PROJECT ON

“Koothambalam And Modern Stage”

SUBMITTED BY

NAVAMI SURESH

SB19BHA020

Final Year BA. Bharatanatyam

ST. TERESA’S COLLEGE

DEPARTMENT OF BHARATHANATYAM

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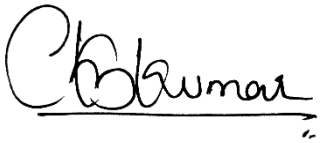
CERTIFICATE

Certified that this is a confide record of final year project on **"Koothambalam And Modern Stages"** Submitted **by Navami Suresh (SB19BHA020)** and submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement of award in B.A Bharatanatyam by this college.



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Koothambhalam &Modern Stages

INDEX

KOOTHAMBALAM:

MODERN STAGES:

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KOOTHAMBALAM

INTRODUCTION

Natyashastra written by Sage Bharata (c.200 BCE - 200 CE) is the seminal extant work for almost all classical art forms of India. The two major streams of Indian classical music (Carnatic and Hindustani), a wide range of classical dance forms from different parts of India (Kathak, Manipuri, Kuchipudi, Bharatanatyam, Mohiniyattam to name a few) and classical Indian theatres (Koodiyattam and Kathakali) all trace their foundations to this definitive treatise on arts. Natyashastra is primarily a performer's (or actor's) manual. The book covers an incredibly wide array of topics related to classical art forms like theatre, dance and music. Most importantly it is an actors manual. Natyashastra and its commentaries - especially Dhvanyaloka by Anandavardhana in 9th century CE and Abhinav Bharathi by Abhinavaguptha in 10th century, both from Kashmir school- have shaped almost all classical performing arts of India down the line.

Koothambalam or which is also known as **Kuttampalam** that is the temple theatre which has a closed wall surrounded by 4 sides ,which can also be called as a mini hall for staging *Koothu*, *Nangiar koothu* and *Koodiyattam*, the ancient religious art forms of Kerala, India. Koothambalams are said to be constructed according to the guide lines given in the 2nd Chapter of Natyashastra the book which was written by Bharata Muni. The stage within the hall is considered to be as sacred as the temple sanctum. The stage can also create a

traditional atmosphere during the art form. It is constructed within the cloister of the Temple; more precisely within the *pancaprakaras* of the temple. The prescribe location is between the *prakaras* of *bahyahara* and *maryada*. In Kerala tradition it is considered as one among the *pancaprasadas* of a temple complex. Its dimension vary from temple to temple. A square platform with a separate pyramidal roof supported by pillars in the center called *natyamandapam* is constructed as s separate structure within the large hall of Koothampalam. The floor of the hall is divided into two equal halves and one part is for performance (including stage, instruments, green room etc.) and other half for seating audience. During the performance, the stage is decorated with fruit-bearing plantains, bunches of coconuts and fronds of the coconut palm. A *para*[1] filled with rice is placed on the stage. A nilavilakku with three *thiri* is used for lighting. The mizhavu, a percussion instrument for accompanying Koothu, is placed within a railed enclosure, with a high seat for the drummer(belonging to nampiar community).

