

# Stage Geography

I know, you are saying “*what? Geography in Drama class? Oh jeez.*” Yes, geography in Drama Class. Stage Geography!

# Your Responsibility Today:

- u Please answer all of the questions on the worksheet and draw all of the necessary diagrams. This information will be on your nine weeks exam!
- u Do not talk. If you have a question or need something, raise your hand.
- u If you do not behave respectfully and complete your assignments, the textbooks will be your friend for the remainder of the 9 week period.

# X marks the spot!

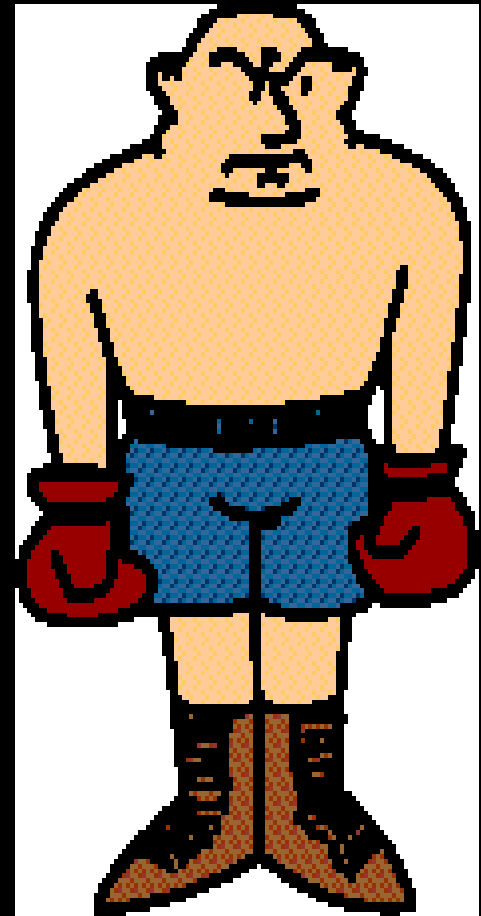
- u Actors and directors use X as an abbreviation for the word *cross*, meaning *move across the stage*, as in X to the door (cross to the door). A *counter-cross* (CX) is a movement designed to help balance the stage and keep one actor from upstaging another. *It is a short cross in the direction opposite (counter) the one just taken by another actor.*

- u A "**Cross**" is simply moving from one part of the stage to another. The director might say "cross left" or "cross down center right". (see STAGE POSITIONS section) In the script you might see it notated as "X".
- u A "**Counter cross**" is a cross a performer takes to adjust for the cross of another actor. The adjustment is made to maintain the visual balance of the scene. A counter cross is also made because a crossing actor may "cover" another actor. (Obsruct the audience's view of the other actor by moving into a position between the other actor and the audience.)
- u Performers frequently counter cross and it is expected that slight adjustments should be made by the performers without being told. Counter crosses that cover a lot of stage territory would normally be handled as "blocking" and discussed with the director.

# The Crusher

For the body position lesson, assume you are the audience and the actors are on the stage (your computer) facing you. Crusher is in a full "open" position also called "**Full Front.**"

- u This is considered a strong position. Crusher is fully "open" to the audience. He can best be seen and heard by the audience.
- u To "open" is to face toward the audience. Depending on the intent, this can mean to turn a little bit toward the audience or to face the audience in the "full front" position.



Full Front

# $\frac{1}{4}$ left $\frac{1}{4}$ right

The Bonaputz twins on the right, Jacques and Henry, (Jacques is the snappy dresser) are demonstrating the  **$\frac{1}{4}$  Left** and the  **$\frac{1}{4}$  Right positions**. These positions are fairly open, and are also strong positions, though not as much as the full front position.

To achieve the  $\frac{1}{4}$  left or  $\frac{1}{4}$  right position, just move one of your legs more upstage (toward the back wall) than the other. This forces your body to turn a bit. Which way you turn depends upon which leg you move upstage. Stand up and try it.

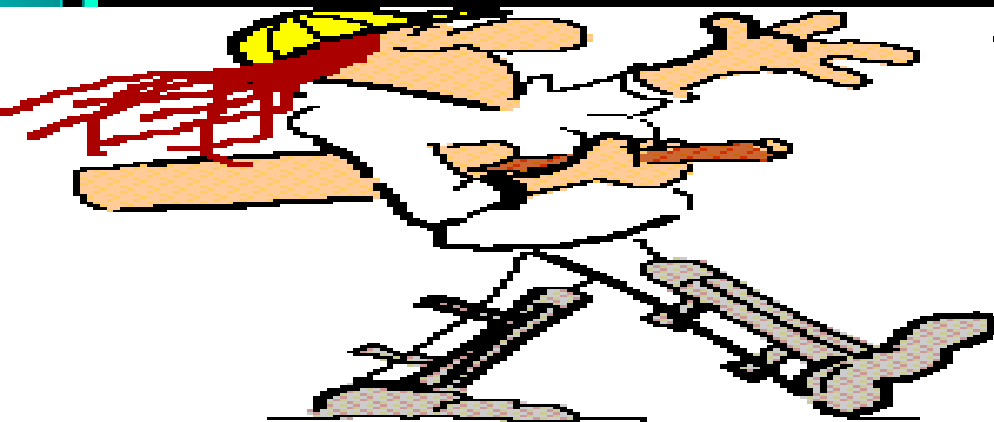
When two performers "share" a scene on stage (they are both open to an equal degree), this is generally the position they will take. If they faced full front, like Crusher, and talked to each other while looking straight out to the audience, well that would not look "natural". So when two actors "share" a scene, they will usually assume the  $\frac{1}{4}$  position.

