

# National Theatre



# Translations

by Brian Friel

## Rehearsal Diaries



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**

Sponsored by



# Contents

|                                    |           |
|------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>The National's Production</b>   | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>Rehearsal Diary: week one</b>   | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>Rehearsal Diary: week two</b>   | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>Rehearsal Diary: week three</b> | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>Rehearsal Diary: week four</b>  | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>Rehearsal Diary: week five</b>  | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>Rehearsal Diary: week six</b>   | <b>10</b> |
| <b>Theatre Glossary</b>            | <b>11</b> |

## Welcome to the National Theatre's rehearsal diaries for *Translations*

These rehearsal diaries, written by the staff director of *Translations*, introduce the process of rehearsing and staging the play. At the end of these rehearsal diaries, you'll find a glossary of some of the common theatre terms which come up as part of a rehearsal process.

Through imaginative and innovative in-school, on-site and online activities, NT Learning opens up the National's repertoire, artistry, skills, and the building itself, enabling participants of all ages to discover new skills and experience the excitement of theatre-making. If you've enjoyed this background pack or would like to talk to us about getting involved in NT Learning activities, please contact us on [learning@nationaltheatre.org.uk](mailto:learning@nationaltheatre.org.uk) or **020 7452 3388**.

**Jane Ball**  
**Programme Manager, NT Learning**  
**July 2018**

This background pack is published by and copyright The Royal National Theatre Board

Reg. No. 1247285  
Registered Charity No. 224223  
Views expressed in this background pack are not necessarily those of the National Theatre

**Author**  
Shane Dempsey

**Editor**  
Harriet Ziebell

**Design**  
NT Graphic Design Studio

NT Learning  
National Theatre  
South Bank  
London SE1 9PX  
T 020 7452 3388  
F 020 7452 3380  
E [learning@nationaltheatre.org.uk](mailto:learning@nationaltheatre.org.uk)

The rehearsal and production photographs in this background pack were taken by Catherine Ashmore

Cover image by David Stewart

**Further production details:**  
[nationaltheatre.org.uk](http://nationaltheatre.org.uk)

# The National's Production

## Cast in ordering speaking

|                   |                        |
|-------------------|------------------------|
| Manus             | <b>Seamus O'Hara</b>   |
| Jimmy Jack Cassie | <b>Dermot Crowley</b>  |
| Sarah             | <b>Michelle Fox</b>    |
| Maire             | <b>Judith Roddy</b>    |
| Doalty            | <b>Laurance Kinlan</b> |
| Bridget           | <b>Aoife Duffin</b>    |
| Hugh              | <b>Ciarán Hinds</b>    |
| Owen              | <b>Colin Morgan</b>    |
| Captain Lancey    | <b>Adetomiwa Edun</b>  |

## Musicians

|                |                              |
|----------------|------------------------------|
| MD and Guitars | <b>Dario Rossetti-Bonell</b> |
| Double Bass    | <b>Nicki Davenport</b>       |
| Viola          | <b>Anna Cooper</b>           |
| Percussion     | <b>Stephen Hiscock</b>       |

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| Director                 | <b>Ian Rickson</b>                             |
| Set Designer             | <b>Rae Smith</b>                               |
| Lighting Designer        | <b>Neil Austen</b>                             |
| Music                    | <b>Stephen Warbeck</b>                         |
| Sound Designer           | <b>Ian Dickson</b>                             |
| Movement                 | <b>Anna Morrissey</b>                          |
| Company Voice Work       | <b>Charmian Hoare and<br/>Jeannette Nelson</b> |
| Dialect Coach            | <b>Majella Hurley</b>                          |
| Staff Director           | <b>Shane Dempsey</b>                           |
| Associate Sound Designer | <b>Alexander Caplen</b>                        |



# Rehearsal diary: week one

**Staff Director Shane Dempsey's diary tracks the six-week rehearsal period for *Translations*, beginning 9 April 2018**

## Beginnings

I have always been obsessed with beginnings. The early steps in the process of making work lay the foundations and establish the rules of the game. First days are notoriously difficult beasts to navigate for many reasons; there are inevitable nerves coupled with a palpable sense of excitement. For many people, myself included, it is their first full production at the National Theatre, a building which carries an incredible legacy and weight.

To the relief of many of the actors, we do not begin with a full read through. Often a process can begin with one but it is far from ideal, as it sometimes increases the tension in the room. Instead, director Ian Rickson leads a series of exercises in which the cast and production team get to know each other while exploring key themes in the world of the play.

