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BY ED HARRIS***

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THE DUMMY'S GUIDE TO BEING LOST

A DUMMY'S GUIDE TO BEING LOST

*A short play
by Ed Harris*

Characters

LAUREN

TONI

MAGGI

MAN¹

PHELPS

MRS. GRUYERE

CHICK, GUMP & HADLOW

WORKER 1

WORKER 2

Notes on text and staging:

*Characters in this text have been given genders, but they can all easily be changed without any changes to the text (except pronouns, titles and some names. **TONI** and **MAGGI** can easily become **TONY** and **MATTY** for example.) Likewise, **LAUREN** doesn't need to be female and **MAN** can equally be **WOMAN**.*

*Apart from **LAUREN**, **MAN** and **WORKER 1 & 2**, none of the characters in this are not assumed to be totally human – but it's your play, so of course they can be!*

I've indicated at the top of each scene which spaces are exterior and interior, but there is no reason why Scene One or Scene Two can't become the interior scene, and Scene Three to be an exterior scene, if your creative team have a better idea!

¹ *MAN on the phone and MAN on the platform are the same character. Worker 1 and Worker 2 can double-up with characters from the weird 'lost' world, in a kind of Wizard of Oz ("You were there, and you were there....") moment.*



SCENE 1.

Exterior. Sunset.

The Lost & Found area of a tip.

A strange cacophony of lost artifacts, some new, and some of which must be dating back a century or more. There is something to use as a chair.

LAUREN is asleep on the something-to-use-as-a-chair. She is dressed for a 'professional' job, probably something in the City. **TONI** is sniffing at **LAUREN**. **MAGGI**, impatient, has a big ledger, pen hovering above the page...

MAGGI: What is it?

TONI: Shh.

MAGGI: Poke it!

TONI: I am doing my job –

MAGGI: Poke it! Pinch it!

TONI: Do you wanna do it?

MAGGI *looks repulsed.* **TONI** *sniffs* **LAUREN** *again.*

MAGGI: I'm putting down 'coat'. "Coat: long black coat. Handed in on the 18th of March...."

TONI: Coat's just the beginning.

MAGGI: Coat and bag.

TONI: What about the... *thing* snoring inside it?

MAGGI: (*Writes.*) "Coat with attachment".

A clock starts chiming.

TONI: Oh no. Oh no.

TONI *starts running around, trying to intercept the clocks/alarms as they all start chiming.* **MAGGI** *reacts in pain.*

MAGGI: Smash them! Break them!

TONI: And what if someone comes to collect their lost clock? What then?

The two sisters yelp in shock/fright when they see LAUREN awake.

TONI & MAGGI: We've got a live one! / It's a live one!

LAUREN: Where am I? Who are you! Have I been kidnapped? Do You Know Who I Am?

MAGGI: You're... (*Looks in book.*) "Coat With Attachment".

LAUREN: I promise you I'm not.

MAGGI: (*To TONI*) She's angry.

TONI: Give her a biscuit.

MAGGI: What?! I've just finished counting them. (*Finds page.*) See? 63 assorted hobnobs and four plain digestives. And a Lion bar.

TONI: Give her a hobnob.

MAGGI: I will not mess up my lovely ledger for... *that thing!*

LAUREN *is trying to get reception on her phone.*

LAUREN: Why can't I get any reception? (*Beat.*) Look. Whoever you are, I'm a Very Important Woman, and I have a keynote speech to deliver this afternoon in Gravesend, to a Very Important Committee of Very Important People. Where is this?

MAGGI: Lost and Found.

LAUREN: Right, thank you. And how do I get out of this... where *are* we?

TONI: There's only one way. That way.

LAUREN: Okay.

LAUREN *heads That Way.*

MAGGI: But you can't leave until you've been claimed.

LAUREN: Say again?

TONI: You can't go until you've been claimed, Coat With Attachment.

LAUREN: My name's Lauren.

TONI: Coat With Lauren.

MAGGI: No-no! I'm not changing it, it's already in the book!

TONI We can only cross an item off when its been claimed by its rightful owner; and then -

MAGGI: - and only then -

TONI: - can we release the item, Coat With Attachment.

LAUREN: Okay then.

The Sisters open the ledger and sit at the something-to-use-as-a-table, and are ready to write.

LAUREN: I, Lauren Buttigeig, am the rightful owner of... “Coat With Attachment”.

MAGGI Okay. And does your item have any identifying features, Ms Buttigeig?

LAUREN: Identifying features?

TONI: In order to ascertain the rightful owner, you might have to identify the item more... specifically?

LAUREN: The item is me!

MAGGI: Can you remember where you lost the item?

LAUREN: Erm. Yes. I was in Paddington Station, on the right platform... it was crowded. And I was just about to get on the train, but... what was it? There was someone in like a blue raincoat – no, it was a duffle-coat because I remember thinking it was like Paddington Bear, and we were in Paddington Station, so, y’know. And have you ever had that sense sometimes like you’ve met someone already. The way he looked at me... these amazing sort of sunset eyes. Like someone you were Meant to meet - like, fate or something? I don’t know why I thought that.

TONI AND MAGGI: Love?

LAUREN: “Love”? You know I have to be in Gravesend? I was about to say something to him... or maybe I was about to get on the train, I can’t remember... Did I pass out or something, is that how I got here?

MAGGI: I’m so sorry, Coat With Attachment - the manager will require more proof than a sappy love story about a smile in a station.

LAUREN: And what kind of proof would I need to prove that I’m mine?!

MAGGI: A receipt?

LAUREN: A RECEIPT? I’M NOT A – (**LAUREN’S phone rings.**) This will be someone from my office - they can explain who I am. One moment.

She answers.

MAN: Hello?

LAUREN: Yes, hello, can you send a cab to collect me? I've been delayed.

MAN: Hellooo? She's not responding.

LAUREN: I am. Can you heeeeeaaaaaar me? (*She gives up.*) No reception.

TONI: This is my advice: with you live ones, it's usually a couple of weeks until someone notices you're missing and comes and collects you. Meantime, accept you're lost and get comfy.

LAUREN: I'm not Lost!

TONI: Where are you?

LAUREN: I'm – Oh.

MAGGI: Exactly.

TONI: There's nothing wrong with being Lost.

MAGGI: There's no adventure without it.

LAUREN: I'm never Lost. In my company I'm the X where X marks the spot, the X that stands for Here. For Found. I'm the Foundest person I know!

TONI: Oh, give her a hobnob.

MAGGI: No! It's always the same with the live ones. "I'm Not Lost" "I'm The Centre of Everything" "Let Me Speak To The Manager" and I'm sick of it!

LAUREN: That's it.

TONI: What?

LAUREN: Let me speak to the Manager.

TONI and MAGGI *gasp in horror.*

TONI: You don't want to speak to the Manager...

MAGGI: No-one wants to speak to the Manger...

TONI: Stay: have a hobnob –

MAGGI: Have them all – have the Lion bar!