Although this position does not look totally natural, it is a theatre convention readily accepted by the audience. The trick is to be open enough to still be seen and heard well, but to be turned enough toward the other performer to appear to be looking at each other.

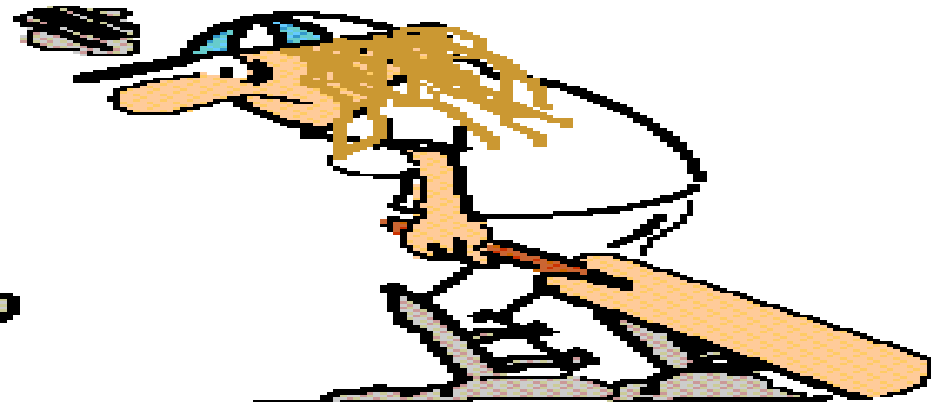


# Left profile/ right profile

- u Brit and Melissa, are demonstrating the "**Left and Right Profile**" positions. (They're really getting into the emotion of this scene. Good job!)
- u Profile is not a particularly strong position because the audience members in the far left or right of the "house" (the audience area) will only see the back of the performer who is facing away from them. They will also have a harder time hearing and understanding them.
- u Unless there is some specific dramatic reason you need to be in profile, you should strive for more "open" positions.