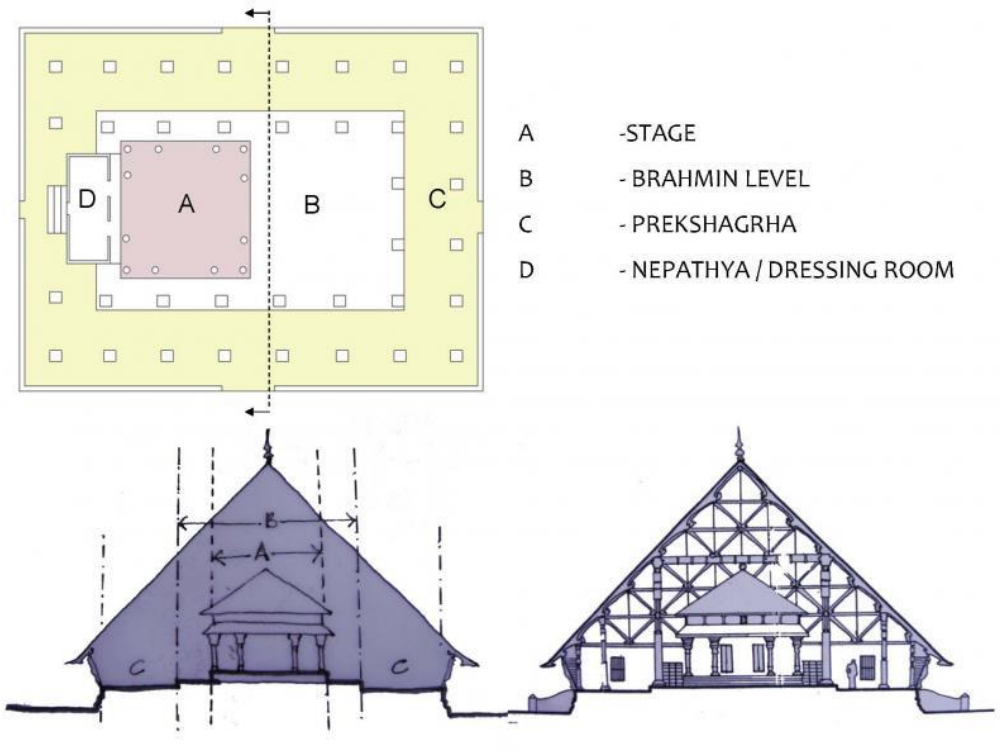
Into the twenty first century, Kerala has preserved the rich tradition of Sanskrit theatre in the form of 'Koodiyattam'. Considered an intangible cultural heritage of humanity by UNESCO, Koodiyattam is surprisingly contemporary in its approach to theatre despite its tradition of several centuries and its very orthodox mien. Traditionally Koodiyattam is performed in purpose built spaces known as 'Koothambalam' (literally a 'theatre-temple'). in many temples of Kerala. The Koothambalams of Koodalmanikyam, Vadakkumathan, Kidangoor and Haripad temples (each of them having a legacy of more than a thousand years) are sterling examples. Among recent constructions, the Koothambalam in Kerala Kalamandalam is a noteworthy example.

Bharatha has devoted about 100 verses (400 lines) in the second chapter of Natyashastra to deal with performance spaces. Natyashastra has emphasized the need for an exclusive enclosed building for the success of any performance, ensuring a safe and

secure space for the audience to watch the performances without any distraction. To emphasize his point, Bharata narrates an incident connected with a play enacted by Devas (Gods) that ended in utter chaos and disruption, when Asuras (demons) protested against the plot which they considered demeaning to their clan.

ITS CONSTRUCTION/ ARCHITECTURAL RULES

Natyashastra recommends three shapes (in plan) viz. Vikrushta (Rectangle), Chatursara (Square) and Thrasra (Triangle) for a theatre. Similarly three sizes viz. large, medium and small are given for each shape. The classification is based on the dimensions of 108 Hastas; (1 Hasta= 72 cm) , 64 Hastas and 32 Hastas. Among the three sizes, the medium size is identified as the optimal taking into account viewing and listening pleasure for the audience. The recommended medium size for the rectangular theatre is 64 H x 32 H and 32 H x 32 H for the square theatre. The “Ranga Mandapa” (stage) size is 8HX8H. Walls



shall be well plastered with lime mortar and shall be decorated with mural paintings. Certain special requirements which differentiate the theatre from the residential architecture are also stated clearly which are comparable with modern acoustic design elements, to increase the quality of sound in the theatre and to reduce possibilities of echo formation. Small windows are recommended to achieve required reverberation and avoid external disturbances.

Koothambalam, in line with Kerala's building traditions, most of the structure above the plinth is built entirely of wood with the roof being finished in copper sheets. The unique feature of the Koothambalam from a modern perspective is the carpentry. It has a very, very ornamental interior which is possibly related to the perfect acoustics of these spaces. The unique feature of the Koothambalam from a modern perspective is its method of enclosing space from the sides. Instead of walls, it has a slanted and sometimes curved plane of trellis-work, which always lets the breeze – along with intimations of everyday life outside – into the performance space. The airiness of the structure is a climatic necessity in the hot and humid coastal climate of Kerala. However, the significance of this little functional detail for some aspects of performance culture may well be greater than is immediately evident. For the contemporary move away from the pure, insulated performance space, the trellis wall of the Koothambalam is an important reference point. In letting in the breeze, it modulates but does not stop the continuity between everyday space outside and the space of illusion or performance inside the Koothambalam.

01. The Koothambalam is sanctified with Tantrik rites as there is a spiritual link with the temple and the dancing space. etc.

02. Since Lord Shiva is a cosmic dancer (Nataraja) and is the Lord of dances, at Koothambalam dances are performed in the Shaivite tradition, irrespective of the presiding deity.

03. Yet another aspect is this space is conceptualized as Nandikeswara, the vehicle of Lord Shiva.

04. The stage within the hall is the most important part of the Natyagraha and is strongly believed to be as sacred as the temple sanctum or Sri Kovil.