TONI: Please don't see the manager.

LAUREN: Why not?

MAGGI: Well...

LAUREN: Yes?

Suddenly, the clocks goes off again.

TONI: Oh no. Oh no.

MAGGI: Smash them! Break them all!

TONI runs around trying to turn them off again. **LAUREN** uses this opportunity to escape... 'That Way'.

End of scene



SCENE 2.

Exterior. Night.

*This is where **PHELPS** lives. I can't quite explain what makes this his home, or why he likes it so much here – but it is, and he does, and you know what it looks like better than me. What I do know is that there is old television set with a cup and string attached, and is listening to the cup end while flicking channels – but the television remains black. **LAUREN** enters, trying to get reception on her phone – can't.*

LAUREN: Excuse me?

PHELPS: Nice. (*Flicks channel.*) Nice...

LAUREN: I'm looking for the manager's office, but...

PHELPS: (*Flicks.*) Cool, yup. (*Flicks.*) Great...

LAUREN: Hello?

PHELPS: You know what, I think I've done it!

LAUREN: Done what?

PHELPS: Got this whaddayacallit exactly perfect! Look.

PHELPS *flicks channels.*

LAUREN: Nothing.

PHELPS: Don't say it like that. Say it like this: Nothing! Everywhere you look, there's nothing to see. No hoohah, no pushing and shoving, no crowds, no endless questions about "how does it feel to be the most successful musician in the world" or "did you really date whatsherchops". Just me, a carton of juice, and a whole world of people.... not thinking about me.

LAUREN: Do people normally think about you?

PHELPS: Oh now, let's not be shy: it's me! (*He bows.*) And yes, you may.

LAUREN: May – ?

PHELPS: Yes.

LAUREN: What?

PHELPS: A selfie. Avec moi.

LAUREN: Oh. Okay. (*Takes a selfie.*)

PHELPS: Let's see.

LAUREN: It's nice.

PHELPS: It's *okay*. You could have squidged over a little bit, it's mostly... "You". Please don't 'at' me -

LAUREN: No no, of course.

PHELPS: - because I'm a Recluse.

LAUREN: Also... I don't know who you are.

Pause.

PHELPS: You'll kick yourself.

LAUREN: I don't think I will.

PHELPS: I'm Phelps.

LAUREN: Phelps?

PHELPS: Just Phelps. The Incredibly Famous World Superstar Musician: Phelps? (*No response.*) Two all-stadium world tours? I sang: "Modest, Moi?!" C'mon, you've never heard of me? I'm very big in Japan.

LAUREN: Sorry.

PHELPS: You know what this means?

LAUREN: What?

PHELPS: I'm better than I thought. I'm so forgotten you can't even remember me!

LAUREN: Or your TV's broken.

PHELPS: Hardy-har-har. This isn't your average television. It taps into the souls of my admirers, all across the world. See! (*Flicks.*) Six months ago there'd be people on every channel. Washing up – thinking about me. Going to bed – thinking about me. Walking the dog – thinking about me. Literally millions of squillions of channels of souls, pining for me, craving me, daydreaming about me!

LAUREN: So when they're not thinking about you –

PHELPS: The channel goes blank. See! (*Flicks.*)

LAUREN *picks up the cord.*

LAUREN: You know it's not plugged into anything?

PHELPS: You don't know very much about televisions, do you?

LAUREN: Okay. Do it on me.

PHELPS: *You?*

LAUREN: I need to contact a colleague or family member or *someone*, so... do me.

PHELPS *hands her the cup on a string.*

PHELPS: Hold this to your heart.

LAUREN: Riiight.

LAUREN *does so.* **PHELPS** *adjusts the old-timey aerial on top of the set.*

PHELPS: Now just hold... hold still... It's calibrated for me, so it might struggle to pick up on your signal. On the other hand...

LAUREN: It doesn't work.

PHELPS: Or no-one's thinking about you.

LAUREN: Or it doesn't work.

PHELPS: Or no-one's thinking about you.

LAUREN: Or –

PHELPS: No-one likes you!

LAUREN: It's not 'friends' I need. I need to see the Manager. Through some kind of admin error, I've been marked down as Lost, and I'm not.

PHELPS: You want to speak to Mrs Gruyere?

LAUREN: If that's her name.

PHELPS: So you can challenge your status as "Lost"?

LAUREN: Yes. I'm really Found – in fact, I'm on my way to Gravesend - I just need to explain to her that I was filled in wrong in the ledger.

PHELPS: But you don't know where to find her?

LAUREN: That's right.

PHELPS: Or where you are?

LAUREN: Precisely.

PHELPS: Well, problem solved: You're Lost now. Take a seat – have a carton of juice – relax!

LAUREN: No, that's –

PHELPS: But don't get a big head. Getting Lost is easy – getting yourself Forgotten, now that's real talent.

LAUREN: Look. Do you know where I can find this Gruyere woman or not?

PHELPS: So you can go back to the office and remind people to remember you? What's so good about being remembered anyway? People hassle you for opinions you don't have, so you try to sound smart, just like when you see attractive people online and you feel like you've gotta be better looking... or at least more outgoing... at least more successful. Or something. *For god's sake give me Something!* Nice garden, shiny car, whatever treads, whatever hair, whatever boyfriend... And why? So that people can look at you and go: "Here she is. She looks So Found she makes me feel lost." When we're *all* lost, all the time – and the sooner we accept that, the happier we are!

LAUREN: Maybe you're right, Phelps, but first, I have to find Mrs Gruyere -

PHELPS: You won't like her.

LAUREN: I don't have to like her. I have to see her.

PHELPS: She won't like you.

LAUREN: I'm not here to be liked.

PHELPS: Have a carton of juice!

LAUREN: No!

PHELPS reveals a sign – it says *MANAGER'S OFFICE*, with an arrow.

PHELPS: And when you start hearing the screaming and banging and shouting, follow your ears. You're headed in the right direction.

LAUREN: Screaming?

PHELPS: Or you can put your feet up with me, watch nothing on the box and have some juice?

LAUREN: No. Thank you. I'm on my way to –

PHELPS: Gravesend. Yes.

LAUREN exits.

PHELPS: The Found are always in such a hurry to be somewhere else...

He starts flicking channels. This time an image comes up on the screen. Foggily, and a bit magically, there is a man onscreen wearing a blue duffel-coat. PHELPS tries flicking channels but it stays there.

PHELPS: Wait... wait... that's not one of mine! SEE! It is working! Hey, Little Miss Found, I've got one of yours! Someone is thinking about you! Come back!

End of scene.



SCENE 3.

Interior, Mrs. GRUYERE'S room. (For example, a veranda, elegant receiving room or standard office.)

Mrs GRUYERE is surrounded by employees demanding her attention. Commotion as LAUREN enters. Phone ringing.

GRUYERE: And get Crumb from accounts on the phone and tell him to pull his socks up - or I'll reach down his throat and pull them up for him!

