

CANBERRA THEATRE CENTRE

LIGHTING TERMINOLOGY

BACKCLOTH/BLACKDROP

Cloth, usually painted, suspended from the FLYS at the rear of the stage

BACK CURTAIN

Curtain suspended across the stage, approximately 1 metre from the BACK WALL, providing access for actors to cross behind the stage. See also CROSSOVER.

BACK LIGHTING

Lighting from upstage or behind actors arranged to enhance the actors. These lights are hung upstage of the actors and focused downstage – actors faces are usually dark but light will illuminate the rear of the actors providing a halo effect. Backlighting coupled with other lighting helps provide depth to characters/actors.

BAR

Horizontally flown rod (usually metal) from which scenery, lighting and other equipment is suspended.

BARN DOORS

Removable shutters fitted to floodlights and Fresnel lanterns to limit or shape the beam of light.

BLACKOUT

Complete absence of stage lighting. Blue working lights backstage should remain on and are not usually under the control of the board, except during a Dead Blackout (DBO), when there is no onstage light. Exit signs and other emergency lighting must remain on at all times.

The act of turning off (or fading out) stage lighting (e.g. "This is where we go to blackout")

BLUES

Blue lights used backstage in performance situations.

CHASE

A repeated sequence of changing lighting states.

CROSSFADE

Bringing a new lighting state up whilst bringing the previous one down, so that the new one completely replaces the old one.

CUE

The signal for an action by an actor or a technician during a performance. Actors' cues are mostly verbal. Technicians may be given a cue verbally, over comms, by the stage manager, or visually by a cue light. A technician's cue is in two stages – 'standby' and 'go'.

CYCLORAMA (CYC)

A Cyc is a large curtain at the back of the stage area. It is used for projection or lighting purposes.

FADE

An increase or decrease or change in lighting level.

FLY

The action of lifting an item up (out) or down (in) when attached to the Flying counterweight system. Scenery is said to have been Flown.

FLY TOWER

The part of the theatre building above the stage that contains the FLYS.

GOBO

A thin metal plate etched to produce a design that is projected by a light e.g. tree foliage. LED moving lights replicate GOBO effects with patterns and movement.

HOUSE LIGHTS

These refer to the lights in the auditorium (FOH – front of House) in the actual theatre, not the lights on the stage. The house lights illuminate the entire audience area.

LEGS

The vertical soft black drapes at the side of the stage masking the wings from the audience.

LEVELS

The intensity of light ranging from 100% (brightest the light can get) to 0% (no light or blackout).

LIGHTING STATE

Each lighting cue results in a different “state”. This allows lighting operators / designers to create “lighting states”.

SIDE LIGHT

Side light is the most commonly used in Dance and the most useful in revealing the actor/dancers form and features.

SILHOUETTE

To light the cyclorama in such a way that the actors are cast into shadow. The audience is unable to see their facial features.

SMOTHER

The large black curtain that covers the Cyc to create a black box theatre look.

SPECIAL

Lighting term – usually a spotlight used for a special effect, such as a lighting a single actor in one place.

TABS

Originally "tableaux curtains" which drew outwards and upwards, but now generally applied to any stage curtains including a vertically flying front curtain (house tabs) and especially a pair of horizontally moving curtains that overlap at the centre and move outwards from that centre.

TECHNICAL REHEARSAL

Usually the first time the show is rehearsed in the venue with lighting, scenery and sound, and costumes where they may cause technical problems (e.g. quick changes). Also known as the TECH RUN, or just TECH. A tech run without actors is known as a dry run.

TOPPING AND TAILING

Cutting out action and dialogue between cues during a technical rehearsal, to save time.

WASH

A lighting state covering the whole stage, generally in colour.

WINGS

The space between the tabs or curtains. Where all entrances and exits on and off stage occur.

WORKLIGHTS

Work lights refer to the lights that are on (both onstage and in the house) for the cast and crew to work by during a rehearsal or tech-check, while the theatrical lights for performance are being rigged (set up).