



# Blueprint Arts

For Teaching and Learning in the



Theater ■ Grades PreK - 12



New York City Department of Education

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# Theater Making: Designing and Technical Theater

## Benchmarks

- Through sequential activities, students begin to understand the process of moving from design to the creation of production elements.
- Students explore various design roles in theater and how design choices influence the mood of the production.

## Understanding Design

Students will be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of character type by making decisions about costume design.
- Endow objects with imaginary qualities. For example, a saucepan becomes a “magic helmet.”
- Make choices about color and scenic elements for “place,” such as settings from stories, poetry, spoken word or plays.
- Demonstrate a preliminary understanding of the design to production process by assisting in the construction of a simple set piece from a rendering or model.
- Demonstrate an understanding of how light, sound, costumes and scenic elements add to performance or storytelling.
- Identify the moods created by different pieces of music.

## Suggested Activities: Designing/Technical Theater

- Guide an exploration of the school auditorium and theater, identifying and naming the areas of the house, theater and backstage areas.
- Review a listing of design and technical jobs in a theater program, and predict the function of the listed positions.
- Alter the classroom space, using existing furniture to create a space for theater activities.
- Make original musical instruments to score a scene or story.
- Create a soundscape with ensemble or solo voices, instruments or improvised sound makers to enhance the telling of a story or a drama.
- Draw a scene or design a costume from a story read in class.
- Use a children's story such as *Goodnight Moon* or *Tar Beach* to generate drawings and a 3-D set model based on the illustrations in the book.
- Using a drawing of a character as a basis, create a stick puppet that demonstrates the characteristics of the puppet through costume.
- Add painted elements to a mural used for a scenic backdrop.
- Use overhead projector with colored acetates as “spotlight.” Discuss the lighting conventions of black-out, fade-out, etc.
- Use flashlights for special effects or to enhance the mood of a scene.
- Use classroom materials or a resource box of found materials to create sets, props and costumes.

## Benchmarks

- By defining the playing area of a stage or classroom, students use and respect theatrical space and elements.

## Using Theatrical Space and Elements

Students will be able to:

- Define playing space and setting, using classroom objects.
- Demonstrate an understanding of playing space as differentiated from the rest of the classroom.
- Recognize the boundaries between onstage and offstage.



# Theater Making: Designing and Technical Theater

## Benchmark

- **Students further their understanding of design and technical theater by connecting design choices to the requirements of a script.**
- **Students apply methods and processes of a designer to their own work and to the theater works they encounter.**

## Understanding Design

Students will be able to:

- Make choices about the scenery, costumes, props, lighting and sound for a scene that are implied in a script.
- Identify how the script requirements of environment, time and action influence the design of a scene.
- Understand how sound and lighting create mood in performance events.
- View and evaluate productions with regard to the design and production elements.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the “world of the play” through cataloging the scenery, costume, prop, lighting and sound requirements of a script.
- Identify the members of the production team and explain how these roles are interdependent:
  - set designer
  - lighting designer
  - costume designer
  - sound designer
  - director
  - stage manager
  - prop master
  - set, costume, lighting, sound and prop crews

## Suggested Activities: Designing/Technical Theater

- Measure a room at home, create a ground plan and place furniture according to the plan.
- Design a marketing poster and program with logo or illustration based on a particular story or play.
- Create a tape or CD of music and sound effects for a scene.
- With supervision, learn to turn on stage and auditorium lights, operate curtains, and set up audio-video equipment.
- Participate in the running of a show as part of the properties, deck, electrics and costume crews.
- Devise a scenic concept for a play read in class, including backdrops, props, furniture and other scenic elements.
- Create a rendering for a stage backdrop and then execute the rendering to scale on a brown paper mural or painted backdrop.
- Build a mini-model of a proscenium theater with moveable scenic elements for at least three scenes.
- Read a play and create a costume rendering for a character.
- Create a design portfolio for one scene in a play with research materials, renderings and working drawings.

## Benchmark

- **Students participate as theater technicians, using basic theater vocabulary and applying technical skills in school productions.**

## Using Theatrical Space and Elements

Students will be able to:

- Identify the basic areas of a stage and theater.
- Measure a stage area, create a ground plan, and place furniture within the stage area.

# Theater Making: Designing and Technical Theater

## Benchmark

- Students expand their skills by examining and participating in the sequential processes of moving from design to production.
- As designers, students make personal and artistic choices to convey meaning.