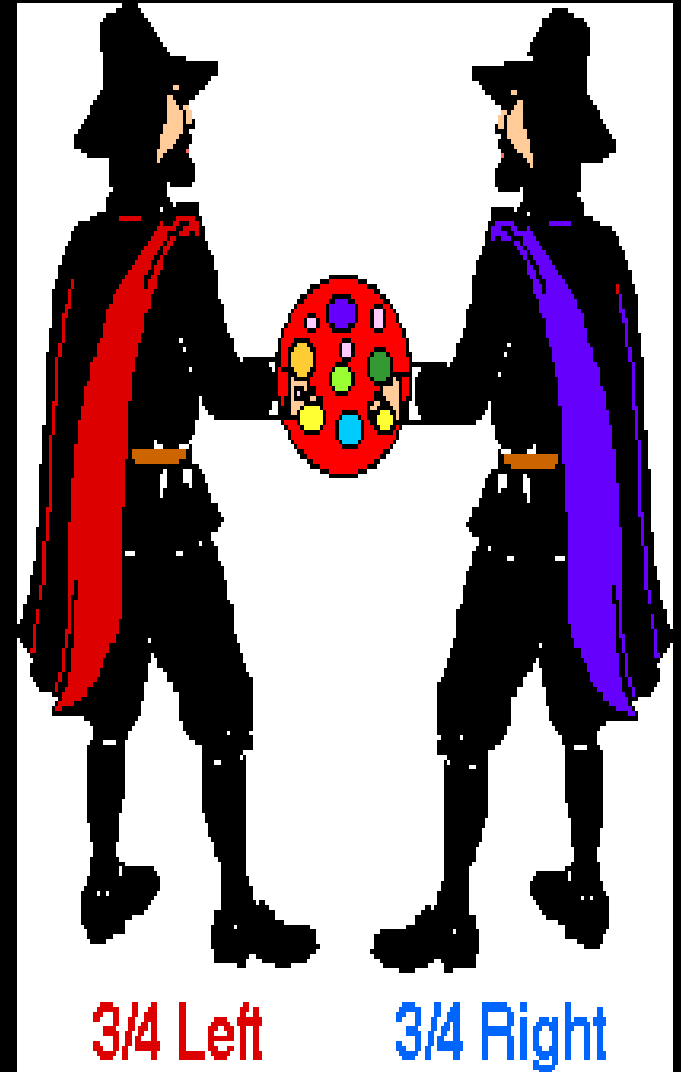
Left Profile



Right Profile

# $\frac{3}{4}$ left and $\frac{3}{4}$ right

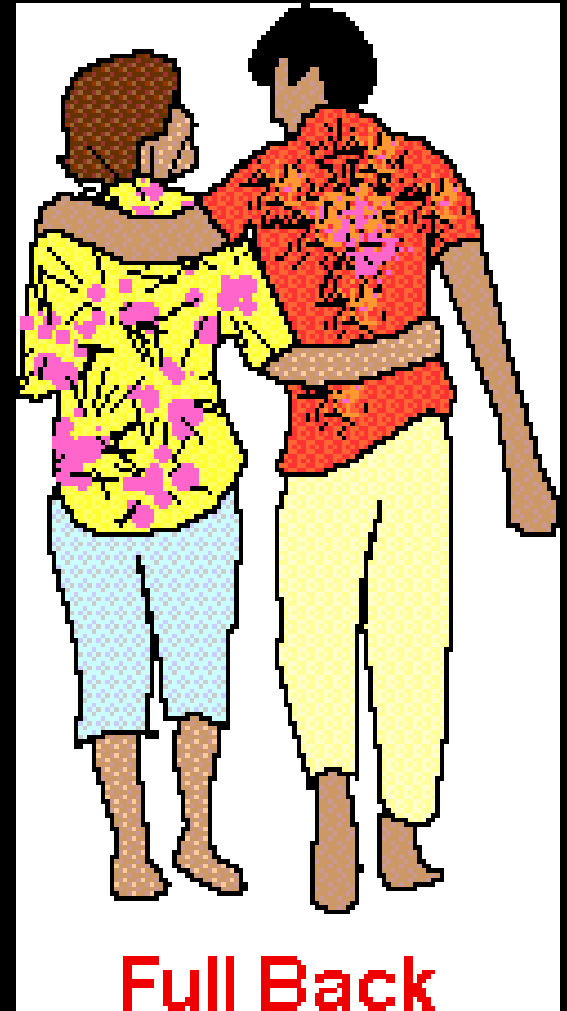
- u Sir Walter and Siegfried are in the  **$\frac{3}{4}$  Left** and the  **$\frac{3}{4}$  Right** positions.
- u Generally weak positions that should be avoided. Hardly anyone in the house can see the performers' faces decently (all those fine facial expressions are lost) and the performers are talking upstage into the wings, this makes it hard for the audience to hear all that important and meaningful dialog the performers spent weeks memorizing and rehearsing.



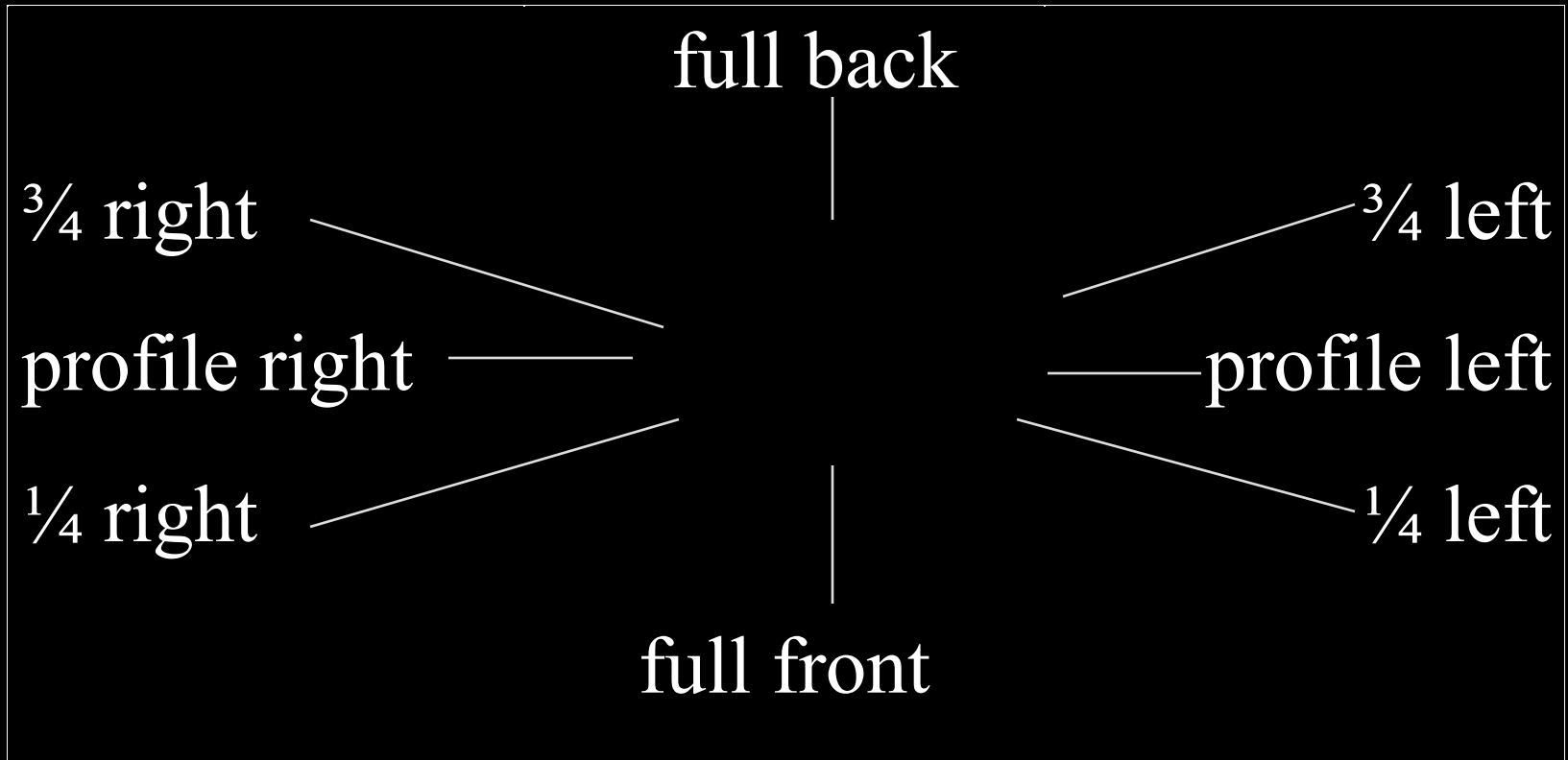


# Full back

- u And finally, our performers Dick and Jane are walking off into the back wall in the "**Full Back**" position.
- u This is by far the weakest position. Noone can see the performers' faces and their lines are being said to the back wall - which can hear them quite well, however the audience has a much harder time of it. Unless you have a strongly compelling dramatic reason for the back wall to see and hear you, **AVOID THIS POSITION.**