CHICK: Yes, Mrs. Gruyere!

CHICK exits, **HADLOW** enters.

GUMP: We just need you to action the payslips, Mrs. Gruyere. The staff haven't been paid in weeks and -

GRUYERE: No more nasty little typos or spelling mistakes this time?

GUMP: No, Mrs. Gruyere.

GRUYERE: Leave them here and -

GUMP: With respect, Mrs Gruyere –

GRUYERE: And I will get to them in my own time!

GUMP *exits.* **CHICK** *returns.*

GRUYERE: (*To HADLOW*) *You.*

HADLOW: Me? Yes. We have a number of –

GRUYERE: Someone find that damned phone! *You!*

LAUREN: Me?

GRUYERE: Don't just stand around gawping! Find! The! Phone! Now! *You -*

HADLOW: Yes. We've had a number of complaints from people trying to collect lost property and –

GRUYERE: No, not you. I don't like your nose. *You.*

CHICK: Me?

GRUYERE: (*Hands over invoices.*) Go through these invoices for errors -

CHICK: And if I can't find any, ma'am?

GRUYERE: Then hand in your notice!

CHICK *exits.*

GRUYERE: (*Shouting after him.*) And get Crumb on the phone, or I'll pluck your eyes out and use them as golf-balls! (*She sips her drink.*) Eugh! You, with the nose?

HADLOW: Yes, Mrs Gruyere?

GRUYERE: Find out who made this and fire them.

HADLOW: Yes, Mrs Gruyere!

All exit, except GRUYERE and LAUREN. GRUYERE is suddenly relaxed.

GRUYERE: You know, I have absolutely no idea what I'm doing here. I got lost, and wandered in here hoping to find someone who could tell me where I was - and since then I've been ambushed, day after day, by all these desperately unhappy men and women, screaming for me to solve their endless problems! I've no idea who they are. I just bark back at them until they go again.

LAUREN: I can't find the phone.

GRUYERE: It'll wear itself out.

It stops.

See?

LAUREN: So, you're not Mrs Gruyere?

GRUYERE: No idea: I've never met her! So! I have your CV here somewhere.

LAUREN: CV?

GRUYERE: You're here for the job, aren't you?

LAUREN: No. I have a Very Important Meeting -

GRUYERE: Oh god, not with me, is it?

LAUREN: No. I'm on my way to Gravesend.

GRUYERE: Thank god for that. But let's have an interview anyway. It'll stop all those awful people rushing in every five minutes and -

CHICK, GUMP and HADLOW *rush in again, possibly from different doors/windows.*

At once:

HADLOW: *(With phone.)* Crumb from Accounts says complaints aren't his department, so he's writing to the complaints department with an account of his complaint.

CHICK: There's a typo on page 3, which -

GUMP: Really, those invoices must be in the last post today –

GRUYERE: Out! Out! Out! We are having An Interview! If I hear so much as a peep out of you, you'll all lose your jobs!

GRUYERE *chases them out.*

LAUREN: Wow. Why do you stay?

GRUYERE: Oh, I just adore all their anxious little faces! I just say whatever comes into my head, don't sign anything, and send them away again as quickly as I can. I've even started receiving wages... from someone. So I advertised for a secretary.

LAUREN: I can't stay, I have to give a Very Important Presentation.

GRUYERE: Important?

LAUREN: Very.

GRUYERE: Oh look at your adorable, anxious little face! You see, nothing's terribly important when you compare it to the Really Important Things.

LAUREN: Like what?

GRUYERE: Take your pick. Flowers. Shoes. I've heard some people even enjoy train-spotting.

LAUREN: Look, I'm Presenting a Keynote Speech on behalf of my company. I'm the manager, no-one else can do it.

GRUYERE: You don't have to tell me about being a boss.

LAUREN: But you're just pretending.

GRUYERE: Of course I am! No-one's *born* a boss. It's called being a grown-up. I mean, look at you in your "Take Me Seriously" Suit. You'd look a damn sight sillier giving a keynote speech dressed like a badger. Or a watermelon.

LAUREN: Of course I would! That's - Look: Please, I just want to get to my meeting.

GRUYERE: Do you know where you're going wrong?

LAUREN: Where?!

GRUYERE: Your hands are still on the wheel.

LAUREN: What wheel?!

GRUYERE: I used to be a thief. International. Jewels, mostly. Highly thought of. Once, I was working with a getaway driver. Always did his homework, always knew the route. But during one getaway, he swerved to avoid something, and we went crashing through someone's garden. Patio furniture, everywhere. Gnomes, destroyed. And then he ploughed through the next garden and the next, all the way down the street, until we hit a tree.

LAUREN: So "stay vigilant", is that the moral?

GRUYERE: Gruyere's talking! (*Cont.*) I was about to get out and run. We'd have made it. Except suddenly, he swung around and drove all the way backwards the way we'd come – carnage! Until eventually we crashed into someone's living room. The police surrounded us, and I grabbed my driver crying: "For the love of god, why didn't you stop? We could have made it on foot!" Do you know what he said?

LAUREN: What?

GRUYERE: "Sorry, I was too busy driving". You see? When people panic, they always stick to what they know. Be smart: Stick to what you don't. If you get Lost in life, stop trying to control everything, just stop. Look around, See What Happens.

There is a sound at the door/window.

GRUYERE: Excuse me.

CHICK, GUMP and HADLOW *are trying to get GRUYERE'S attention.*

GRUYERE: I warned you!

GRUYERE chases **CHICK, GUMP** and **HADLOW** away. The phone starts ringing again. **LAUREN** finds it under whatever Gruyere was sitting on.

LAUREN: Um, Mrs Gruyere's Office?

MAN: Helloooooo?

LAUREN: Yes, helloooooo?

SECOND VOICE: The 12:15 to Gravesend will now be departing.

LAUREN: Can you hear me?

MAN: Hellooo, are you alright?

GRUYERE returns. **LAUREN** hangs up.

GRUYERE: See? I leave you alone for two seconds and you're answering phones like you've been working here years! You have the job! *(Pause.)* Oh. You look faint. Are you alright?

LAUREN: I don't know who that was. They kept asking if I'm alright.

GRUYERE: And you are. Aren't you?

LAUREN: I don't know. I'm meant to be -

GRUYERE: I know, darling, somewhere to do with graves. Why not stay? See where being lost can take you! I'd only been lost a few short weeks and look at me now – I manage this entire place! I think.

LAUREN: I was told you could get me home.

GRUYERE: *(Not listening.)* So, you sit here, and when they come storming in, you tell them I'm not available, and to come back when I am -

LAUREN: What happens when they come back?

GRUYERE: Then comes the clever bit.

LAUREN: What?

GRUYERE: You do it again!

LAUREN: And what will you be doing?

GRUYERE: Having a bath. Reading on the roof terrace. Who knows? And then, in a few months, when you've saved up enough of your pay, you can hire yourself your own little secretary to do the same for you!