05. The stage is normally built facing the deity and artists on the stage perform facing the deity.

06. Regardless of which direction the main deity in the temple is facing west or east, the Koothambalam has to be to the right side of it.

07. Three important parts of Koothambalam are the roof, the super structure and adishana on which these rest. Thy are built as per guide lines.

08. An interesting feature is there is a roof within the main roof of the auditorium.

09. In contrast to the main hall, the roof over the stage is elaborate and ornamental so as to produce good acoustics. Any small whisper can be picked up and transmitted across the audience far and wide. No distortions in the sound. The ceiling and the breaking-up of its surface into ornamental sections normally will improve the quality of acoustics.

10. The stage wooden ceiling has 49 squares. Nepathya is a small room (something like green room) for the artists. The upper part has narrow jallis for free flow of fresh air.

11. As per Bharata's guide lines, Kothambalam gives the feeling of a mountain cave like structure (shailaguhakar); Trellis frames allow gentle breeze without disturbing the on-going performance and the low protruding roof cuts down Sun's glaze.

12. As for seating in the theater, tiered seating is not followed nowadays, not so centuries ago. It was caste-specific, people from different castes seat in any place. In the past tiered seating was allowed and Brahmins used to sit close to the stage.

13. As mentioned in Bharata's Nataya Sastra, the drummers and other accompanists perform facing the East on the stage, even in the case of main deity facing west.

14. Unlike Bharata's treatise on Natya, Kothambalam has three rows of pillars - outer , middle and inner one.

15. Regarding shape of the dancing space, only square and rectangular shaped Koothambalams are common.

16. The space for the audience is close to the stage and it helps the audience to enjoy the performance at close quarters. In a way, it improves the visual treat for the audience.

17. While the performences are going on a Villaku - oil lamp with three wicks has to be kept going without interruption.

18. The Koothambalam and other ancient temples in Kerala began to use copper plates on their roofs after the Portuguese (15th century) introduced the technique in the region. It gives extra protection to the slante and tiled roof of the Koothambalam against the harsh SW monsoon that brings in

lots of rain here.

19. Because Shaivite tradition is followed, invocation of Lord Shiva is done by using tantrik rites.

20. As for temple architecture, the principles are taken from the ancient texts, but the construction materials keep changing from time to time.

KOOTHAMBALAM IN ANCIENT TIMES.

The Koothambalam or Nrtta Mandapa came into existence during the day of Bharata. Bharat Muni in his extant Natya Sastra has in fact written an entire chapter on the construction of an auditorium for theatre. Though there is a legend associated with the necessity of an auditorium, practically Bharata believed in providing a specifically erected enclosed space for theatre to make it more aesthetic. Earlier, there were not any particular spaces for performing arts; performances

were conducted in any open space or on temporarily erected stages and even on streets.

As a result, the category of audience began to change. Mostly only invitees were present or those who were genuinely interested in the art form. The big audience began to disappear after transforming theatre to Natyadharmi. The Nrtta Mandapa would have a capacity of 150 to 200 people which actually helped them closely observe satvika abhinaya. The square shape is the basis of all Indian architecture as it can contain any shape like the circle, triangle, octagon etc and also can be extended to a rectangle. Square is considered ideal as it emulates the shape of the Vedic home kunda; it is associated with divine beings in Vedic rituals and hence considered suitable for building temples.

Koothambalam is square or rectangular and arrived at after the process of addition, subtraction, multiplication or division mentioned in the slokas of Silparatna pertaining to theatre. The architecture of the Koothambalam reflects that of the temple. It is considered as one of the Prasadas of the temple. The character and identity of a temple is determined by the architecture of its srikovil. Srikovil is the nucleus of a temple complex.

The Koothambalam is traditionally always located within one of the large areas of a temple complex in Kerala. The character of the architecture of those temples comes into the Koothambalam, and connects the monumental and the intimate quite superbly in an architectural experience. In the Koothambalam you can see in the distance, deep inside, there is a little roof inside the building; the Koothambalam is a shelter within a shelter, or a room within a room. This is unlike the standard proscenium theatre which is more like a room beside a room, separated by the proscenium.

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‘Koothambalam’ or the temple theatre is a closed hall surrounded by wooden trellis-work on a half brick wall and is used for staging traditional cultural performing art forms. It was an addition to the development of the temple enclosure during the 14th century (1301 – 1800 AD). Temples were the focal point of the evolution of cultural activities that gradually spread out. A temple layout constitutes five prakaras and the ideal location area for Koothambalam is between the Bahyahara and the Maryada.

FAMOUS TEMPLES WITH KOOTHAMBALAM.