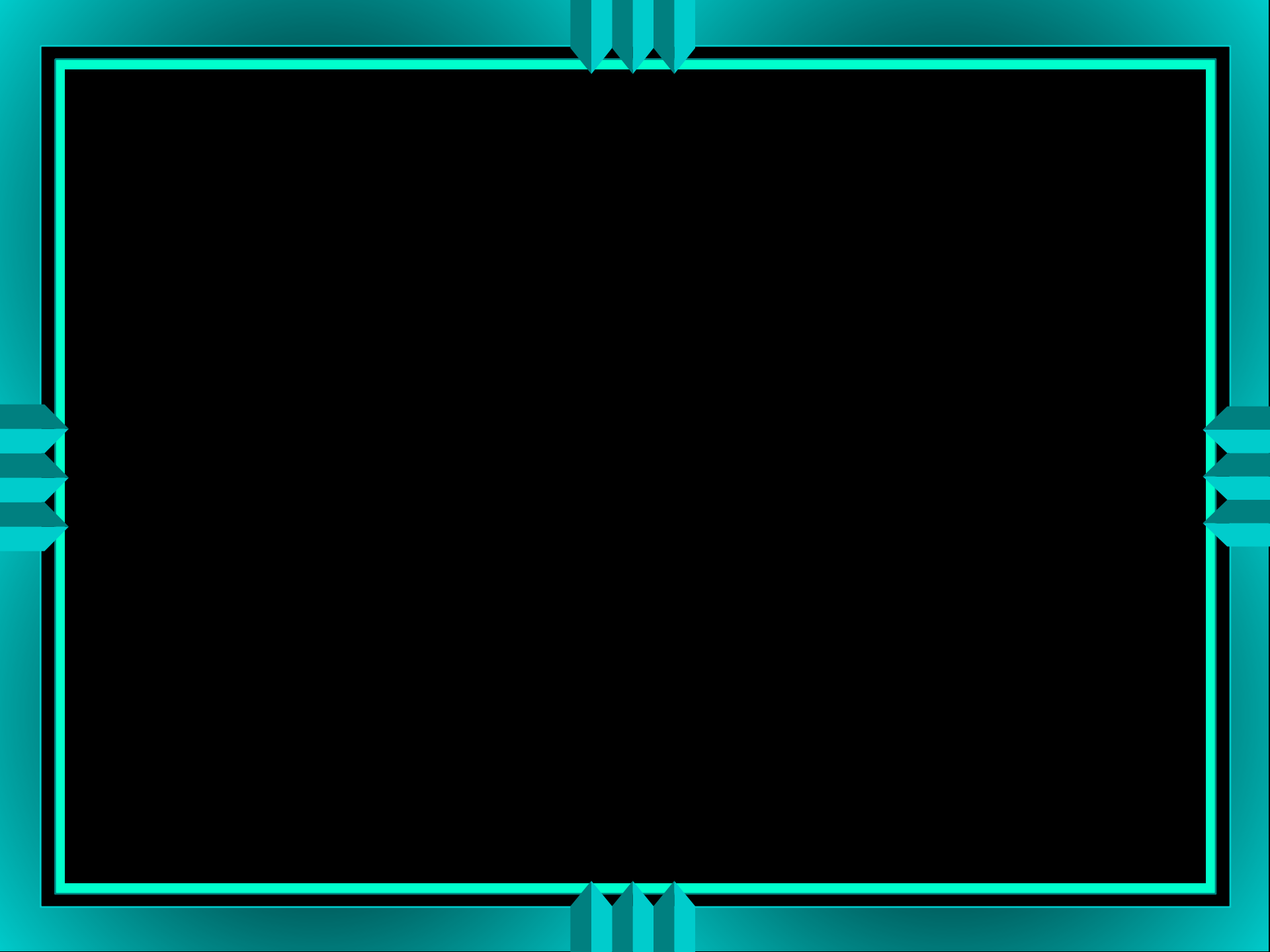


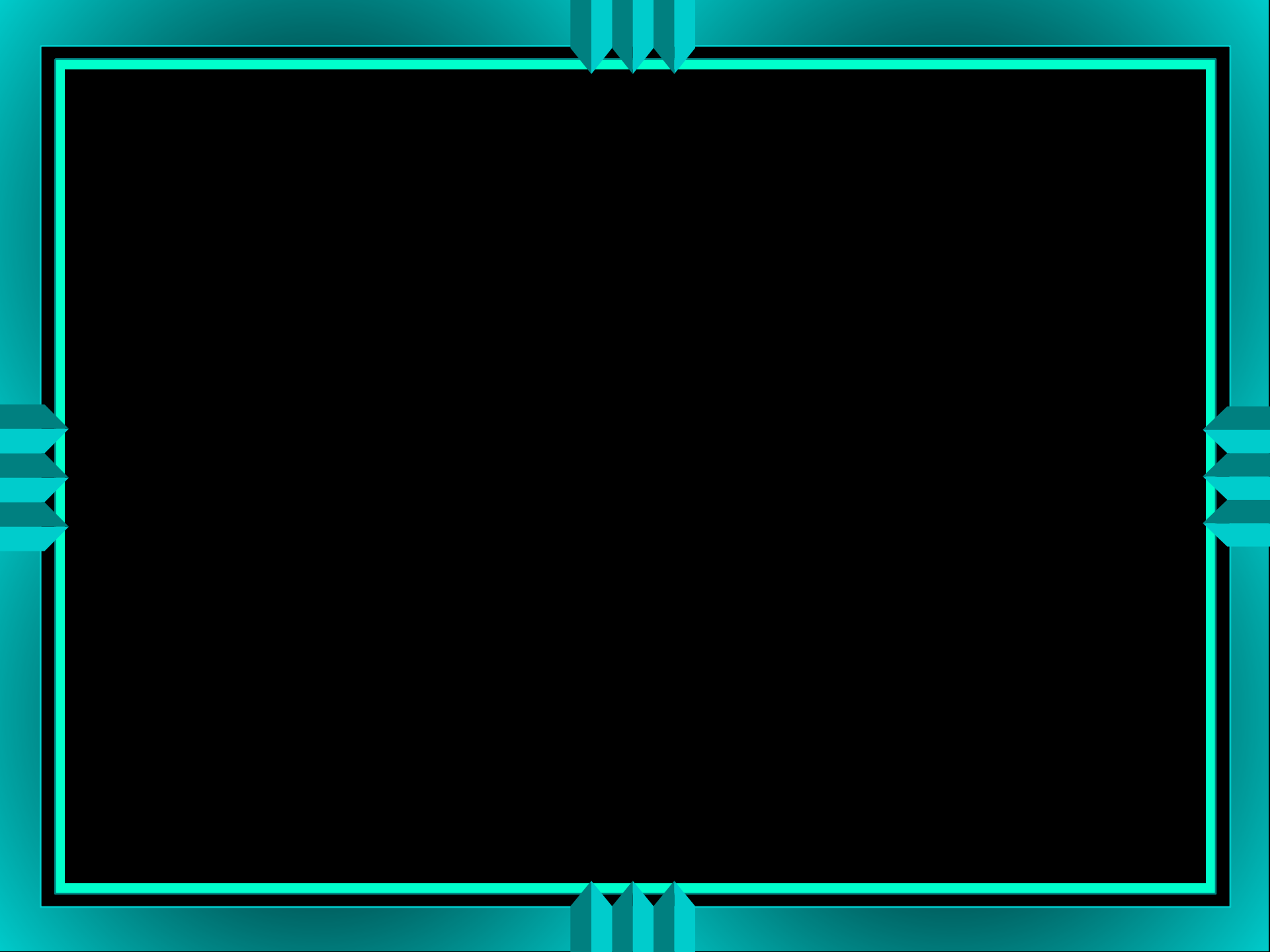
# BODY POSITIONS



# BODY POSITIONS (cont)

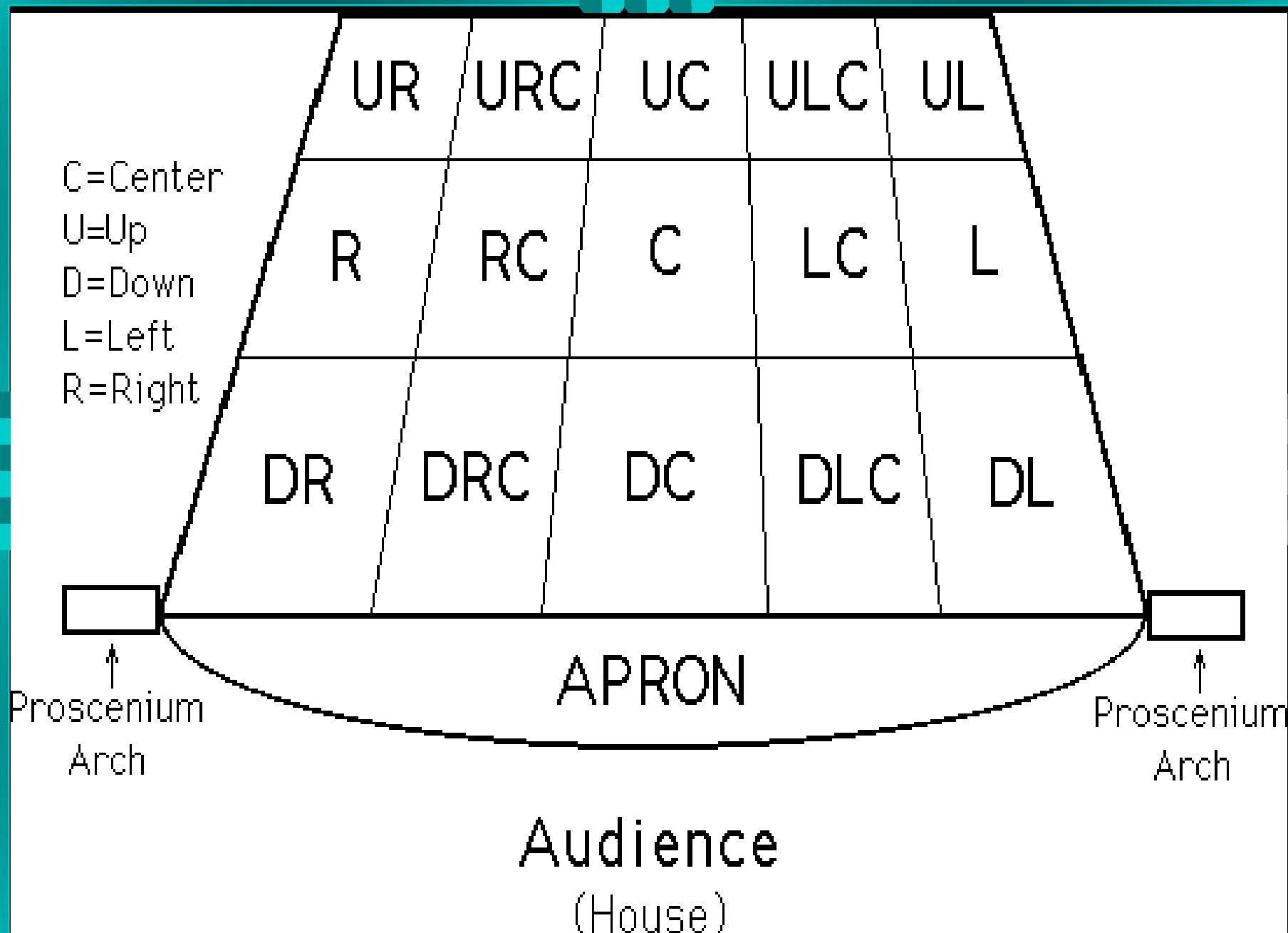
- u Which way an actor faces is important. In life outside the theatre, two people holding a conversation are likely to stand facing each other. On stage, though, two actors rarely face each other. Instead they *open up*, each one turning just a little toward downstage. This allows the audience to get a better look at both actor's faces. There are eight basic body positions - or directions to face - for actors. (*full back, 3/4 right, profile right, 1/4 right, full front, 1/4 left, profile left, 3/4 left*) Remember that the Left and Right designations refer to the side of the stage the actor is facing, not to the side of his face we can see.





