

Theatre Royal Stratford East

Schools

Technical Theatre

Resource Pack



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ABOUT STRATFORD EAST

Theatre Royal Stratford East is a producing theatre, built in 1884, in the heart of East London. We have a proud history and an exciting future.

Many leading actors, writers and directors have been part of the Stratford East family including Meera Syal, Barbara Windsor, Don Warrington, Sheila Hancock, Indhu Rubasingham, Tanika Gupta, Roy Williams and Cynthia Erivo

We represent our culturally and socially diverse community in Newham through the stories we tell on stage, the people we employ, our audiences, and the participants that get involved in our work. Led by Artistic Director, Nadia Fall, we tell stories that are current, political and representative of London.

You can find out more about the history of the theatre [here](#).

How to use this pack

This pack is designed for teachers of GCSE & A-Level Drama. The resource is geared towards developing teachers' understanding of technical theatre, with practical exercises to apply in the classroom.



LIGHTING

1. The Impact of Lighting
2. The Role of a Lighting Designer
3. Roles within the Lighting Department
4. Lighting Tasks
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THE IMPACT OF LIGHTING

As well as helping to illuminate the action on stage, lighting is essential in setting the tone for each scene, portraying meaning and emotion, and directing the audience's attention, so they don't miss important elements of the storytelling. Lighting can also convey contextual information, like time of day, weather, location and temperature.

There is usually a careful balance between what the audience can and cannot see, relying on the contrast between light and shadow. The use of shadows also sculpts shape, creating three-dimensional characters and scenic elements on stage.

By adjusting the intensity of lighting, tone, atmosphere and focus of stage lights, the lighting designer has a great deal of influence on the composition and presentation of the physical environment and therefore, the storytelling.





THE ROLE OF A LIGHTING DESIGNER

The Lighting Designer is responsible for designing all lighting elements within a show. This includes the lights used to light the stage, as well as any lights that feature as part of the 'world' of the play, e.g. desk lamps or fairy lights. The Lighting Designer will need to decide which lantern to use, where to put it in the theatre, what colour the light is and how bright or dark the light is (the intensity).

They work with everyone to help create the mood of the production through the lighting choices they make. They work in close collaboration with the Set Designer, as this can heavily influence where it is possible to put lanterns or shine lights on the stage and set.

Other Lighting Roles

Lighting Technician

A Lighting Technician is tasked with the rigging and operating of lights during a performance. They respond to the lighting cues and make sure the lighting state is correct at that moment in time.

Production Electrician

When a show goes on tour, the Production Electrician will ensure all the technical information will be sent ahead of time to each venue with what is needed for the show.

Head of Lighting

The Head of Lighting leads the lighting department and is responsible for budget management and acting as the main point of contact for the lighting department.



LIGHTING TASK 1



5-10 minutes

Match the picture with the definition

1.



A. **Birdie**. Soft-edged light. Ideal for hiding in small spaces.

2.



B. **Parcan**. Projects colour well as it can hold a gel. It has a powerful narrow beam. It cannot be focussed.

3.



C. **Fresnel**. Soft-Edged Spotlight. Not as easy to control. But the shape of the light beams can be changed by barn doors.

4.