## Understanding Design

### Understanding Design

Students will be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the constraints of physical space and identify spatial relationships in scenery and set pieces.
- Select design elements (scenery, lights, costumes, and sound) to convey meaning.
- Explore the relationship between color and light in the design process.
- Recognize texture and quality in costume and scenic design.
- Use sound, music and rhythm to convey meaning in sound design.
- Identify connections among design elements, including:
  - spatial relationships
  - patterns
  - placement of objects
  - color choices

### Design and Technical Skills

Students will be able to:

- Investigate and analyze theater design components.
- Visualize, conceptualize and implement a point of view in creating designs.
- Identify and discuss symbols and symbolism in design.
- Demonstrate the ability to make design, construction and production-running decisions.
- Work in collaboration with other designers, stage manager, director or crew members.
- Use research and documentation to generate design.
- Create a production needs list from script reading.
- Prepare and plan to realize schedules, construct designs and models.
- Use the specific tools of designers and theater technicians.



# Theater Making: Designing and Technical Theater *continued*

## Benchmark

- **Students experiment with transforming space in order to understand the abstract elements of design.**

## Using Theatrical Space and Elements

### Transforming environment

Students will be able to:

- Execute a plan for transforming a neutral space.
- Identify and understand the importance of placement and use of design elements including:
  - spatial relationships
  - symbols
  - patterns
  - dissonance and similarities

## Benchmark

- **Students develop communication skills and proficiency in the use of theater documents while engaged in the authentic process of theater production.**

## Communication and Organization Skills

### Communication

Students will be able to:

- Communicate design choices to fellow design and technical theater students.

### Organization

Students will be able to:

- Use theater paperwork including prompt book, cast lists, rehearsal and production schedules.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the skills required to work as a:
  - costume designer
  - lighting designer
  - prop master
  - scenic designer
  - sound designer
  - stage manager
  - member of set, costume, lighting and prop crews
- Recognize the constraints of a production schedule and a working budget.

# Theater Making: Designing

## Benchmark

- **Students work in groups and independently as designers, applying a multi-faceted understanding of design concepts and processes.**

## Understanding Design and Developing Design Skills

### Understanding Design

Students will be able to:

- Understand and apply the following vocabulary and principles of theatrical design to scenic, costume, lighting, sound, hair and makeup design:
  - concept
  - composition
  - balance
  - form
  - line
  - color
  - texture
  - mood
  - atmosphere
  - theme
- Understand the relationship of theatrical design to the other aspects of theatre making in a performance.
- Demonstrate critical and creative skills by analyzing, synthesizing, imagining and elaborating on basic knowledge.
- Use research to generate concepts, choices, solutions and designs in the service of a performance event/text.
- Make artistic choices that are specific and detailed to produce a unified design that captures the central idea of a performance event/text.
- Articulate a clear and specific design concept that explains how one's own work relates to the text and its themes.
- Understand and apply design variables that support the director's vision, the performers' efforts, and the needs of an audience.

### Developing Design Skills

Students will be able to:

- Demonstrate and communicate design concepts through:
  - ground plans
  - models
  - renderings
  - elevations
  - collage
  - swatches
  - other appropriate forms
- Work imaginatively within the limits of available resources in the pursuit of a unified theatrical design.
- Demonstrate the ability to encounter challenges with maturity, flexibility and creativity.



# Theater Making: Designing *continued*

## Benchmark

- **Students develop the communication and organizational skills to effectively realize a design project.**

## Communication and Organizational Skills

Students will be able to:

- Lead a group of peers through the construction and execution of a theatrical design.
- Demonstrate effective task and time management skills in daily efforts and long-term projects.
- Engage in regular effective and responsible communication with fellow designers, the director, actors and the crew.
- Demonstrate sensitivity to the emotional and physical safety of self and others.

## Suggested Activities: Designing

- Either alone or in groups, develop and present a design concept with a concise design statement (set, costume, sound or lighting) for either a drama or a musical through which the student:
  - translates an emotional response to the text into the elements of design, such as actor-audience relationship, scale, traffic patterns and color.
  - responds to the demands of the text, such as the historical, aesthetic and spatial requirements by using elements of design.
  - supports the design concept with visual research in a design/research portfolio.
  - demonstrates the ability to communicate the design through the appropriate tool, such as ground plans, renderings, swatches, elevations or a model.
- Design a unit set for a period or contemporary play.
- Render and swatch ten costumes for two or three different characters in a period or contemporary play.
- Design and draw a lighting plot with appropriate instruments and justifiable color choices for a one-act play, demonstrating the passage of time and change of atmosphere.
- Create a sound plot accompanied by an original audio tape or CD, including music and sound effects.