# Stage Directions in a Proscenium Theatre

- u Stage Directions in a proscenium theatre are given in terms of up, down, right and left.
- u UP is away from the audience
- u DOWN is towards the audience
- u LEFT and RIGHT are always used from the point of view of the actor *facing* the audience.







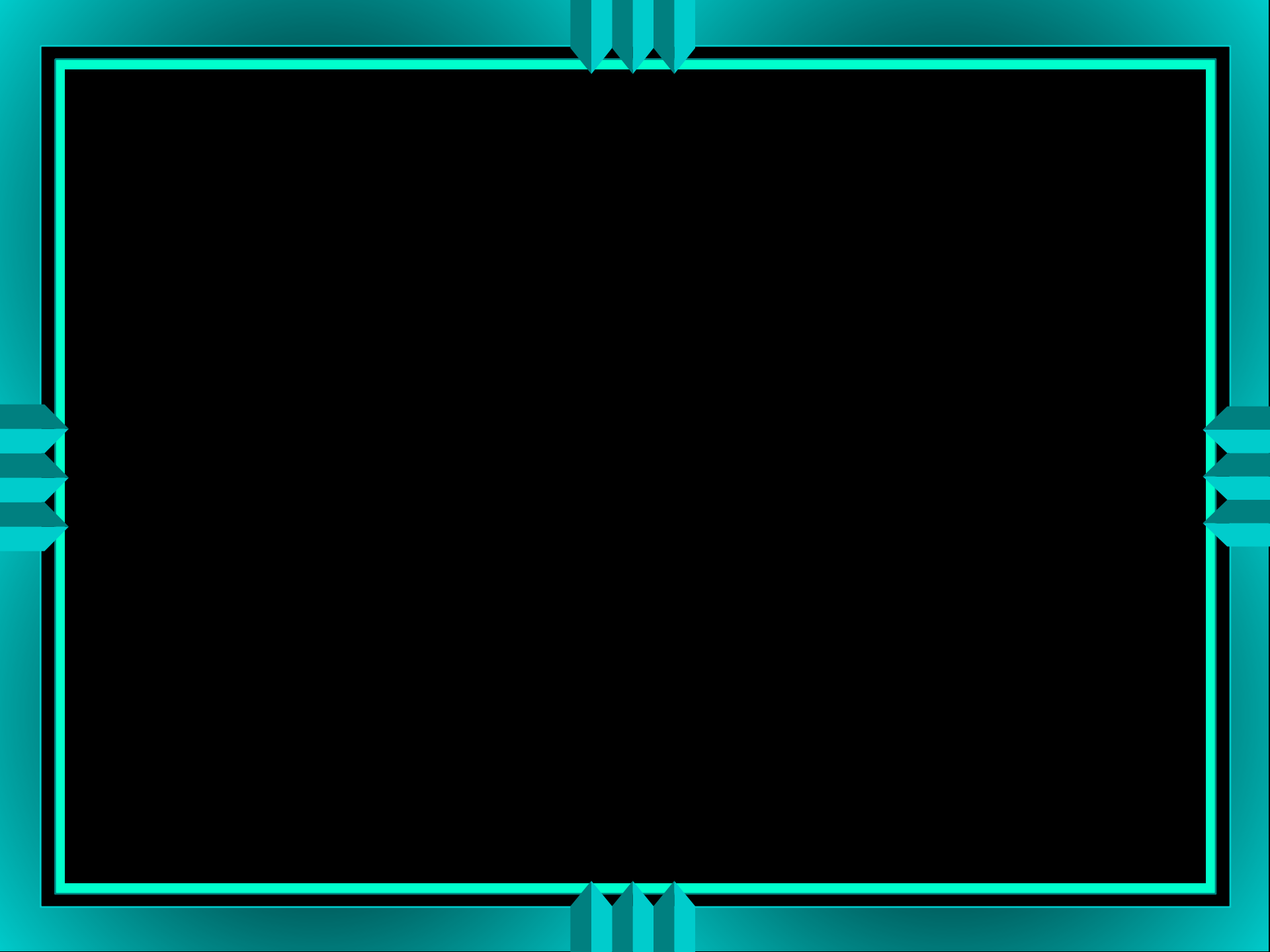
# STAGE DIRECTIONS

|                       |                        |                      |
|-----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>UP<br/>RIGHT</b>   | <b>UP<br/>CENTER</b>   | <b>UP<br/>LEFT</b>   |
| <b>RIGHT</b>          | <b>CENTER</b>          | <b>LEFT</b>          |
| <b>DOWN<br/>RIGHT</b> | <b>DOWN<br/>CENTER</b> | <b>DOWN<br/>LEFT</b> |

