before him, and they would bow low. If the audience keeps applauding that means they are happy, the performers get to bow a lot, which requires bending at the knee, and hence "breaking a leg."

Cue A cue is a verbal or physical signal to do or say something. During rehearsals a director will give the performers their cues for entering/exiting. On stage actors give each other cues by saying specific lines from the script or by making specific gestures or movements.

Green Room This is where performers hang out, rehearse or relax before or after being on stage. No, the room isn't green. There are tons of theories about how it got its name that go back to the 17th century. One theory is that performers would wait in the green room to get paid, since money is green, it was called the green room.

Ghost Light This is a stand with a single bulb left on stage when the entire theater is dark so when the crew comes back no one trips over the scenery or tumbles off the edge of the stage. Some people believe theaters are haunted and the light keeps spirits away or from bumping into things themselves.

Waiting in the Wings Is when a performer is waiting in the areas right or left of the stage to listen or look for the stage manager to call or cue them to the stage.



A ROUND OF APPLAUSE

What do you do to show that you have enjoyed a performance or event at a theater?

If you're like the audience members in ancient Rome and Greece, you are more-than-likely to show your appreciation by clapping. Smacking your hands together to recreate thunderous sounds heard in nature.

Clapping is essentially patting someone on the back to show your

appreciation from afar. Across the world, clapping, also known as “a round of applause,” is the universal sign to performers for a job well done.

Applause dates back to ancient Rome and Greece, where theater-goers mostly used clapping, snapping of the fingers, and a wave of the flap of the toga or a handkerchief to create noise to signify their appreciation.

Applause was a way for the crowd to say ‘thank you’ to the performers, or to communicate how much they liked the performance. If they liked it, they would applaud very loudly and for a long time. If they did not like it, they would applaud quickly without much noise. In this way, an audience could communicate in unison.

The Apollo Theater encourages expression of appreciation and dissatisfaction during Amateur Night. The Apollo Theater is the only theater that allows “booing” during the performances on Amateur Night. It makes performers work hard to win the approval of the audience. And now to celebrate coming to the end of this study guide and your job well done: Give yourself a hand!

DID YOU KNOW?

In many cultures, such as in West Africa, the audience participates in the performance and is encouraged to take part in the experience by clapping, dancing, singing along or taking part in a call-and-response with the performers.

**Word
search
answers**

B	I	V	I	F	F	F	B	T	V	W	A	C	F	O	K	N	R	V	H	P	P
P	D	P	E	R	F	O	R	M	A	N	C	E	S	I	I	S	H	T	P	R	P
D	A	C	B	O	X	S	E	A	T	S	I	X	D	F	U	M	Y	W	O	O	G
F	R	X	A	Q	X	S	K	Y	N	P	B	V	P	R	M	L	F	K	L	P	L
I	S	C	B	N	H	M	Y	N	I	W	M	O	O	Q	Y	V	R	L	I	H	O
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Q	W	A	E	W	G	J	C	V	Q	I	U	C	G	J	A	W	Q	L	H	Y	A
E	S	P	C	S	C	O	L	L	A	B	O	R	A	T	I	V	E	L	R	V	X
V	W	V	P	T	N	O	R	C	H	E	S	T	R	A	C	Q	M	L	A	E	E
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Y	T	C	H	C	P	R	O	D	U	C	E	R	F	L	K	E	Q	B	V	U	Z

WORD SEARCH

Find the words listed below. You can find the meaning of each word in the guide.

B	I	V	I	F	F	F	B	T	V	W	A	C	F	O	K	N	R	V	H	P	P
P	D	P	E	R	F	O	R	M	A	N	C	E	S	I	I	S	H	T	P	R	P
D	A	C	B	O	X	S	E	A	T	S	I	X	D	F	U	M	Y	W	O	O	G
F	R	X	A	Q	X	S	K	Y	N	P	B	V	P	R	M	L	F	K	L	P	L
I	S	C	B	N	H	M	Y	N	I	W	M	O	O	Q	Y	V	R	L	I	H	O
Z	I	F	S	A	U	W	Y	P	X	Z	L	H	J	T	F	R	O	F	S	E	K
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