- Work with a technical theater crew to realize the design through the construction, load-in, technical rehearsals, and running of the production.
- Write an analysis of the above work, contrasting the student-generated concept with an actual design they have seen in a live or taped production by a prominent designer, citing specific influences and the practical parameters of the project. Designers might include Tony Walton, Derek McClane, Jennifer Tipton, Jules Fisher, Theoni Aldrich, William Ivey Long or Paul Tazewell.



# Theater Making: Technical Theater

## Benchmark

- **Students demonstrate proficiency in one area of technical theater and develop working skills in another selected area.**
- **Students apply the mathematical, organizational, safety and analytical skills required of a theater technician.**

## Understanding Technical Theater

Students will be able to:

- Perform the duties associated with one selected area of technical theater.
- Demonstrate general knowledge and experience in at least one other area of technical theater.
- Apply basic mathematical concepts that apply to technical theater duties.
- Observe all safety procedures required in technical theater.

## Suggested Activities: Technical Theater

(by area of expertise)

### Costuming/Makeup and Hair

- Perform basic hand and machine stitching.
- Take measurements and perform fittings.
- Label costumes, accessories and shoes.
- Organize dress bags and wardrobe racks.
- Set up and organize a quick change booth.
- Create a character makeup design for three to five actors for a performance.
- Use basic makeup techniques in performance.
- Identify and use costume and makeup resources, including shops and suppliers.
- Create a list of the range of fabric and appropriate choices available for costume construction.
- Perform basic costume maintenance, including laundry and repairs.
- Prepare a wardrobe plot for each character in a script.
- List the basic hair and wig requirements for a show from an examination of the script.
- Create and use budgets for costume, makeup and hair expenditures.

### Carpentry

- Use the basic components of a flat to construct scenery.
- Build a standard 4'x 8' platform with legs and bracing.
- Measure and work in scale from a ground plan or working drawing.
- Read construction plans such as elevations and ground plans.
- Create technical drawings.
- Create a cut list for scenic construction.
- Lay out the set placement on stage.
- Spike scenic units in the performance space.
- Use bearing loads in platform construction.
- Use basic scene-shop math for measuring.
- Follow and enforce all safety procedures required in carpentry work.
- Create and use scenic budgets.
- Use basic theater rigging techniques.

### Electrics

- Differentiate between the basic types of lighting instruments.
- Operate a spotlight.
- Hang and focus lighting equipment.
- Change lamps and gels in standard lighting equipment.
- Circuit and patch lighting equipment.
- Read lighting plots and generate lighting paperwork.
- Use lighting equipment templates to draw lighting symbols on a hang plot.

- Identify electrics and lighting positions in the theater.
- Use math in calculations working with stage electrics and circuitry.
- Follow and enforce all safety procedures required in electrics work.
- Create and use electrics budgets.

### Properties

- Create properties paperwork and running sheets.
- Lay out and label a prop table.
- Construct and repair basic props using a variety of materials and skills.
- Create props from papier-maché.
- Create and use a properties budget.

### Running Crews

- Follow cues from headset and cue lights.
- Read cue sheets and run show accordingly.
- Understand and use rigging systems and operations.
- Discuss and outline the roles of various crew positions.
- Outline in discussion or writing the procedures for deck safety.
- Walk the stage area to trouble-shoot for safety issues.

High school students engaged in a sequential commencement program may be provided with opportunities to work both as designers and as theater technicians. Therefore, the 12th grade benchmark in Theater Making differentiates between Designing and Technical Theater, allowing for the participation of students with diverse interests.

## Theater Making: Technical Theater *continued*

### Suggested Activities: Technical Theater *continued*

#### Stage Management

- Create a time line and flow chart to demonstrate an understanding of the rehearsal and production processes.
- Create a call book to be used in the production of a theater event.
- Create call sheets and scene breakdown paperwork to be used in the production of a theater event.
- Direct the various crews in running rehearsals and performances.
- Create prop running paperwork in conjunction with the prop crew.
- Generate rehearsal and show reports.
- Communicate in writing and in person as the liaison between creative team, actors and crews.
- Generate rehearsal schedules in conjunction with the director.
- Create and stock a basic stage management kit.
- Tape out a rehearsal room by reading drawings and ground plans.
- Supervise the deck crew in glow taping stage set and set-up of safety lights.
- Organize and run a rehearsal and a line run-through session with the cast.
- Create and use production budgets.

