

Chapter Two
Definitions and Spellings
by Debra Bruch

Theatre vs. Drama.

Sometimes people confuse drama with theatre, believing that drama and theatre are one and the same. There is a difference. The drama is the literature, the actual script, and includes plot, character, thought, scene, and dialogue. When students study drama, they read and analyze playscripts. The theatre, on the other hand, has a broader context which includes the drama. Theatre is the actual production and contains the drama, all elements of production including actors, the space, and the audience. We don't "do" drama, we "do" theatre. Also, "a drama" refers to a specific playscript while "a theatre" refers to a certain building.

Theatre vs. Theater.

Sam Smiley in *Theatre: The Human Art* helps us understand spelling differences. He states that "the proper way to spell theatre is with an 're' at the end, except in newspapers and magazines where it's spelled with an 'er.'" In other words, educated usage requires the French spelling, theatre, and journalistic usage requires the German spelling, theater." Also, people often differ the spelling when meaning movies or movie houses. To go to the theater means to go to a movie while to go to the theatre means to attend a live performance. Granted, all this is confusing, but these are essays about theatre.

Playwright and Playwriting.

A playwright writes plays. The term "playwright" comes from Aristotle's writings around 325 B.C. "Wright" means to craft. A playwright, then, is a person who crafts a play or drama. The playwright, however, engages in playwriting rather than playwrighting. In other words, the "wright" crafts his or her work by writing. Despite all the confusion, remember that a "playwright" is the person and "playwriting" is writing the drama.

Dramatic Presentations.

Most presentations as a part of the worship service that are labeled "drama" are really dramatic presentations (and even more accurately theatre presentations). The different categories of dramatic presentations can be defined as follows:

Monologue.

This type of dramatic presentation involves no more than one person speaking to the congregation. The actor memorizes the piece and presents a character (or characters!)

rather than himself or herself. This type must also be highly rehearsed for physical movement, and the person often wears a costume.

Dialogue.

Dialogue involves two or more people interacting. Actors memorize the scene and presents characters. Directing and rehearsing is necessary, for physical interactions play an important role in creating an experience for the congregation.

Mime.

Mime is the type of presentation when no words are spoken and usually no music accompanies. One or more people may present this style of expression. Physical movement is highly stylized and is the focus of experience. This type must be carefully rehearsed. Actors usually wear makeup and costume to help draw focus from the person and onto the message expressed in movement. Clown ministry falls under this category.

Dance.

Like film, dance is really a cousin to theatre. I include it here because, like theatre, the major instrument of expression is the person. Dance focuses on movement and is accompanied with music. The experience comes from the interaction of music and movement, and may involve one or more people.

Interpretative Reading.

Interpretative or dramatic reading may be performed by one or more people. The focus is on vocal expression. Consequently, physical movement is limited and the piece is not memorized. Each reader has the script in hand and often does not portray a character. Rehearsals focus on vocal tone, volume, rhythm, and inflection. One person may read a poem, a story, or scripture. Two or more people may read a short piece of dialogue or an essay broken into separate lines.

Readers Theatre.

A reader's theatre is not drama. It's a compilation of short pieces or "dramatic presentations" revolving around a common theme. Readers Theatre is a combination of physical presentation and interpretative reading. This type involves a group of people who interpretatively read with scripts in hand, but this form is often longer than interpretative reading. These short pieces may include either dialogue, poetry, or story (which is orally interpreted and presented by reading), or mime, skits, or a combination of any of the above, and often utilizes music and perhaps dance. It may also involve different media such as slides or video. Dialogue usually is not memorized, but read. However, reader's theatre must be carefully rehearsed. The people involved may or may not portray a character.