# STAGE DIRECTIONS (cont)

|                             |            |                              |            |                            |
|-----------------------------|------------|------------------------------|------------|----------------------------|
| <i>UP</i><br><i>RIGHT</i>   | <i>URC</i> | <i>UP</i><br><i>CENTER</i>   | <i>ULC</i> | <i>UP</i><br><i>LEFT</i>   |
| <i>RIGHT</i>                | <i>RC</i>  | <i>CENTER</i>                | <i>LC</i>  | <i>LEFT</i>                |
| <i>DOWN</i><br><i>RIGHT</i> | <i>DRC</i> | <i>DOWN</i><br><i>CENTER</i> | <i>DLC</i> | <i>DOWN</i><br><i>LEFT</i> |





# TO THINK ABOUT

- u If a director told you to *XDL2* what would he be asking you to do?
- u If a director told you to *X below sofa*, what would he be asking you to do? Does he want you to become very very small and slither under the furniture?
- u If a director asked you to *X in 2* , what do you think he wishes you to do?

# TO THINK ABOUT *ANSWERS*

- u *XDL2* means to **cross** *DL 2 steps*. That doesn't mean you are expected to move all the way to the DL area in two giant steps. It means, "*take two steps in the direction of DL*"
- u What about that strange direction? *X below sofa*? In this case the director is not asking you to slip beneath the sofa. NO! The directions *below (and above) mean on the downstage (or with above, upstage)* side of the sofa.
- u When an actor is directed to *X in 2* , it usually means he or she should take two steps toward another actor.

# Learning your way around a Theatre

# Parts of a Theatre

**u** THE STAGE - The most important part of the theatre where the acting takes place during a performance.

**u** THE HOUSE - The part of the theatre where the audience sits to watch the performance



# Parts of a Theatre

**u GREEN ROOM** - The room where the actors wait for their entrances or cues. The green room is not necessarily green. It is located near the stage.

**u BOX OFFICE** - The place for selling and buying tickets, usually located at the front of the HOUSE.

# Parts of a Theatre

uPROP CLOSET - a room or closet where props are stored.

uBACKSTAGE - backstage, or behind the stage are located places for scenery storage and building, and costume storage.

What is the difference between a  
\*Theatre\* and an \*Auditorium\*

u If you think about the word  
*audio*, it will come as no surprise  
that an auditorium was originally a  
place for hearing something. It's  
less obvious that the Greek word  
*theatron* originally meant a seeing  
place.

# Theatre Designs

- u Proscenium Theatre
- u Theatre-in-the-round
- u Three-quarter Theatre
- u Two-sided Theatre
- u End Stage
- u Thrust Stage

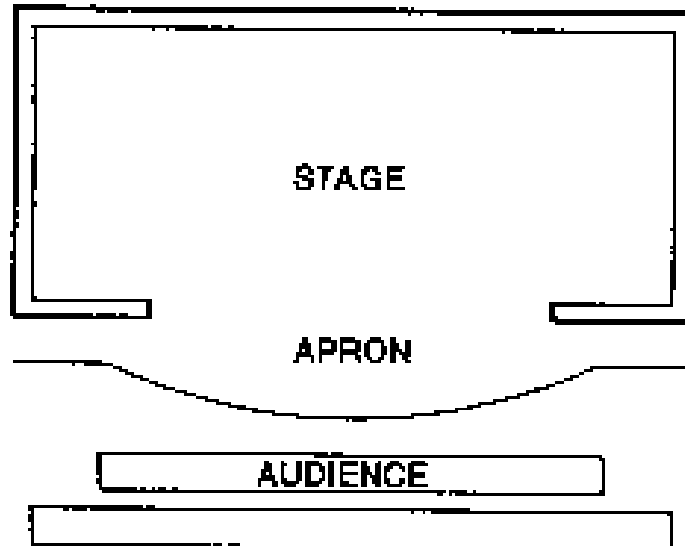
# Proscenium Arch Stage

- u The Proscenium Arch stage is also known as a 'picture frame stage' because from the audience perspective they are viewing through a hole in the wall resembling a picture frame.
- u The audience is separated from the stage in a proscenium arch stage.
- u The proscenium arch stage has 'wings' on each side from which actors enter and exit.

# The Proscenium or Traditional Stage

## Pros of the Proscenium Stage:

Proscenium Theatre



• Can use lots of scenery--allows for a "picture frame."

• Realism possible

• Light (from one direction.)

• Backstage

• Additional stage areas (upstage, etc.)

# A Well-Designed and Equipped Proscenium Theatre

- u Benefits the set designer because the *stage house* is invisible to the audience it is easy to store and shift several different settings for a single play. Flat scenery can be ‘flown’ into the upper reaches of the scene house in just a few seconds. Wagons and platforms can be stored in the *wings*.
- u Also benefits the lighting designer. All of the spotlights, floodlights, and strip lights can be hidden from view up in the *flies*, in the *wings*, or in various locations in the house, such as the *beam port* cut through the ceiling above the audience. The audience sees only the results of the designers work as the light illuminates the actors and scenery without their attention being drawn to the sources of that light.