LAUREN: No. This isn't my world.

GRUYERE: I'd bet you my own fat head that none of those people at your "Very Important Presentation" is missing you.

LAUREN: It's not them I'm thinking about.

GRUYERE: Then who?

LAUREN: Someone...

GRUYERE: Oh, I see. There's someone *you're* missing.

LAUREN: I don't know. Can you miss someone you've never met?

GRUYERE: My dear, I am someone I've never met!

More knocking at the door "Mrs Gruyere!" etc.

LAUREN: If I can save you from your employees, will you help me get back to the station?

GRUYERE: If you're quick!

LAUREN: (*Shows her phone.*) I've got an app on this that schedules meetings and appointments. Get them to email you about setting up a meeting, and then let this take over – it immediately responds to emails and just schedules everyone for a free slot next week.

GRUYERE: But what happens when next week comes around?

LAUREN: It never does. You set it to automatically cancel everything 24 hours before, and ask them to reschedule. I've been doing it with three of my clients for years!

GRUYERE: My god, that's brilliant.

LAUREN: Yours.

She gives her the phone.

GRUYERE: Are you sure? Won't you get lost without Ubers and maps and train times?

LAUREN: *(Smiles.)* Maybe. We'll find out.

GRUYERE *takes a key and opens something that previously looked unopenable – a wall, a bookshelf etc...*

GRUYERE: In the end, all paths lead nowhere, so choose the path that has heart. There's no-one's more lost than the ones who can't see that.

GRUYERE *helps LAUREN through the opening in the back of the set. The stage revolves.*

End of scene.



SCENE 4.

A train platform. Daytime.

LAUREN scrambles through, straight onto the platform. She slumps. There are two train guards standing over her. **LAUREN** is coming to.

WORKER 1: Hello? Hellooooo? Are you alright? Madam?

WORKER 2: Your boyfriend's gone to get you some water.

LAUREN starts sitting up.

WORKER 1: Take it easy there, champ.

LAUREN: Did I faint?

WORKER 2: We just found you like this, Madam.

WORKER 1: Just you and you partner, looking after you.

LAUREN: I missed the train!

WORKER 1: Always another in a couple of minutes.

LAUREN: Partner? Sorry, I don't have a partner...

The two train guards help LAUREN onto a bench. MAN in a blue duffle-coat enters with a carton of juice and a Lion bar for her.

WORKER 2: Ah, you're back.

LAUREN: Oh, he's not...

The train guards move on.

MAN: Are you okay? I think you passed out.

LAUREN: A little disorientated.

MAN: Juice? I thought something sugary would be good, y'know. Oh, and chocolate. I didn't know what to get so I just grabbed whatever.

LAUREN: Thank you. Oh. Ha! Lion bar.

A train comes in.

LAUREN: You don't want to get that?

MAN: I'm not in a hurry. What about you, it looked like you were in a panic? I was almost about to say something, actually. Are you lost?

LAUREN: Erm... (*Thinks.*) Not enough.

They sit next to each other, a little awkwardly. Then relax, both looking like they're not going anywhere for a bit.

LAUREN: I'm Lauren.

End of play.

THEATRE TERMS GLOSSARY



ACT

1) Subdivision between sections of a play. A short play is a 'One-Act-er', a play with one interval has two Acts etc. Acts are subdivided further into Scenes. 2) The thing Actors can do which makes them different from Techicians.

Acting Area

That area within the performance space within which the actor may move in full view of the audience. Also known as the playing area.

Aisle

A passage through seating.

ASM

Assistant Stage Manager

Audition

Process where the director or casting director of a production asks actors / actresses / performers to show him/her what they can do. Sometimes very nerve-wracking, but auditions can be a fairly painless process if handled properly. Performers are often asked to memorise a monologue from a play they like to perform for the director.

Auditorium

The part of the theatre accommodating the audience during the performance. Sometimes known as the "house".

Backstage

The part of the stage and theatre which is out of the sight of the audience. The service areas of the theatre, behind, beside or underneath the stage. Also refers to the personnel who work in the technical departments that work to create the performance, alongside the actors and musicians.

Beginners

A call given by Stage Management to bring

the actors who appear in the first part of a play to the stage. e.g. "Act One Beginners to the stage, please". The actors/actresses are then called by name.

Black Box

A kind of flexible small studio theatre where the audience and actors are in the same room, surrounded by black tabs (curtains). Doesn't necessarily describe the audience layout, which can be easily reconfigured.

Blackout

1) Complete absence of stage lighting 2) The act of turning off (or fading out) stage lighting (e.g. "This is where we go to blackout")

Blacks

1) Black clothing worn by stage management during productions. 2) Any black drapes or tabs, permanently or temporarily rigged. Used for masking offstage and technical areas.

Blocking & 'the prompt copy'

The process of arranging moves to be made by the actors during the play, recorded by stage management in the prompt copy. Positions at the start of scenes are noted, as are all movements around the stage (using terms such as 'Gardener X DSL' meaning the Gardener crosses to downstage left.) It must be described in minute detail, but simple enough to enable anyone to read and understand it. As well as being used to 'run the show' the prompt copy is also used for the rehearsal of the understudies.

Box office

Part of the theatre building where audience members can buy tickets. Most Box Offices are now computerised, and offer phone and online reservations.

'Break a leg'

A superstitious and widely accepted alternative to 'Good Luck' (which is considered bad luck)

Call

1) A notification of a working session (eg a Rehearsal Call, Band Call, Photo Call, Focus Call). A rehearsal call for the next day / week used to be posted on a Call Sheet on the stage door notice-board, but is now often an online document, updated by the stage management team. A 'Company Call' means the full cast and crew are called for the rehearsal. 2) The period of time to which the above call refers. (eg "Your call for tomorrow nights show is 6.55pm") 3) A request for an actor to come to the stage because an entrance is imminent (these are courtesy calls and should not be relied on by actors - eg "This is your call for the finale Mr Smith and Miss Jones") 4) An acknowledgement of applause (eg Curtain Call) 5) The DSM on the book is said to be "calling the cues". 6) The Final Call is also known as The Half - 35 minutes before the performance starts, and the latest time when the cast and crew should be in the theatre.

Callback

Following an audition, the director may ask to see a shortlist of actors again - they are called back for an additional audition to enable the director to make her/his decision.

Cast

The members of the acting company. The Cast List contains the names of the actors and the characters they'll be playing.

Casting

The process of the director choosing actors to perform the characters in the play.

Centre line

Imaginary line running down the stage through the exact centre of the proscenium opening. Normally marked on the stage floor and used as a reference when marking out or assembling a set.

Clearance

Message passed to Stage Management from the Theatre's Front of House Manager that the house is ready for the performance to begin. (ie everyone is in their correct seat and there are no coach parties coming through the doors). Announced as 'We have Front of House Clearance'.

Company

The cast, crew and other staff associated with a show.