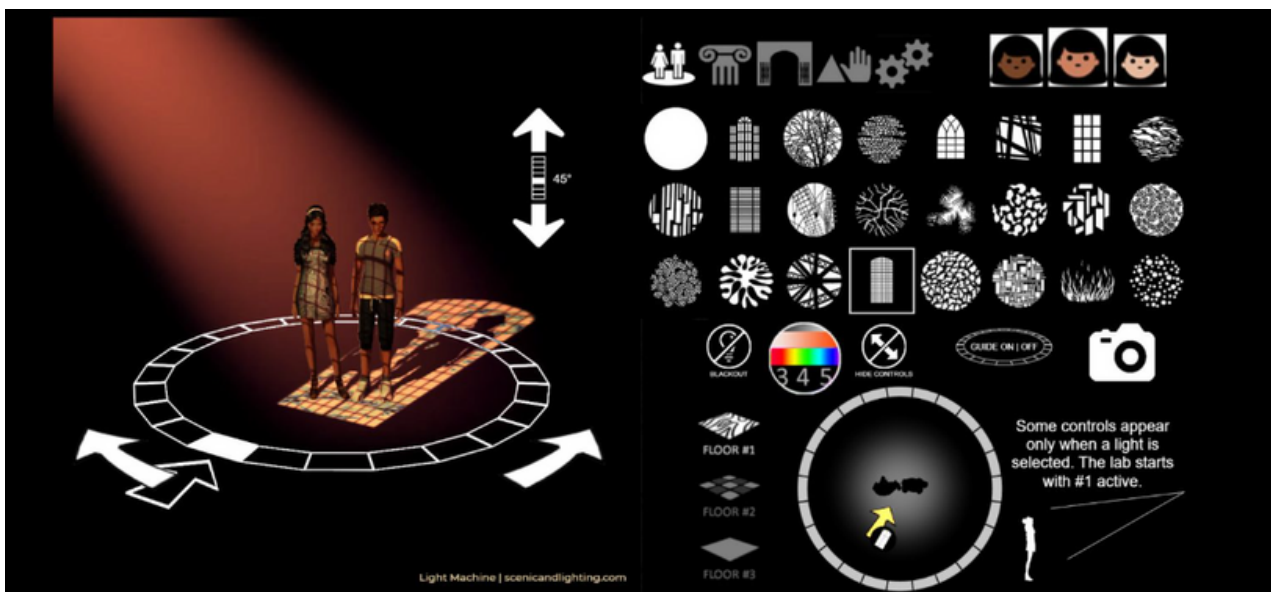


D. **Profile Spot**. Gives a sharply defined image with a strong beam. It needs to be operated by a person. Works well with gels and gobos.

LIGHTING TASK 2

If you don't have access to a drama studio with a lighting rig, this online virtual lab for scenic and lighting design may help your students visualise lighting in a space more clearly.

[Matt Kizer: Scenic & Lighting Design Tools](#)



Teacher Led Practical Task

 **20-25 minutes**

For 15 minutes, ask your students to work in pairs to create a lighting state, representing:

- A haunted house or
- A nightclub or
- A scene from a set text

Students should consider the intensity, direction of lights and colour states. Once completed, ask the pairs to present their ideas and the choices they made back to the group.

LIGHTING GLOSSARY

Blackout	A lighting cue where all the lights go off at the same time.
Cue	An instruction, given by the Stage Manager, for a lighting change.
Direction	The direction from which the light comes, e.g. backlight, top light, front light, side light.
Fade	A gradual change in the lights executed at a certain speed (quick, slow, snap, etc.)
Flood	A lantern with a wide beam, which can cover a larger area of the stage, an effect called a wash.
Focus	A lighting state on which a light shines on a particular actor or part of the stage.
Gel	Coloured lighting film used to alter the colour of a light.
Gobo	A thin metal plate etched to produce a design which can then be projected by a profile spot.
Level	Level of intensity of the light (dim, bright, etc.).
House Lights	Lights used to illuminate the auditorium for the audience.
Lighting State	The intensity, direction, level, colour, etc. of the lighting at one time.
Spotlight	A bright beam of light, often used to highlight a performer as they move about.



SOUND

1. The Impact of Sound
2. The Role of a Sound Designer
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4. Sound Task
5. Glossary

THE IMPACT OF SOUND

Sound informs the mood and atmosphere of a performance. It paints an auditory picture for an audience and places them in a specific scene.

A sunny spring afternoon may be captured with the sound effects of birds chirping or the breeze in the trees. A scene on a busy high-street may feature a soundscape of traffic and people talking. These are all examples of diegetic sound - the sound that the characters can hear in their world.

Sounds can be used to build atmosphere or create tension, like a long droning sound which could be used to create a foreboding sense of danger or an instrumental. These sounds are not heard by characters on stage, they are only heard by the audience, these are examples of non-diegetic sounds.



THE ROLE OF A SOUND DESIGNER

The Sound Designer is responsible for the audio world of the play. They design what the audience hear, and how they hear it. This includes creating or sourcing sound effects, composing music for an underscore or soundtrack, and choosing to mic an actor to amplify or change their voice. In plays, there are sounds that the characters can hear (music playing, doors closing, sirens etc.) and sound/music can also help support the atmosphere and mood of the scenes, just like in films.

As well as creating and sourcing the music and sound, the Sound Designer, is also responsible for deciding how to play the sound in the theatre. They will think about where the speakers are in the space and which speakers are used for each sound cue to create different effects. For example, if a character is listening to music on a radio, the Sound Designer might choose to play the sound from a speaker on stage so that it feels to the audience like the sound is really coming from the radio on stage.

Other Sound Roles

Sound Technicians

Responsible for assembling and maintaining sound equipment.

Sound Operators

Responsible for managing, monitoring and playing all the sound cues within a show.

SOUND EXERCISE

Teacher Led Practical Task



15-20 minutes

Begin in a circle. Ask one member of the group to act as the 'conductor' and the rest of the group to be the 'orchestra'.

Give the orchestra a theme (e.g. a city, jungle, seaside, or shop) and invite the group to begin making sounds that they would expect to hear within the given theme. The conductor, by raising and lowering their hand, will be in control of the volume of the orchestra.

This task will support students to think about the different diegetic sounds within a performance and give them ideas of sound effects they could use in their role as Sound Designers.