Famous temples with Koothambalams include the

- Haripad Sree Subrahmanya Swamy temple,
- Thirunakkara Mahadeva Temple - Kottayam,
- Sreekrishna Temple - Guruvayoor,
- Vadakkumnathan Temple - Trichur,
- Koodalmanikyam Temple - Irinjalakkuda,
- Mahadeva Temple - Peruvanam in Trichur District,
- Sree Mahadeva temple - Thiruvegappura,
- Thirumandhamkunnu Bhagavathi Temple - Angadippuram in Malappuram District,
- Thirumuzhikkulam Lakshamana Temple - near Aluva,
- Subramanya temple - Kidangoor,
- Siva Temple - Chengannur etc.

The Kerala Kalamandalam, Deemed University for Art and Culture, Cheruthuruthy, Thrissur District houses a beautiful Koothambalam. Another koothambalam at Vyloppilly Samskarika Nilayam, Trivandrum which is built recently is another example built out of traditional context- i.e., outside temple premises. All these are

rectangular in plan. The plan, elevation and structure of these follow the shape grammar typical to the traditional Kerala architecture following the *vastu* rules prescribed in *thantrasamuccayam* and *silparatnam*, the authentic texts on temple *vastu*.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF KOOTHAMBALAM.

The carbon emissions generated by a heritage building are mainly due to excess electricity usage and by vehicles. The presence of eco-friendly materials and the capacity of the building to adapt to the climate change could result in less energy consumption. The availability of public transport will reduce traffic congestion, contributing to less depletion of natural resources and sir pollution. The compliance code of the building standards helps to ensure the health and safety of the occupants. “Conservation and sustainability share the same generative basics. The first and basic concept of sustainability is to use what already exists. Similarly, the basic concept of conservation is to protect what we already have” [11]. Heritage buildings have the advantage of having less consumption of energy and the skills of superior craftsmanship that have definitely contributed to their durability for hundreds of years. The traditional process of building construction in Kerala was primarily guided by historical canons. Craftsmen worked precisely and systematically under the guidance and supervision of the Stamatis. Silparatna (SR)

and TantrasamucchayaSilpabhagam (TSB) are two historical texts used for the construction guidelines of the design of Koothambalam.

PERFORMANCE

The Koothambalam is used for staging Koothu - Chakyar or Nangyar Koothu - and Koodiyattam, an ancient ritualistic art form of Central Kerala. The Chakyarkoothu performers are collectively known as Chakyars. They are hereditary actors from Kerala mostly doing solo acts in Sanskrit plays. The single act can go on for several days. It is necessary to enact a prelude to the original theme to be presented. That portion where a flashback is performed is called Nirvahana. The act begins properly only during the last 2 days when all the characters come together to be enacted by a single Chakyar, hence the name Koodiyattam meaning 'joint acting,' also referred to as Koothu. Two legendary Chakyarkoothu doyens are Mani Madhava Chakyar and Ammanur Madhava Chakyar. The legacy is taken forward by eminent Guru G. Venu and his talented daughter Kapila Venu.

The only accompanying instruments used are 2 mizhavus and an edakka, both percussion instruments. The 2 mizhavus are permanently fixed on the Ranga Mandapa of the Koothambalam. One of the mizhavus is the main one which controls the entire act and the other one is used to fill up any gaps during talam. Mizhavus are also consecrated like the Koothambalam itself and once it is spoilt out of

usage, it is given royal funeral rituals. These mizhavus are placed almost in front of the doors to the Nepathya.

Though Koothu was originally in Sanskrit, the regionalized version came up in the 9th -10th century A.D and hence started using Manipravalam (mixture of Sanskrit and Malayalam). The maintenance of the Natakasala and the performers were ensured by the royalty and common men through generous endowments of cash and kind.