Costumes

Clothes worn by the actors onstage. The responsibility of the WARDROBE DEPARTMENT.

Cue

1) The command given to technical departments to carry out a particular operation. E.g. Lighting Cue, Fly Cue or Sound Cue. Normally given by stage management, but may be taken directly from the action (i.e. a Visual Cue). 2) Any signal (spoken line, action or count) that indicates another action should follow (i.e. the actors' cue to enter is when the Maid says "I hear someone coming! Quick - Hide!" - this is known as a Cue Line.

Cue to cue

(also known as 'Topping and Tailing') Cutting out action and dialogue between cues during a technical rehearsal, to save time.

Curtain call

At the end of a performance, the acknowledgement of applause by actors - the bows.

Cyclorama

(& Gauze) Usually shortened to just cyc (pronounced sike). The Cyclorama is a curved plain cloth or plastered wall filling the rear of the stage or TV studio. Often used as a sky backing to a traditional set, or as the main

backing for a dance piece etc. Although strictly a cyc should be curved, most cycs are flat with curved wraparound ends. A more effective backing can be obtained by hanging a shark-stooth gauze just in front of the plain white cyc which gives a hazy effect of distance.

Dialogue

The spoken text of a play - conversations between characters is dialogue.

Director

There are many types of director. Broadly, the role involves being responsible for the overall artistic vision of a production.

Artistic Director

Normally in charge of the programming of a venue. May also direct shows.

Executive Director

Manager in charge of the administration of a venue.

Technical Director

In charge of the technical requirements of a production.

Doofer

An object or tool that you're not sure of the correct name for. For example, 'Pass me the doofer so I can sort this thingy'.

Downstage

1) The part of the stage nearest to the audience. It's called Downstage because it's the lowest part of a raked stage. A raked stage is when the stages floor is on a slight slope. Downstage Left (DSL), Downstage Centre (DSC) and Downstage Right (DSR) are commonly used for the areas towards the front of the stage. 2) A movement towards the audience (in a proscenium theatre).

Dramatic pause

A brief pause (a few beats) in an actors' delivery of a line to emphasise a moment or to heighten anticipation.

Dress rehearsal

A full rehearsal, with all technical and creative elements brought together. The performance as it will be 'on the night'.

Dressing room

Rooms containing clothes rails and mirrors (often surrounded with lights) in which actors change into their costumes and apply make-up. Dressing Room doors have a list of the actors contained within.

Flat

A flat is supported by a stage brace and brace weight. Most theatres have a range of stock flattage made to a standard size, and re-used many times. A soft flat is covered with canvas material, and a hard flat is covered with plywood.

Front of house (FOH)

1) Every part of the theatre building in front of the proscenium arch. Includes foyer areas open to the general public. 2) All lanterns which are on the audience side of the proscenium and are focussed towards the stage. The backstage areas of the theatre are known as Rear of House (ROH).

Get-in

The process of moving set, props and other hardware into a theatre prior to the fit-up.

Get-out

Moving an entire production out of the venue, and back into storage or into transport. Usually preceded by the strike (where the set is disassembled back into component parts).

Green room

Room close to the stage for the actors to meet and relax before or after going on stage.

Half

1) The Half is a call given to the actors half an hour before they will be called to the stage for the beginning of a performance. It is given 35 minutes before the advertised time of commencement in the UK. Subsequent calls given are the 'quarter' at 20 minutes, 'the five' at 10 minutes and 'beginners to the stage' at 5 minutes before curtain up.

House

1) The audience (eg 'How big is the house tonight?' means how many audience members are we expecting?) 2) The auditorium (eg 'The house is now open, please do not cross the stage' means the audience are now able to enter the theatre so please don't go on it)

Interval

Break between sections of a performance. During a play, the interval is normally half way through a standard length performance (approx 1 hour each half) and is usually 15 or 20 minutes in duration.

Lines

Scripted words to be spoken by actors. Example phrases: "Do you know your lines for Scene 2 yet?", "You missed a few lines at the end of the scene", "What's my next line".

Marking Out

Sticking tapes to the floor of the rehearsal space to indicate the groundplan of the scenery. Also for marking position of furniture etc. within a set.

Matinee

Afternoon performance of a show.

Offstage

1) A movement towards the nearest side of the stage from the centre. (e.g. 'Focus that spot offstage a bit please') 2) The area out of sight of the audience (e.g. 'Get that donkey offstage !')

Open

The start of the run of a show in a venue.

Play

A piece of text containing lines and stage directions designed to be performed live on a stage in front of an audience.

Playwright

The author of a play.

Premiere

The first time a show is performed in a theatre to an audience.

Preset

1) Anything in position before the beginning of a scene or act (eg Props placed on stage before the performance, lighting state on stage as the audience are entering.) 2) The process of putting any part of the production into its' starting position / setting. A Preset Checklist is used by stage management and all other technical teams, to ensure that everything is correctly set to start the show.

Preshow

The period before the performance begins, when the audience may be in the front-of-house areas, or even in the auditorium.

Prompt Corner

Area, traditionally on the stage left side of the stage, from which the stage manager (or Deputy Stage Manager- DSM) controls ('prompts') the performance, from the prompt desk.

Props

(Properties) Furnishings, set dressings, and all items large and small which cannot be classified as scenery, electrics or wardrobe. Props handled by actors are known as hand props, props which are kept in an actors costume are known as PERSONAL PROPS.

Proscenium arch

The opening in the wall which stands between stage and auditorium in some theatres; the picture frame through which the audience sees the play. The "fourth wall". Often shortened to Proscenium or Pros Arch.

Raked stage

A sloping stage which is raised at the back (up-stage) end.

Run

1) A sequence of performances of the same production. (e.g. 'How long is the run of this show?' or 'This show runs for two weeks') 2) A rehearsal of the whole show or a section of it (e.g. 'This afternoon's rehearsal will be a run of Act II followed by notes'). Run-throughs early in the rehearsal schedule are sometimes known as STAGGERS as actors are unsure of their lines. A SPEED RUN is a rehearsal at faster than normal pace, concentrating on actor moves and entrances / exits rather than the quality of performance. This can only take place in the rehearsal room - once technical elements are included, a CUE TO CUE run is used, which jumps over long sequences with no technical elements to concentrate on polishing the transitions.

Set

1) To prepare the stage for action. (verb) - e.g. 'Have you set the chairs for Act 1?' 2) The complete stage setting for a scene or act. (noun) - e.g. 'What's the set for the finale?' The set is a cottage in the mountains.

Stage Left / Right

Left/ Right as seen from the Actor's point of view on stage. (ie Stage Left is the right side of the stage when looking from the auditorium.)

Stage Manager Phrases

"Get on your cues" - actors and crew members must concentrate so that they react as soon as they get a cue, not once they notice others reacting. "Quiet Backstage" - there should be no talking backstage or in the wings unless essential, and then only at a whisper. "Quiet On Cans" - the headset system (for communicating between crew members) must only be used for giving and receiving cues. There should be no unnecessary chatter.