We then begin to work on the text, slowly navigating it line by line, page by page. This process allows us to investigate the relationships, establish the facts, probe the ambiguities and explore the subtext. We also ask what the character is trying to achieve, what is getting in the way of that and what they do to the other characters to help get them closer to their aim. This meticulous text work is supported by improvisation and exercises that explore the previous circumstances and relationships, as well as developing each character's inner life and memories.

## Research

The actors are set the task of investigating places, chronology, living/mythical creatures, the elements and the body through the text. We pair up and share our experiences or thoughts on the following subjects:

Donegal  
Emigration  
The army  
Our favourite writers  
Memorable quotes from 'the classics'  
Favourite place-names  
The effects of poteen or Irish whiskey  
Brushes with authority

Next we make a physical map showing where we were born, then where we were aged seven, at 16 and finally where we are living now. For a play in which a sense of place is integral, this is a brilliant and simple way of helping each of us get in touch with that reality.



## Visitors

Designer Rae Smith shares her design with the team, talking through her influences and inspiration. Her set design is beautiful yet stark, heavily influenced by Friel's script, and rooted in the history of the play. The design is bold yet subtle and helps illuminate the epic nature of the play and its context.

Through the week we work with our movement director Anna Morrissey, who is exploring spatial relationships, helping the actors to discover their character's individual physicality and the specifics of their behaviour. As the play is set in a farming community, the actors must have a strong sense of their bodies as tools and we are keen to ensure that we connect to the physical reality of this world in performance.

This week we are visited by two experts. Helen Eastman, whose speciality is Greek literature, and Nigel Barton, who served as a Royal Engineer. Helen's capacity to articulate and illuminate the connections between Irish mythology and the Greeks is exhilarating. Nigel occupies a very different world and gives us real insight into the day-to-day realities of working on foreign soil and the connection to and reliance on an interpreter.

Later in the week we have a voice session with Jeannette Nelson on the Olivier stage. This is a significant milestone for the company as we collectively get to explore the space; to investigate its specific atmosphere and identify its particular challenges. There is a muscularity to the language of the play and for it to resonate on a stage of this size will require particular attention to the actor's vocal craft. This is going to be a regular part of our process to remind us of the scale of



# Rehearsal diary: week one

performance energy necessary in this theatre. For a play that is so much about the contours of language, it is an important moment for us to begin to explore the power of the word.

## **The end of the beginning**

We end the week with a read through of the play. It is lovely to see the early images and to hear how the play might translate on stage. There is a great connection to music in much of Friel's work and this becomes clear when you experience the language out loud. There are subtle movements that come to the surface and then drop back down again, only to re-emerge with greater ferocity.

Our final exercise to close the week is to list three aims that we want our production of *Translations* to do our audiences. These are sealed away for a later date – I am sure we will come back to them, perhaps on our closing night. Ian is a director of extraordinary humanity and rigour. It is such a pleasure to be part of this team on one of the most important plays in the Irish canon.



# Rehearsal diary: week two

## Finding our feet

This week marks the beginning of putting the play on its feet and into our rehearsal. We have the luxury of being able to use a full-scale replica of our set which means we can find an optimum spatial relationship to it, which is essential in the Olivier theatre. It is a slightly strange dynamic as we begin working in smaller groups of two or three, which is a real testament to the strong sense of ensemble that our director Ian established in week one.

We begin placing objects into the space, exploring spatial relationships. We are determined that in a relatively empty space each prop is endowed with energy and each character has a specific relationship to that item. We explored the formality of the schoolroom and its rules and decided which areas have psychological resonance for individuals. Ian has established a playful environment, where the actors are free to explore, test and try out options. He does not want to 'block' the action but for this to emerge organically. We are interested in exploring what drives or repels the characters. This is also true of spatial contact, if the desire is to get close, we try and find the opposite. This creates powerful stage imagery that is always rooted in the reality of the world of the play, but ensures that the visual language is as inclusive as possible.

Tuesday sees us working all the way through to the end of Act One. In many ways, this Act is the most complex to stage, as the full company gradually end up on stage. Ian uses the notion of 'major and minor' to help navigate the complexity of the storytelling. This Act has particular challenges as the landscape has to be carefully navigated to ensure the focus is in the correct area at the correct time. In the afternoon, we get a glimpse into the carefully researched costume design by Rae Smith that, although deeply rooted in the 1830s also has an influence from the early 1980s. This fusion frames the play for a modern audience and helps move them away from viewing Irish drama through a lens of nostalgia. This play has enormous pressure points and each person is fighting to hold on or to change their world.