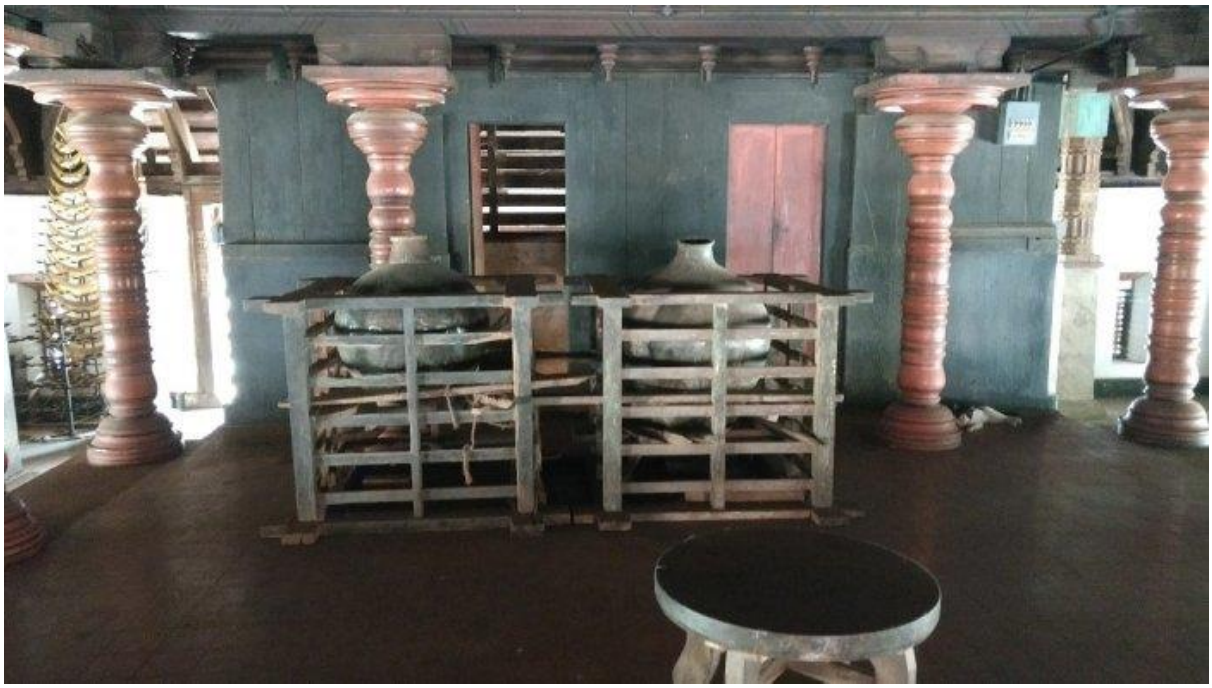
The Koothu was considered divine and was in fact one of the 16 upacharas or rituals conducted at the temple for the propitiation of the deity. The Chakyar was considered next to the temple head priest. He receives the Vilakku from the priest after pooja. During a performance, there wouldn't be any pooja at the Srikovil or vice versa as the deity's presence should be present at the ritual as a whole, hence shouldn't be divided. The deity should be present at the time of the performance at the Koothambalam as Koothu was sacred. The Koothambalam was considered almost equivalent to the Srikovil, hence Koothambalam was treated like a temple.

Some of the most famous Koothambalams are found in temples such as Vadakkunnathan Temple in Thrissur, Guruvayoor Sri Krishna Temple, Koodalmanikyam Temple in Irinjalakkuda, Mahadeva Temple in Peruvanam in Thrissur district, Subramanya temple in Harippad.

SALIENT FEATURES.

* To remove all external disturbances. It is said that after entering into the Koothambalam, it should be equivalent to entering a cave devoid of any distractions and complete obliviousness from the outside world. This helped in creating an atmosphere of divinity and hence, uphold its sanctity as a divine structure.

* Unlike the present day proscenium theatre where there is quite a distance between the performer and the audience since the stage is much higher, the Arangu at a Koothambalam, although a raised platform, is not very high. Thus, it ensures a healthy interaction



between the performer and the audience. The audience seated on the ground would be completely involved in the performance.

* if the theme is Karuna, then the respective visual arts should also

depict the same bhava. They should be miniatures of mythological stories compatible to the theme.

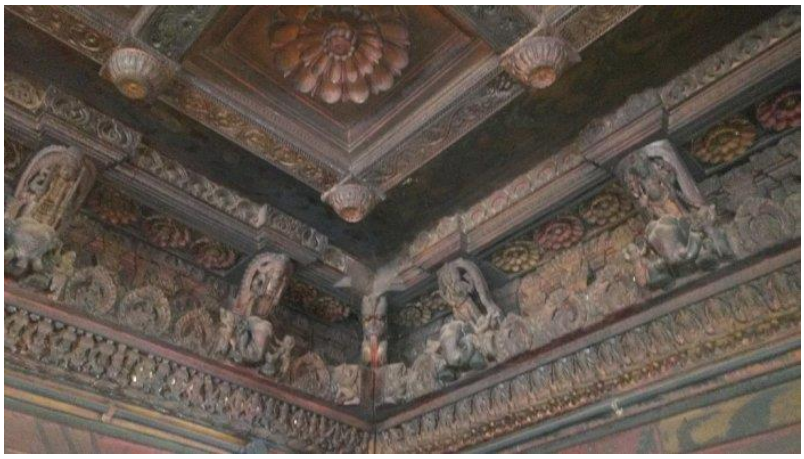
* There shouldn't be any background for the stage and any concept depicted was entirely dependent on the angika abhinaya of the actor.