TABS

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 which overlap at the centre and move outwards from that centre.

Tech

1) Short for Technical Rehearsal. (e.g. 'The Tech took 14 hours') 2) A member of (amateur) crew ('I'm the lighting tech for this show')

Technical Rehearsal

(also known as the TECH RUN, or just TECH). Usually the first time the show is rehearsed in the venue, with lighting, scenery and sound. Costumes are sometimes used where they may cause technical problems (eg Quick changes). Often a very lengthy process. Often abbreviated to the Tech. A DRY TECH is without actors to rehearse the integration of lighting, scenic changes etc. It follows that a WET TECH is a full technical rehearsal with actors and all technical elements, although this term

isn't used as often as DRY TECH. A PAPER TECH is a session without the set or actors when the technical and design team talk through the show ensuring everything's going to work as planned. Stage Managers can use this session to ensure all is written correctly in the Prompt Book.

Treads

General name for any stage staircase or set of steps used on stage.

Upstage

The part of the stage furthest from the audience. It's called Upstage because on a raked stage the stage slopes down towards the audience to improve sightlines. The furthest from the audience is literally higher due to the slope of the stage, so moving from close to the audience involves walking up the raked stage, towards 'Upstage'. US = Upstage, USC = Upstage Centre. USL = Upstage Left. USR = Upstage Right

Visual Cue

A cue taken by a technician from the action on stage rather than being cued by the stage manager. Often abbreviated to "Viz" or "Vis".

Wings

The out of view areas to the sides of the acting area.

***THEATRE BOX CREATIVE
TEAM BIOGRAPHIES***



ED HARRIS – PLAYWRIGHT

Ed is an award-winning, dyslexic playwright, poet and comedy writer based in Brighton. Before finding his feet as a writer, Ed was a binman, care worker... and even once spent a winter as a husky trainer in Lapland. His first major play **Mongrel Island** opened at Soho Theatre in 2011 to great critical acclaim, and was later produced in Mexico as **Perro Sin Raza**, where it ran for six months. His other plays include **The Cow Play**, **What the Thunder Said** (which won The Writers' Guild Award for Best Play For Younger Audiences), and **Never Ever After** (shortlisted for the Meyer-Whitworth award). He wrote his first opera, **A Shoe Full of Stars**, with composer Omar Shahryar. It was described as a 'comic opera for children... about terrorism!' and won the international YAM Award in 2018 for Best Opera.

Ed has also become one of BBC Radio Drama's most regularly commissioned and highly acclaimed dramatists since his first radio play **Porshia** was produced in 2007. His first sitcom, **Dot**, a popular wartime spoof about the misadventures of some of the female staff of Churchill's War Rooms, has run since 2015. Between 2011 and 2015 he won a Sony Gold/Radio Academy Award for **The Resistance of Mrs Brown**, a Writers' Guild Award for **Troll**, and a BBC Audio Drama Award for **Billions**.

His first play for the National Theatre **Strangers Like Me** will be produced as part of their NT Connections programme in 2023. He is a Royal Literary Fellow and currently on attachment at the National Theatre Studios. Ed has been working regularly with Turtle Key Arts as a playwright and workshop leader since 2016.

Ed can be found at ed.john.harris@gmail.com

TINA BICAT – DESIGNER

Tina Bicât is a theatre designer of costumes, sets, puppets, props and installations. She also designs and works with the Drama students of St Mary's University who work alongside her on her projects either as interns or as young professionals. Her most recent work outside college has been with Ockham's Razor (costume), The National Trust (interactive installation) RedCape Theatre (set, costume and props), NIE (Costume and set) Kew Gardens (installation) South Bank Centre (costume, puppets and and props), Flying Cloud Theatre (set, costume, props and effects) Stefano di Renzo (Costume) , Cantata Dramatica (design and consultancy) Amici- (costume, props and puppets), Young Vic (costume and set) and the Barbican (Barbican Boxes and installation) . She is an Associate Artist with Ockham's Razor, won the Critics Circle award for her work with Punchdrunk, lectures on aspects of design and Creative Thinking and has written seven books on various aspects of theatre practice.

OLIVER CAMPBELL-SMITH – DRAMA LEADER

Oli is Associated Artist for Young People and Inclusion at Turtle Key Arts, directing and facilitating for Turtle Opera, Art Is Key, Key Words, Theatre Box, Joy Festival and Jabala and the Jinn outreach. Oli is also directing for White City Theatre Project ReAct Festival and is drama tutor for MENCAP Hammersmith youth development project. Oli has directed multiple projects for Extant Theatre (UK's foremost production company run by and for visually impaired people), ProThinC Theatre (Bare Truths project – in collaboration with Merton Youth Offending Services) and Theatre Day Productions and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency in Gaza.

KATE BICAT – ARTIST

Kate Bicât is a fine art painter, graduate of the Slade School of art and post graduate of de Ateliers, Amsterdam after which she was shortlisted for the Queens prize for painting in The Hague. As well as exhibiting her paintings in various galleries in Amsterdam, Berlin, London, Brussels and Los Angeles she has carried out many live-painting murals, most recently for Mr Motley and Cantata Dramatica. She has painted artwork for numerous installations for the Barbican, illustrated for Nrc Next, a leading Dutch newspaper, assisted design for Ockham's Razor and painted sets for performances at St Mary's University, London. She has been awarded two grants from the national Dutch arts funding body, her work exists in numerous private collections in the UK, Netherlands, France and the US.

TURTLE KEY ARTS – PRODUCER

Turtle Key Arts produces and devises original, inclusive art to entertain and inspire. They believe that access to the arts helps to improve the quality of life by bringing people together, offering creative opportunities, social inter-action, confidence and self-esteem.

They produce a number of innovative and original theatre, dance and circus companies and have a long track record of running excellent arts projects, free to all participants, for disabled, disadvantaged and socially excluded people.