On Wednesday we roughly stage all of Act Two, which is where the play really settles into its main argument. Ian, often drawing on a Stanislavskian process, is equally able to create a truly playful rehearsal room, where the actors have total freedom to explore the contradictions within their behaviour. He is a master conductor who has absolute confidence in his capacity to create conditions where all parts of the team can not only contribute, but thrive.

We finish putting a rough draft of the play on its feet, which brings us nicely to the end of this current phase of exploration. One of the key rehearsal systems has been to improvise a substitute language and then isolate keywords that the locals would understand from the soldiers.



Improvisation helps launch the actors into the right key for each scene and charges their imaginations; it's an extraordinary tool to empower the actors and help complete their on-stage journey.

## Collaboration

I meet with Hannah and Sophie from the NT's Learning department who would like me to run some workshops exploring approaches to rehearsal and how we have prepared the text. I am looking forward to sharing our approach with participants and engaging in a conversation about what the text means.

We have a brilliant and illuminating session with Annie Morrisson, who is a speech therapist as well as voice director. One of our characters, Sarah, has a severe language impairment, which we have determined is likely to be selective mutism, which often emerges from a severe trauma where the capacity to speak is lost. Considering the play's central theme of language, it's a fascinating device to give a character a difficulty in communicating verbally. Annie helps us refine some of the vocal patterns and habits for Sarah but it is also crucial to investigate the psychological areas from which the condition emerges.

We are visited by Professor Roy Foster, who specialises in Irish history. This is a fascinating session and helps unify the company's understanding of key events leading up to the beginning of our play. There was a major famine in the 1820s in Ireland. Another fascinating fact was that pre 1847, the Irish were much more sexually liberated. This was to drastically change once the hierarchy of the Catholic Church took its hold on the people in the decades after. Friel's decision to set this play between these major events gives it a particular charged energy.

# Rehearsal diary: week three

## The understudy company

Week three seems to have come around incredibly fast; time is flying by. This week sees the introduction of our understudy company. We start by reading the play and beginning our engagement into the process. It's wonderful to hear new interpretations, each actor brings a unique quality to a character. It is important that I support their process and ensure they feel empowered and ready for performance. We have the luxury of a longer rehearsal process than usual for this production and can spend time exploring a range of possibilities away from the tyranny of the clock.

## Working through the play

We explore the key events that occur between Act Two, scene ii and Act Three. In this period of 18 hours, Friel has crammed in a series of catastrophic events for the community: the disappearance of Yolland, Hugh's news of his rejection as principal of the new National School and the death of Nellie Ruadh's baby. The company improvise these events and explore the possibilities of what happened and when. These improvisations are often very simple but help fuel the actor into the next section of the story and root them in the immediate circumstances. A well-structured improvisation can springboard the actor into the appropriate psychological and physical state and empower their choices.

Act Three is the most devastating part of the story. Even at the beginning of the Act, it is apparent that life in Baile Beag will never be the same again. It is in this Act that Friel truly comes into his own and slowly begins to launch his community towards crisis. It's during this Act that the play takes on a Beckettian tone, with the repetition of Maire's return with the empty milk can and Hugh's failure to remember his favourite passage from Virgil. It would appear that even language and its meaning is beginning to lose some of its potency.

## Language, voice and movement

Colin Morgan (playing Owen) and I meet Sinéad Mulvihill, who worked in the European Parliament translating to Irish from English and French. We engage in a rigorous discussion about language, culture and identity. Sinéad explains that in particularly tense negotiations the translator has to have a real economy in their choice of language to help retain their neutrality. The dropout rate for interpreters in the European Parliament is extremely high due to the difficulty of this task. The visit is incredibly helpful to Colin and will help add another layer to his work in the room. He is a consummate artist who relishes every opportunity to dig deeper into his character and the world of the play.

We have another voice session on the Olivier stage with Jeannette Nelson. Already the company have greater confidence in language and in their abilities to fill the auditorium. Ian takes the opportunity to work through sections of the play and experiment with spatial relationships. Anne-Marie Duff recently described playing

in the Olivier as the equivalent of playing Glastonbury. This image really empowers the actors and excites us all about the journey ahead. Back in the rehearsal room we continue to layer our work on the end of Act One when Owen introduces the soldiers to the community. The play ratchets up gradually and is so beautifully constructed: the longer you spend with it, the more it reveals to you. With Ian's guiding hand, each moment is probed and its full range of its possibilities explored.