* Acoustics are given utmost importance. There should be no echo present and hence acoustic friendly. The actor should be able to deliver his voice till last end of his/her audience. The 3 types of Natyagrahas mentioned in Bharata's Natya Sastra according to size and dimensions (biggest, middle and small sizes) also ensures the same. The 3 types according to their shapes are Vikrsta - oblong, Chaturasra - rectangular and Tryasra - triangular. Hence to avoid echoes, there would be openings on either sides of the structure especially between the trellis walls of the mandapam.

* Akin to the green rooms found in current day auditoriums, Koothambalams have a dressing room called Nepathya or Aniyara. It would mostly have 2 doors from the Rangamandapa, one for exit and one for entrance. There would also be a door leading to the pathway behind Rangamandapa.

* Lighting is not given much importance as there would be mostly just big traditional lamps (Vilakku) that would be lit and Vilakku was an integral part of the performance. Once the Vilakku has been lit, the performer becomes completely involved in his character. The Vilakku is considered as the deity instead of the temple's presiding deity.

* Consecration of a Koothambalam is an important ritual as the structure is considered divine.



MODERN STAGES

INTRODUCTION

In theatre and performing arts, the **stage** (sometimes referred to as the **deck** in stagecraft) is a designated space for the performance of productions. The stage serves as a space for actors or performers and a focal point (the screen in cinema theatres) for the audience. As an architectural feature, the stage may consist of a platform (often raised) or series of platforms. In some cases, these may be temporary or adjustable but in theatres and other buildings devoted to such productions, the stage is often a permanent feature.

There are several types of stages that vary as to the usage and the relation of the audience to them.[1] The most common form found in the West is the proscenium stage. In this type, the audience is located on one side of the stage with the remaining sides hidden and used by the performers and technicians. Thrust stages may be similar to proscenium stages but with a platform or performance area that extends into the audience space so that the audience is located on three sides. In theatre in the round, the audience is located on all four sides of the stage. The fourth type of stage incorporates created and found stages which may be constructed specifically for a performance or may involve a space that is adapted as a stage.

DIFFERENT TYPS OF STAGES.

There are different types of stages ;

The four main types of stages are:

- Found stages
- Proscenium stages
- Thrust stages
- Arena stages

1. Found Stage

A found stage is one of the simplest stages available. Also referred to as a found space or profile theatre, found stages are non-theatrical areas that are converted into theatre spaces. The beauty of found stages is that one can effectively create a theatre in any context. These stages typically place audiences on risers facing the “stage.” They do not require staging such as props, lighting or other theatrical elements.

In many cases, a found stage isn’t used in a traditionally theatrical space. A basketball court can act as a found stage as it provides a surface for performance and houses an audience that can face the stage from a single direction. You can create a found stage out of any space, but they are most effective in long, narrow spaces such as a store front, alleyway or patch of green space adjacent to a building.

2. Proscenium Stage

Of all the different types of theatre stages, the proscenium stage is perhaps the most readily recognizable. Though many may not know it by name, this stage’s iconic design immediately comes to mind when you envision a stage. One of the traditional features of a proscenium stage is the proscenium arch — an architectural frame around the stage which doesn’t necessarily need to be in an arch shape. Proscenium stages are usually deep from front to back. The back of the stage may be raked so the stage slightly inclines as it moves away from the audience. The front of the stage may also extend beyond the proscenium frame into the audience, creating what’s known as an apron or forestage. Other common features of proscenium stages include orchestra pits below the front-center of the stage and a fly tower above the stage for moving set pieces and lighting.

There are many benefits of proscenium stages, as they can accommodate a number of performance arts that require minimal or extensive space for sets and lighting. The proscenium stage is also regarded as a “classic” theatrical stage, which may be the preferred choice for auditorium spaces in schools or larger community centres.

3. End Stage

An end stage theatre, which can also be referred to as an end on stage theatre, is a type of setup in which the audience sits opposite of the stage. The audience is faced in a single direction and is usually rectangular or square in shape. A proscenium arch theater can feature an end stage, but that doesn't mean all end stages are within proscenium theatres.
End stages do not need to be limited to a square or rectangular design. These stages could be round, triangular or another irregular shape. For instance, a triangular end stage is referred to as a corner stage theater, while an irregularly shaped end stage is called an extended stage theater. The only requirement is that the audience is seated in a single group on only one side of the stage

One benefit to an end stage theater is that the entire audience is solely focused on the events on stage. Aspects of the production are simplified, such as blocking for actors, because they are only playing towards one direction. However, some theater managers do not like that the audience cannot see other members of the audience in their direct field of vision. To resolve this problem, the audience seating may be constructed in a bell or horseshoe shape.