TURTLE KEY ARTS TEAM

Artistic Director Charlotte Cunningham

Chief Executive Alison King

Marketing & Development Director Shaun Dawson

Senior Producer Holly Cameron-Jennings

Producer Carina Simões

Finance Manager Alan Bowyer

Project and Office Manager Niamh Hanns

Participation Manager Ruth Naylor-Smith

Dementia Consultant Carolyn von stumm

Autism Consultant Ceri Black

Associated Artist for Young People and Inclusion Oli Campbell-Smith

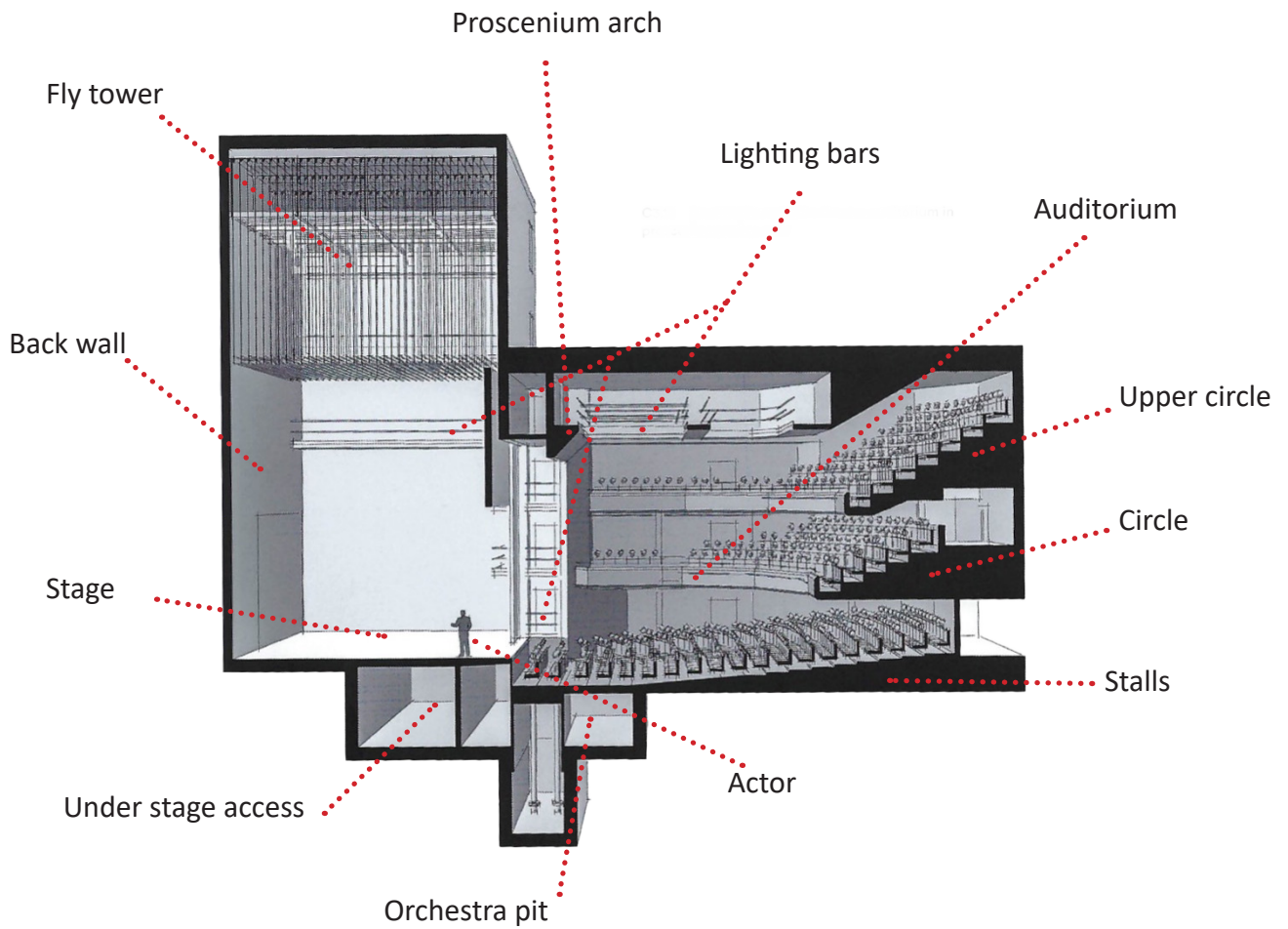
www.turtlekeyarts.org.uk

THEATRE DIAGRAMS

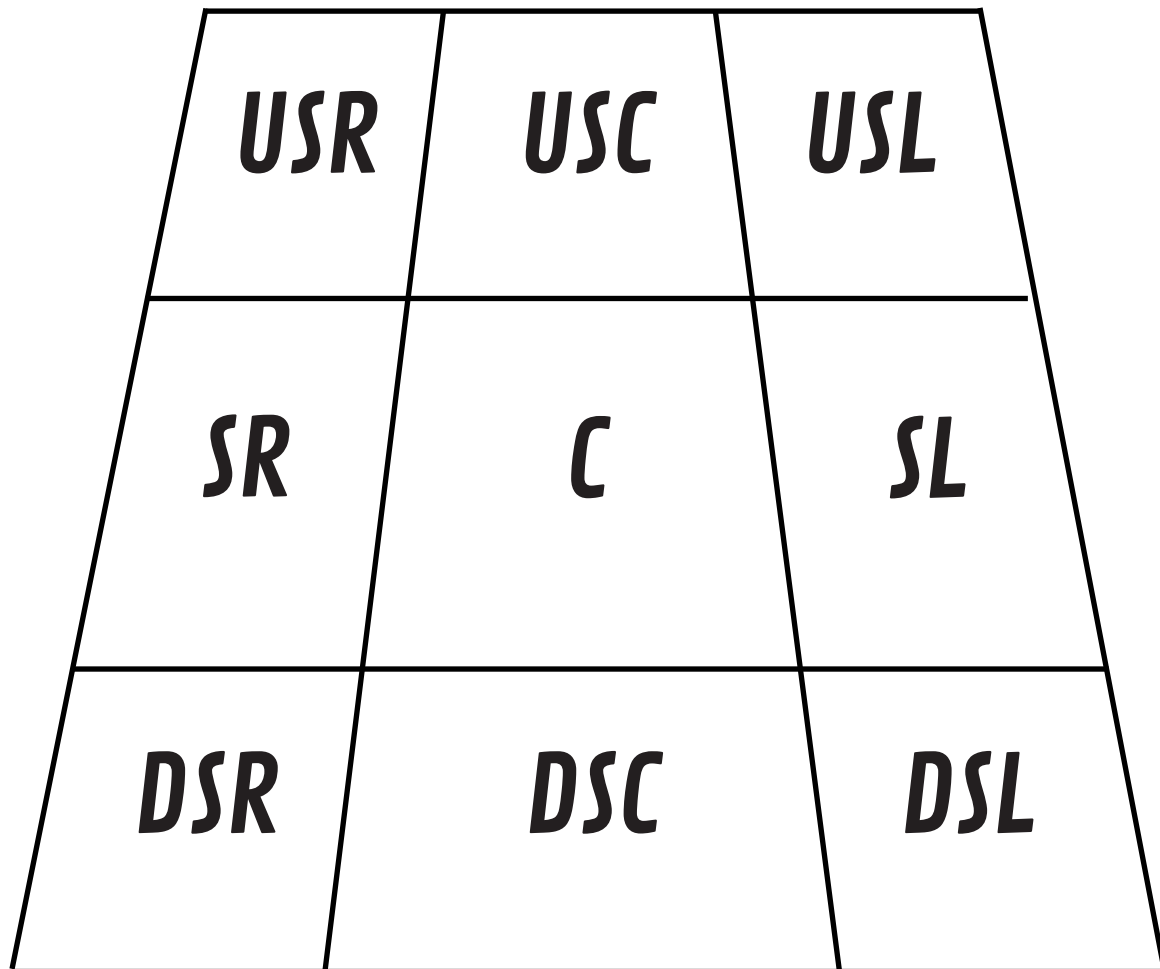


INSIDE A THEATRE

This is an image of The Bridge Theatre in London. Imagine we took a slice through the middle of it vertically, this is what we'd see.