Our movement director, Anna Morrissey, leads an insightful session with Seamus O'Hara on his physicality for Manus. Due to an accident as a child, Manus has a limp in his right leg. Anna helps Seamus experiment with weight distribution and where tension is held in the body. One of the great luxuries of working at the NT is the opportunity for companies to work with an Alexander technique practitioner to help ensure that the actors are not doing any damage to their bodies while working in character.

We have a drill session for the actors playing soldiers. Led by Nigel Barton, a former Royal Engineer from the British Army, this session introduces exercises to instil discipline and a sense of the power of the group. Nigel also takes the actors through some basic weapon work and encourages them to rehearse with the weapons as often as possible, to get comfortable with their weight and how they change posture.

## The living creatures

The full company comes together to explore one of our research topics: 'The Living Creatures'. Laurence Kinlan and Michelle Fox have brought in a collection of photographs and assign an image to key people in the play the audience may never see, from Yolland's mother to the infamous Donnelly twins. We assign three descriptive qualities to each character: an animal, a geographic element and a musical instrument or genre. There are some truly inspiring descriptions and you can really get a sense of the collective imagination of the company at play. There is also a fascinating exploration of the O'Donnell family's history. We improvise around key events for Hugh and his two sons – Manus and Owen.

The company are going to move up another gear next week, as we will begin to put together longer sections of the play. We end this week in a good position and there is a strong sense of the play emerging and its gesture is dynamic, epic and exciting.



# Rehearsal diary: week four

## Back to the beginning

It's hard to believe we are already in our fourth week of rehearsal. Our initial focus is back on Act One, where we are introduced to all the characters in the play. Although Friel sets up all the major conflicts in this Act the overall tone is light, playful and there are some incredibly humorous moments. I really admire Ian's capacity to ground the performances in a psychological reality. Every moment is explored from the perspective of each character, so each actor has a thorough understanding of their contribution to the stage symphony. What is evident is a real sense of play within the company and they have an exhilarating capacity to respond to each other in the moment.

We continue to work through the beginning of Act One, exploring the relationship between Manus and Sarah and how they relate to each other. We then begin putting together Act Two, scene i, which is an incredibly dense section of the text. It is here that Friel flexes his linguistic muscles and gives Hugh illuminating text on language, its meaning and culture. Although at times these concepts can be tricky, Friel's skill as a writer always ensures that he provides avenues in for his audience and the work strings together like a carefully woven tapestry.

We also explore Act Two, scene ii, which is one of the most beautiful love scenes that I have ever encountered. Yolland and Maire leave a dance to be alone, the tension rises as they have no common language but their desire to be understood goes beyond words. Of course, the consequences of their romance are catastrophic.

Our attention then turns to our final Act of the play, in which a shattering series of events occur over the course of one night, most significantly the disappearance of Yolland. This event triggers enormous consequences for the people of Baile Beag. Manus leaves for Sligo, though it is suggested that he will not get far. A large party of soldiers are looking for him and despite claiming his innocence he is already a source of suspicion. The

community is charged into action as more soldiers arrive to look for Yolland and the threat of a major atrocity hangs high in the air.

Throughout rehearsals, Ian puts trust in the actors' instincts. One of the great advantages of being a staff director is the opportunity to learn from such an experienced director. It is a great honour to work on this production and it's so exciting to see how the play will resonate today with a London audience.

## Getting on stage

We have a voice call on the Olivier stage with Charmian Hoare. This on-stage time has become an essential part of our process, with new discoveries being made through each session – often these are about spatial relationships and staging. Each session empowers our actors and helps them feel more at home in the theatre. It is a real privilege to be supported by a body of experienced practitioners. There is a memorable event near the end of our on-stage call when a group of school children enter the auditorium while visiting the theatre. Ian invites them to watch some of the play. This beautiful moment of generosity really ignites the company's attention.





# Rehearsal diary: week five

## Using our time

It's great to be back in the room today after a long weekend. The company are in high spirits and there is a real sense of anticipation starting to build in the room as we approach our final phase of rehearsal. There are only two more weeks until we begin rehearsals on the Olivier stage. I am excited about a longer rehearsal period as the typical four-week regime is far too short to truly investigate a play of this complexity and depth. A six-week period allows space and time to probe each moment and ensure the actors are truly unified as an ensemble.