Once you have established what a soundscape is. Divide the class into groups of six and ask them to choose an extract from a piece of text, this could be one of their set texts. Ask half the group to devise a piece of movement for the scene and the other half to create a soundscape to compliment the devised piece.



SOUND GLOSSARY

Amplification	The process of increasing the volume of a sound.
Crossfade	Bringing in a new sound state to replace the current sound state.
Microphone	A device that picks up sound, allowing the sound team to amplify, mix and control it.
Non Diegetic Sound	Sound not heard by the actors and designed to create mood/atmosphere/impact on the audience e.g., an emotional underscore.
Flood	A lantern with a wide beam that can cover a larger area of the stage, an effect called a wash.
Sound 1	Sound 1 manages the mixing desk, turning microphones up and down, following the script and adjusting the levels live.
Sound 2	Sound 2 is responsible for fitting the radio mics backstage and ensuring that all other aspects of sound are working.
Sound Cue	An instruction, given by the Stage Manager, for a change in the sound state.
Sound Effects	Many sound effects are recorded using found sound (e.g. traffic or rain). Live effects, like gunshots, door slams and offstage voices are best created live.
Soundscape	Sounds that are played under a scene, to help establish the world of the play. This can be created using recorded and/or live sound.



STAGE

1. The Impact of Set Design
2. The Role of a Set Designer
3. Roles within the Stage Department
4. Set Design Exercise
5. Glossary

THE IMPACT OF SET DESIGN

The set is the first theatrical element the audience see from the auditorium. The set can convey a historical period and location. It can hint at themes, symbols and motifs.

For instance, a play that is rooted in surrealism may use abstract props and a set that reflects the surreal world of the play.

Set Designers sometimes use a technique called forced perspective to create the illusion of depth in a small space. It is used to make certain elements of the set feel further away than others.

Set Designers also consider the shape of the performance space and the position of the audience. They must make sure that their set is not obscuring any audience sightlines. They may also consider the texture of their set, for example, a plush velvet material may be a symbol of wealth, while a set clad in iron may portray a more industrial aesthetic.



THE ROLE OF A SET DESIGNER

The Set Designer is responsible for designing the production scenery. They collaborate with different departments to ensure the set is functional for the cast and crew, and fits the director's artistic vision. Before they create the full-scale set, they will create a model box. In productions with smaller budgets, a set designer may also be responsible for costume design.

Other Stage Roles

Designer

Also known as a scenographer. In lower budget productions, the Designer is responsible for costumes, props and set.

Stage Manager

Stage Managers facilitate communication across all creative and technical departments; are responsible for HR and administrative management of the cast and creatives, act as a right hand to the director; oversee sets, props, lights, and sound; and call all technical cues during performances.

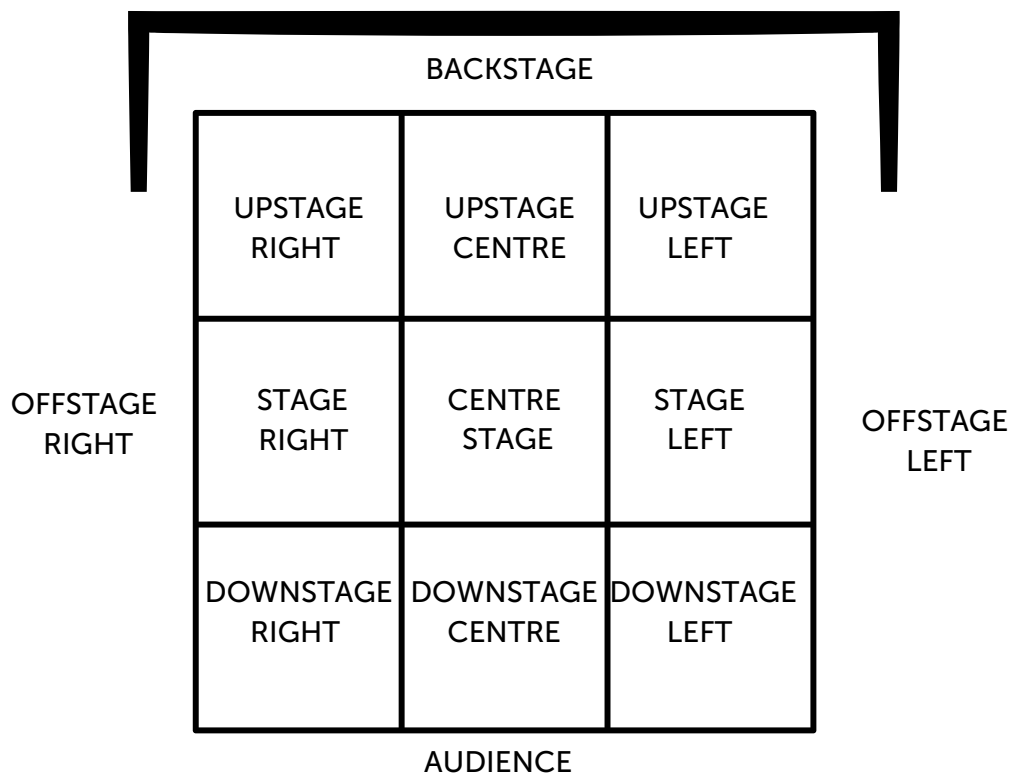
Puppet Designer

Also known as a Puppeteer. The artist who designs, creates and dresses puppets and uses them to stage a live performance. A good example would be Good Chance Theatre's 'Little Amal'.