STAGE DIRECTIONS



Audience



USR Upstage Right

USC Up Stage

USL Up Stage Left

SR Stage Right

C Centre Stage

SL Stage Left

DSR Down Stage Right

DSC Down Stage Centre

DSL Down Stage Left

WHAT NEXT?

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JOB ROLES IN THEATRE

Who works in a theatre?

A lot of work goes into creating a theatre performance. It takes the work of many different specialised teams to complete all of the tasks required before the actors can even step foot on stage.

The number and range of people who work in a theatre depends upon its size and type. But whatever the scale of the theatre or the production it has always taken a team of people to get there.

Today, theatres can generally be divided into two types: Producing theatres or presenting theatres, but some do both.

Producing theatres have creative teams which develop new productions from existing or new works. This includes directors, musical directors and choreographers, as well as designers of sets, props, costume, lighting and audio-visual media. They might be freelance or based at the venue, with additional specialists being brought on as required.

Often these theatres will also have craft departments to make or install the design elements chosen for the production. The performers are usually hired for a specific production although some venues do continue the tradition of having a venue company contracted for a longer period of time.

Presenting theatres, sometimes referred to as 'receiving houses', host visiting companies whose productions have been developed elsewhere and are touring to a number of venues.

Who produces and presents a show?

Other than the performers and artists, a large, highly-skilled team is needed to produce and present a show. Most of the team is never seen by the audience.

Producer

Artistic Director

Director

Designers

Stage Management

Company Manager

Production Manager

Technical Department

Staging department

Flymen and Mechanists

Orchestra or band

Operational Roles

Chief Executive

Marketing Manager

Development Manager

Finance and administration staff

Education and outreach staff

Front of house staff

House Manager and Duty Manager

Box office staff

Ushers and bar staff

To learn more about these job roles and their responsibilities visit (Theatre FAQs): <http://www.theatrust.org.uk/discover-theatres/>

PLACES TO LEARN AND STUDY NEAR ME...

Name	website	Address	What is it?	What can I do here?
National Youth Theatre	www.nyt.org.uk	443-445 Holloway Road London, N7 6LW	A youth arts charity that gives opportunities to young people onstage and backstage. Notable alumni are Daniel Craig and Dame Helen Mirren	If you are 14-25 you can audition to become either an acting member or to become a backstage member such as stage management, costume design, lighting etc.
The Almeida Theatre	www.almeida.co.uk	Almeida Theatre, Almeida Street, London, N1 1TA	A working theatre that runs projects and opportunities for young people to get involved.	Become part of the young company, join the youth board or become a young producer or theatre critic!
Identity School of Acting	www.identityschool-ofacting.com	Identity School of Acting 21-25 Beehive Place London SW9 7QR	A part time acting school based in London and Los Angeles. Notable Alumni are Letitia Wright and John Boyega.	You will need to be 16 or older and can audition to become a member of identity. This is relevant for those who are interested in Acting.
The Kiln Theatre	www.kilntheatre.com	269 Kilburn High Road, London, UK, NW6 7JR	A working theatre that offers different access and opportunities for young people Theatre company and youth theatre available to join.	If you have an idea for a project and are from Brent you can join the agency to kickstart the project!
Royal Academy of Dramatic Art	www.rada.ac.uk	62-64 Gower Street London WC1E 6ED (see website for alternative venues)	RADA is a graduate drama school however it offers many different programmes for youth and outreach.	You can audition to become a member of the Youth Company for either acting or theatre production.

The Bush Theatre	www.bushtheatre.co.uk	7 Uxbridge Road, Shepherds Bush London, W12 8LJ	A Working Theatre in Shepherds Bush who have recently launched their own young peoples company	The young company encourages all creatives from the ages 14-25 to come together and create theatre! You can also join the white city youth theatre.
Stagecoach	www.stagecoach.co.uk	See website for contact details on your local club	Available in lots of different boroughs A weekend performing arts club, there are a lot of different sites available around London. For ages 4-18.	Stagecoach offers a chance for you to practice not only acting but also your dancing and singing skills
Arts ED	www.artsed.co.uk	ArtsEd 14 Bath Road, Chiswick, London W4 1LY	A performing arts day school and sixth form	If you attend Arts Ed you will receive a combination of school education mixed with performing arts, you can specialise in specific mediums such as musical theatre or dance.
The Brit School	www.brit.croydon.sch.uk	The BRIT School 60 The crescent Croydon CRO 2HN	A performing arts school and sixth form	As well as learning the standard curriculum you will also specialise in a range of creative areas which can be found on the school website. You can join from 14.

Resources

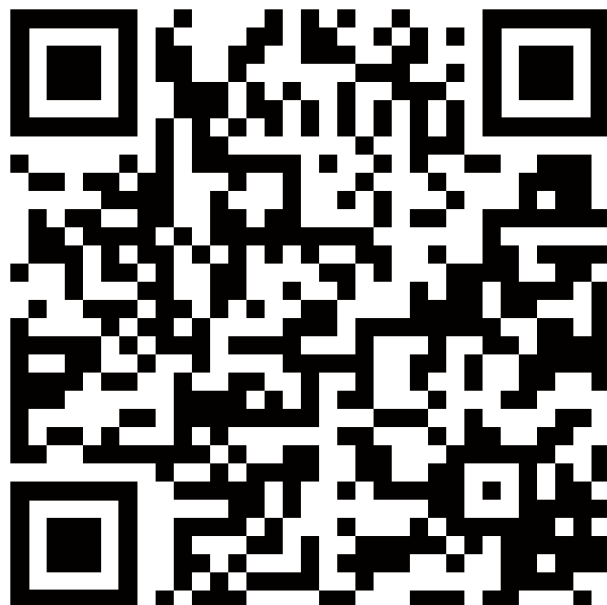
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Tutorial Films

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Scan the QR code below to watch our 4 tutorial films



Model Box Photos

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Photos from the original Demo Model Box designed for play 'The Turn of the Screw' by Henry James Interior Scenes



*Photos from the original Demo Model Box designed for play 'The Turn of the Screw' by Henry James
Exterior Scenes*

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL PROVIDED BY

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Playtext sketches by playwright Ed Harris

Diagram of The Bridge Theatre by Haworth Tompkins from book **Play On** by Alistair Fair, Lund Humphries Publishers Ltd (2019)

Job roles and titles in Theatre **www.theatrust.org.uk**

Theatre Glossary from **www.theatrecrafts.com**

Images: Jamie Dennis

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