4. Thrust Stage

The end stage and the thrust stage are very similar. Both are typically square or rectangular, but could be of varying shapes. While the end stage has the audience only on one side of the stage, the thrust stage features audience members on three sides of the stage. This is because the stage thrusts out past the proscenium and into the audience. The size of the thrust stage could encompass the entire stage or essentially a large extension of the forestage or apron.

A famous example of the thrust stage would be the Globe Theatre in London, England. One of the benefits of thrust stages is that they encourage a deeper connection between the audience and performers. While the audience is typically looking "in" at the performance on a

proscenium stage, the performers are effectively looking “out” at the audience on a thrust stage.

The thrust stage is a great option for event spaces that want to prioritize intimacy between those on stage and those in the audience. William Shakespeare’s plays, for example, were written for this type of stage setup. This stage is also great for other events outside of theatrical performances, including worship services, motivational speaking engagements and events for children.

CURTAINS

Like sounds and lighting, the curtain also plays a vital role in a performance. Usually we call the curtain that is used on stage - Stage curtains. Stage curtains are large pieces of cloth which mask the backstage area of the theatre from the spectators. They are designed for a variety of specific purposes and come in many types.

STAGE CURTAINS:

a) Front Curtain

b) Main valance

c) Borders

d) Legs

e) Background curtain.

FRONT CURTAIN: The front curtain is called the Proscenium curtain that hangs just behind the proscenium arch. It is typically opened and closed during the performances. The front curtain is usually seen in a pleated manner. There are two types of Front curtain. They are single and two front curtains. Depending on this the curtain opens horizontally or vertically.

MAIN VALANCE :It is the horizontal curtain which is situated across the top.

BORDERS “Borders” are short and wide theatre curtains spanning a stage’s width. Borders block the scenery and lights in the fly loft. Borders frame the top of the theatre scene.

LEGS :“Legs” are side theatre curtains that are narrow and tall. They are situated on either side of the stage and run parallel to the grand drape. They are designed to block the audience’s view of the backstage areas know as the wings. Legs are constructed from light-blocking velour material, and are almost always black. In most situations, three or more legs are placed stage right, and three or more are placed stage left. The legs frame the side of the theatre scene.

BACKGROUND CURTAIN :The curtain used as background is called the Background Curtain. Hence this curtain will be almost dark in colour.

LIGHT

Lighting has its own importance in a Stage performance. The basic aims in dance lighting are the same as for any lighting - selective visibility, indication of time and place if necessary, enhancement of scenery and costumes, conveying the general message of the piece,

and so on.

FUNCTIONS OF LIGHT

a) Selective visibility: Here the main thing is almost always the dancer's movement, and the grouping of dancers on the stage.

b) Time and place: This depends on the dance itself.

c) Mood and atmosphere: These depend on the dance. There is no written text to help you get the mood, and it's not easy to grasp in rehearsal where the dancers are working hard on technical difficulties.

d) Heightening effect of other visual elements: Costumes are absolutely crucial here!! Often there won't be scenery in a dance performance, and the most powerful visual element on stage will be the costumes.

DIFFERENT LIGHTS USED IN A PERFORMANCE:

a) Low Side light- The lights are placed in the side at a lower angle.

b) High side light- the lights which are placed in the side at High angle.

c) Backlight- the light from backside.

d) Spot light: the light which is used to spot a place.

e) Stage lights- provide light to stage.

f) Floor lights- which used to emphasize the face of dancers.

g) Colour lights- used to show the environment, mood,etc of the play or dance.

SEATING ARRANGEMENTS

All theatres provide a space for an audience. In a fixed seating theatre the audience is often separated from the performers by the proscenium arch. In proscenium theatres and amphitheatres, the proscenium arch, like the stage, is a permanent feature of the structure. This area is known as the auditorium or the house.[2]