# Theatre-in-the round

- u Theatre-in-the-round is also known as *Arena Theatre*
- u Theatre-in-the round is characterized by the seating of audience on all four sides of the stage
- u Seating of audience on 4 sides of the stages means the actor has to create an imaginary *fourth wall* to keep him/her within the world of the play
- u minimal scenery is used as not to obstruct audience viewing



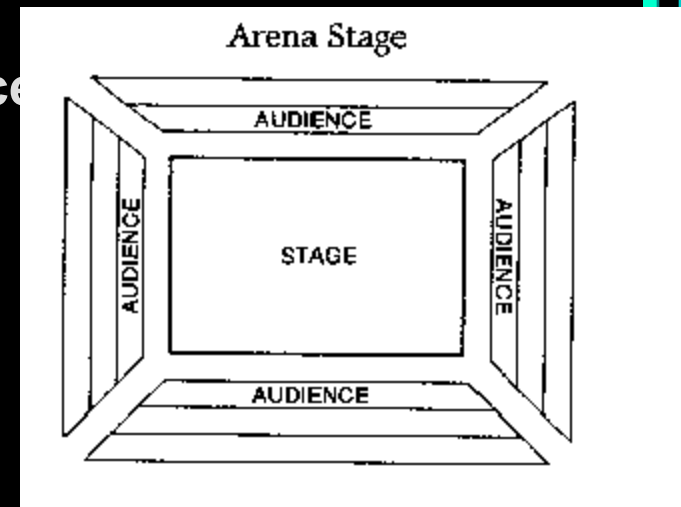
# Arena Stage (Theatre-in-the-Round)

## Pros of the Arena Stage:

- Very intimate-closer to the action than with a
- proscenium stage; can see other audience
- members across the stage
- Lends itself to varied kinds of plays

## Cons of the Arena Stage:

- Can't use very realistic scenery
- Someone's back is always facing the audience
- Can't use traditional stage areas



# Three-quarter theatre

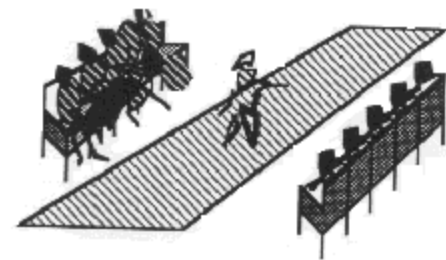
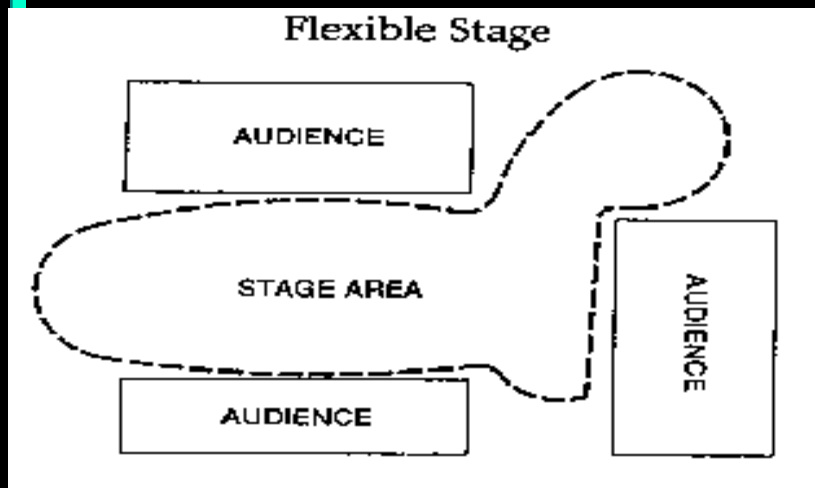
- u Three-quarter Theatre is similar to a Thrust stage. The difference is that in a Thrust Stage the audience is raked, seated in tiers above the stage.
- u Audience is seated on three sides in a Three-quarter theatre.
- u scenery must be minimal in order not to obstruct the audience viewing of the play
- u Directors must take care that the actors are visible to the audience. This is a challenge!

# Two-sided theatre

- u Two-sided theatre is also known as *Traverse Staging*. There is also the *Flexible Stage* where every room can be adapted into a stage space.
- u Audience is seated on either side of the stage, but not on the ends.
- u This would be similar to a stage used for runway modeling, or fashion shows.
- u As in both three-sided theatre and theatre-in-the-round, movement is a challenge and scenery is minimal

## Pros of the Flexible Stage:

- Uses the environment that already exists in a room/space
- Sometimes audiences can be in the performance space
- Sometimes performers within audience space
- Uses available space, modified or no



## **traverse stage**

This image taken from Kenneth M. Cameron and Patti P. Gillespie's *The Enjoyment of Theatre*, 3rd edition (Macmillan, 1992), p. 80.

# End Stage

- u The End Stage is similar to a proscenium arch stage. The difference is the lack of a *stage house*. This means that while the audience still views the play through a proscenium, there is no stage house to fly scenery in and out.

# Thrust Stage

- u The Thrust Stage is similar to three-sided theatre in that the audience is seated on three sides of the stage, the difference is that with a thrust stage the audience is raked upwards.
- u A Thrust stage has a backstage area which is unseen by the audience.
- u scenery can be less minimal due to the raked seating of the House. Raked seating is similar to bleachers in a gymnasium.

## Thrust Stage (Three-quarter Round)

### Pros of the Thrust Stage:

- Blend of proscenium and arena
- Versatile
- Can use big, realistic sets
- Still have intimacy

### Cons of the Thrust Stage:

- Must use/rearrange some audience space