We return to Act One, the most complex section of the play, featuring the full company on stage by the end of the Act. As I was away for a few days at the end of last week I could see significant growth in what the actors are bringing to the play. There is a real specificity in their work as we have moved beyond the tentative stages of early exploration. We have a special treat at the end of the day with a visit from Anne-Marie Duff, who generously gives the cast some tips and advice about performing in the Olivier. She has played in this theatre many times, so has a strong sense of how the space works and its particular challenges. The company finish the day feeling energised and prepared for the next phase of the journey.

As the week continues, we begin putting together the segues that transition from each Act to the next. Our brilliant stage management team create a detailed plan of what needs to happen. Ian and Anna carefully assign tasks to the company and gradually begin layering the action. The first transition has a truly cinematic quality, with the world of the community being altered by the imposition of the Royal Engineers.

## Development

I have been working with our understudy company much more in the few last days and it is a joy to begin our exploration of this extraordinary play. It is important to allow them time to discover and tease out their interpretation and not focus on an endgame of a final



performance. I aim to support them and ensure they are prepared, confident and ready to deliver, should they be called to cover someone during the run.

## Full run through

The week ends with a full run of the play for the complete production team. This is the first time I get a full sense of the impact of the play and I find it incredibly moving. The play, of course, has enormous resonance in terms of discussions of the Irish border in post-Brexit Britain but at the heart of the story lies a human tragedy, as we witness the decimation of a certain way of Irish life. To programme this play on the biggest stage at the National Theatre is a powerful gesture and will affirm and celebrate Brian Friel's enormous contribution to contemporary drama.



# Rehearsal diary: week six

## Act One again

We return to the beginning of Act One and investigate the relationship between Manus, Sarah and Jimmy Jack. In many ways, all three are outsiders in the community but in the hedge school they are brought together and experience a real sense of communion and connection.

We have another session in the Olivier, reworking Act One with a view to articulating the physical shape of the play and expanding the scale of the work to reach the back of the auditorium. Ian's directorial diligence and rigour help ensure that we find the optimal staging so every member of the audience can truly engage with the work. This is no meagre task considering the scale of the space, but it's a challenge that has been fully embraced. Each session in the theatre unlocks new possibilities and opens up further avenues for exploration.

## The joy of playing

One rehearsal takes on a different and extremely playful tone, starting with a 'working notes' session where notes are played out as well as given as verbal feedback. This is a wonderful technique to help the actors engage with the note and incorporate the offers into their process. We then explore the segue into Act Two scene i, where the process of mapping leads to Yolland and Owen colonising the hedge school.

Ian wants to ensure the actors are grounded in the physical reality of agricultural work and have a real sense of what its daily grind has on their bodies. To this end I lead a session on farming, looking at turf cutting and footing and the particulars of milking cows by hand. Whoever would have thought as a lad growing up in rural County Tipperary that I would be drawing on all these skills years later?

Ian then leads a session where the actors swap parts. This has an invigorating quality as we unlock new possibilities for characters and remind the actors of the joy of playing. We have our final assembly of the play in

the rehearsal room before moving up to the Olivier. It's an exciting phase to be approaching and I am confident that the work will continue to grow in the coming days.

## In the Olivier – finally

We finally cross the threshold and begin work in the Olivier. It's wonderful to see how the various departments join up to put the production together in the theatre. The designer Rae Smith has made the bold decision to place the classroom at the front of the stage and surround it with the Donegal landscape. The result is that the action becomes incredibly focused and makes for an intimate yet epic mode of performance. Stephen Warbeck's haunting score underpins key moments of tension and helps illuminate the emotional heart of the play. Stephen's great skill is his economy, and he finds the perfect balance in the musical composition. It is such a luxury to have a live band on this production and the energy of each musician helps compliment the work.

It has been nothing short of exhilarating to see how all the elements of the storytelling are starting to weave together: design, lighting, sound, performances, movement and music. The overall pace of the technical rehearsals is relaxed and focused, with time to continue to explore and test ideas.

Despite the long hours of rehearsing, the company remain buoyant as we end what has been a highly productive and charged final week of rehearsal.



# Theatre Glossary

## **Meet and greet**

Usually held on the first day of rehearsals, the meet and greet is a chance for the company and production team to meet everyone who is involved in the production as well as staff from marketing, learning, fundraising, etc. The director – and sometimes the writer – may take this opportunity to explain a bit about their vision for the production.

## **Round the table / table work**

Some directors like to start rehearsals by reading through the script, and getting an understanding of the play, characters and setting without adding movement or blocking.

## **Blocking**

Working out where actors should stand or move on stage, and at what point.