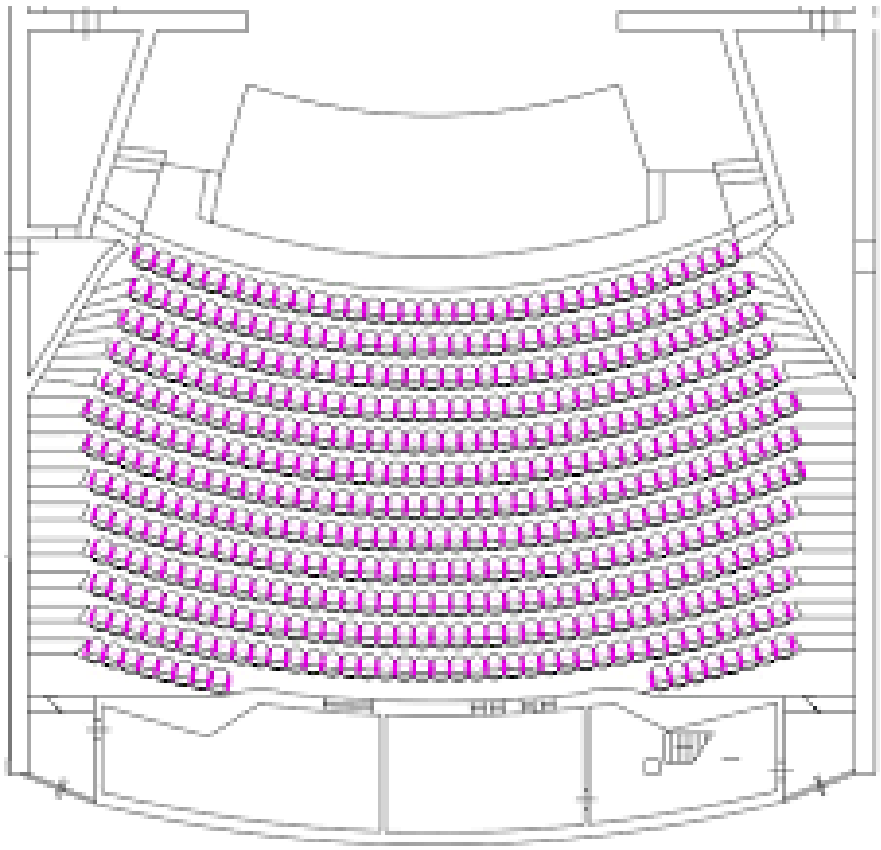
The seating areas can include some or all of the following:

- Stalls or arena (in North America, "orchestra"): the lower flat area, usually below or at the same level as the stage. The word *parterre* (occasionally, *parquet*) is sometimes used to refer to a particular subset of this area. In North American usage this is usually the rear seating block beneath the gallery (see below) whereas in Britain it can mean either the area in front near the orchestra pit, or the whole of the stalls. The term can also refer to the side stalls in some usages. Derived from the gardening term parterre, the usage refers to the sectioned pattern of both the seats of an auditorium and of the planted beds seen in garden construction. Throughout the 18th century the term was also used to refer to the theatre audience who occupied the parterre.
- Balconies or galleries: one or more raised seating platforms towards the rear of the auditorium. In larger theatres, multiple levels are stacked vertically above or behind the stalls. The first level is usually called the dress circle or grand circle. The next level may be the *loge*, from the French version of *loggia*. A second tier inserted beneath the main balcony may be the mezzanine. The highest platform, or upper circle, is sometimes known as "the gods", especially in large opera houses, where the seats can be very high and a long distance from the stage.
- Boxes (*state box* or *stage box*): typically placed immediately to the front, side and above the level of the stage. They are often separate rooms with an open viewing area which typically seat up to five people. These seats are typically considered the most prestigious of the house. A "state box" or "royal box" is sometimes provided for dignitaries.
- House seats: these are "the best seats in the house", giving the best view of the stage. Though each theatre’s layout is

different, these are usually in the center of the stalls. These seats are traditionally reserved for the cast and crew to invite family members, agents, and others. If they are not used, they usually go on sale on the day of the performance.

THE STAGE AND THE BACK STAGE/OFF STAGE

Stage:



The acting or performance space is the stage. In some theaters, such as proscenium theaters, arena theaters and amphitheatres, this area is

permanent part of the structure. In some theaters the stage area can be changed and adapted specifically to a production, often called a black box theater, due to the common practice of the walls being painted black and hung with black drapes.

Backstage and offstage:

Usually in a building used specifically for performance there are offstage spaces used by the performers and crew. This is where props, sets and scenery are stored, and the performers standby before their entrance. These offstage spaces are called wings on either side of a proscenium stage. A prompter's box may be found backstage. In an amphitheater, an area behind the stage may be designated for such uses while a Blackbox theater may have spaces outside of the actual theater designated for such uses.

Often a theater will incorporate other spaces intended for the performers and other personnel. A booth facing the stage may be incorporated into the house where lighting and sound personnel may view the show and run their respective instruments. Other rooms in the building may be used for dressing rooms, rehearsal rooms, spaces for constructing sets, props and costumes, as well as storage.