

GET OFF THE STAGE

by www.Children-of-Promis.com

Get really brave and use the aisles! Turn all entrances and exits into streets, paths, roads, highways! But, more than that, use whatever space you can create in the audience as staging space. Remember, an entrance from the wings doesn't have the strength -- the power! -- as an entrance down an aisle. The same is true of exits.

In addition to using the aisles as pathways, use these spaces to stage longer scenes. If you need a yellow-brick-road, let the road flow off the stage, down an aisle, and across one row of audience to the second aisle, then back to the stage.

Perhaps you'll need to make an elevated road, about 30" high, just above the seats of row F or G. Want to make sure the audience knows this is a yellow-brick-road? Easy! Buy some dark, cheap low-knap carpeting. Cut it into long strips about 30" wide, and paint the carpeting to duplicate your yellow-brick-road. Run this carpeting down your aisles, across the platform above Row F and back up the aisle to your stage.

Think of the nasty witch in Hansel & Gretel, casting her spells and riding her broomstick behind the audience, larger-than-life! Let your imagination soar! Even Hansel & Gretel can follow aisle paths from the house [on stage] and into the forest [again on stage following the scene change which takes place when the children are on the "path"].

Surround your audience with singers. Create an elevated area anywhere in your theatre where you can set mini-scenes. Ask yourself, "If this were an arena theatre, how flexible could my staging be?" Now, apply some of those techniques to the more limited proscenium theatre.

"But, I can't!" says someone. "My lights don't go there! How do I get light to aisles and mini-stages throughout my house?"

Answer: Theatre is problem solving. To solve the problem of giving limited-but-effective lighting for transient paths and mini-stages in music theatre, turn to follow-spots. Mount one follow spot in each of the four "corners" of your house, and you can hit anywhere you want with at least two of them. Yes, there is a trade-off between design [what it looks like] and function [how well does it solve the problem]. But remember -- every decision facing us in play production involves the design/function formula.