## **Put on its feet**

The point in rehearsals where the company start to add in blocking and try out movement for scenes. Some directors like to put a play 'on its feet' from the very start, and work out the intention of the play and the characters at the same time as the movement.

## **A run**

Rehearsing each scene of the play in chronological order, without interruption. Runs help directors and actors to see which parts of the production may need more attention or reworking. The first run-through of a play is often referred to as a 'stagger-through', as there are usually delays and mistakes.

## **Off book**

Once an actor has learnt their part, they no longer need to use their script in rehearsals and are described as being 'off book'.

## **The book**

This is another name for the script. A stage manager who is 'on the book' will be in the wings of the stage, ready to help any actor who may have forgotten a line – they are also known as the 'prompt'.

## **Act**

The separation of a play into different sections, which in turn are sometimes sub-divided into scenes.

## **The space**

The area in which the work is taking place. This term can refer to both the rehearsal room and the theatre stage.

## **Staff director**

The National Theatre uses staff directors rather than assistant directors. Staff directors have a variety of jobs, depending on the production and the director they are working with. They can help with background research

for rehearsals, lead improvisations and act as a liaison on behalf of the director. Once a production has had its press night, the director steps away from the production and the staff director takes over. The staff director rehearses the company at 'bring back calls' and also rehearses the understudies.

## **Bring back call**

The National Theatre operates a 'rep' system, meaning that a production will not be playing every day and a company may have a break every other week or so. A bring back call is a short rehearsal on the day when the company return from having a break. The staff director normally holds a line run with the company, and rehearses in more detail complicated scenes, movement sequences or fights.

## **Rehearsal call**

The stage manager will work out a day-by-day rehearsal schedule for a production, in consultation with the director. The rehearsal call sets out the scenes that are being worked on that day, and the actors or production team who are needed, and when.

## **Ensemble**

A company of actors or performers where the emphasis is on collaborative group work.

## **Company**

The cast, production team and other staff associated with the show.

## **Understudy**

An actor who learns the role of another member of the company so that they can perform that part in the event of injury, illness or scheduled absence.

## **Actioning / intentions**

A way of approaching a text, which some actors and directors like to use. Each line is assigned a transitive verb, which may help the actor to explore ways of delivering that line and uncover the meaning behind what their character is saying or trying to achieve.

## **Stanislavskian**

Relating to Constantin Stanislavski, a Russian theatre practitioner usually associated with method acting.

## **Beckettian**

Relating to playwright Samuel Beckett, whose work is associated with minimalism.

## **Alexander technique**

A system designed to promote healthy movement and posture. Named after its creator Frederick Matthias Alexander.



# Theatre Glossary *continued*

**Upstage**

The area at the back of the stage furthest from the audience.

**Downstage**

The area at the front of the stage closest to the audience.

**Improvisation**

Action taken by an actor(s) that is unprepared or unrehearsed. During the rehearsal process this is often led by suggestions from the director for the purposes of exploration and discovery. During performance improvisation is often used by actors to cover a mistake or accident on stage.

**Beat**

In the script a playwright may use the term 'beat' to denote a pause or a shift in pace or intention in the play. In rehearsal, the term is often used to describe a particular moment or event on stage. It can also be used to describe a unit of time.

**Line run**

The company say their lines without adding movements. Line runs help actors to feel confident that they know their words before going on stage. Sometimes line runs are done at speed, which can really test how well actors know their roles.

**Model box**

A scale model of the set, used by the director and designer to work out how each scene could look. For the acting company, model boxes help them to visualise where they will be standing on stage and the world their character is living in. Carpenters, production managers, scenic artists and prop-makers will also study the model box, to get an idea of textures and finish on the set, as well as the overall look. Model boxes can also help to flag any issues with elements of staging before they are made.

**Fit up**

The set is assembled on the stage.

**Get in**

The set, props and costumes are brought to the stage, ready for technical rehearsals.

**Technical run**

Running through the play setting all technical cues, including lighting, sound, set changes and automation. This is an opportunity to practice scene changes, characters' entrances and exits, costume changes, and for actors to get used to being on the set.

**Dress run / dress rehearsal**

A dress rehearsal is a chance to pull together all elements of a production, including sound, lighting and costume, and work through the play as though it is a performance.

**Previews**

Before a production has its press night, it normally has a couple of preview performances. Productions can still change right up to press night, and it is during previews that the company and director get to see how audiences respond to the production, and they may rework sections accordingly.

**Press night**

The night the critics see the production before reviewing it.