Scenic Painter

Scenic artists paint backdrops, murals and prop pieces for theatre. They take the designs and ideas provided by the Set Designer and create set pieces, which could be anything from a cityscape to a wall decorated in period style.

STAGE TASK 1



Teacher Led Practical Task



10-20 minutes

What you will need:

A clear space big enough for your students to walk around in.

How to run this activity:

Take the time to explain the stage directions in the diagram above. Ask students to walk around the space and begin to call out different stage directions, using the diagram above. Students should walk to the area you have just called out. Repeat until you feel they are familiar with the stage. This can be done in teams or as individuals depending on the dynamic of the group.

To develop this further, allocate labels to stage right and left, e.g. as true and false. Call out facts, these could be about their GCSE set texts or general theatre knowledge. The students should move to the corresponding stage side to give their answers. Again, this can work in teams or as individuals.

STAGE TASK 2

Teacher Led Practical Task



30-40 minutes

What you will need:

Paper, pens, stimuli images, craft materials

How to run this activity:

To begin with, ask the students to analyse image(s) of set design from a GCSE set text. Ask them to call out words and themes that come to mind, and write them on a board. Now reveal what the play is about and see if the student's observations match the themes of the play.

Next, provide a choice of stimuli to inform this next part of the task. For example, an image of an abandoned barn, a rainy woodland and a luxurious hotel. Working in small groups, ask students to create a set design inspired by one of the stimuli. Working on large sheets of paper, students can build a scrapbook-style outline of their design, using materials like crepe paper, feathers, sequins, magazine cuttings, fabric cut-offs etc.

Students must annotate their creations, explaining their creative choices and how their designs would convey their ideas.

To develop this further: students could consider what storylines may emerge from the stimulus, who are the characters and what the main themes may be. Ask students to present back their creations to the group, detailing their creative choices and the inspiration behind those decisions.

STAGE GLOSSARY

Auditorium	The part of the theatre that accommodates the audience, also known as the 'house'.
Black Box	A one room theatre without a proscenium arch. The interior is completely black.
End On	Traditional audience seating layout, in which the audience face the audience in rows.
Promenade	A theatrical production with the expectation that the audience will predominantly move or walk about.
Proscenium Arch	A frame or arch that separates the stage from the auditorium, creating a frame for the stage.
Sight Lines	Imaginary lines of sight that determine what areas of the stage are visible to the audience from any given seat in the auditorium.
Sight Specific	A form of production designed to be performed at a unique, specially adapted location, rather than a theatre. For instance, a car park or a church.
In the Round	A non-traditional staging format, in which the stage is viewed from all angles from the audience.
Thrust	A stage that extends into the audience, with seats on three sides of a peninsula shaped acting space.
Traverse	Form of staging where the audience is on either side of the acting area.
Revolve	A round floor or turntable within the stage floor that spins around a central pivot point, driven by a motor.

EXAM QUESTION

Student Led Writing Task



30-45 minutes

As a designer, describe how you could use lighting or sound in the extract below. In your answer, refer to:

- atmosphere
- your ideas for lighting or sound

Things to consider when answering an exam question.

- WHAT is your design idea?
- HOW will you create a particular lighting/sound state?
- HOW do you want it to look/effect?
- WHY do you want it to look like this?

This is an extract from Tanika Gupta's *The Empress*. This extract is set in 1887.

'Boarding house.

We are in Lascar Sally's boarding house. It is a rowdy place. We can see many lascars – Chinese, Indian, Indonesian, from all parts of the world. Some are drinking and eating at tables. Others are playing cards whilst others are singing traditional songs from their country. There are a couple of women there too – white English as well as black who are very obviously prostitutes and are touting their wares to the men. The scene is of debauchery and poverty.'

GET INVOLVED

Learning & Participation is at the very heart of Stratford East. We have a range of activities available to all.

From youth theatres to community partnerships, schools programmes to development opportunities for young people and adults.

If you have any questions about our Learning & Participation programmes, then please email getinvolved@stratfordeast.com.

For more information about our schools programmes contact mpindar@stratfordeast.com.

Find out more about our Learning & Participation department [here](#)

