

Genres of Theatre

There are a variety of genres that writers, producers and directors can employ in theatre to suit a variety of tastes. This is an incomplete and exclusively eurocentric list:

Musical theater: A theatrical genre in which the primary means of performance is through singing and music.

Pantomime: A form of musical drama in which elements of dance, puppetry, slapstick and melodrama are combined to produce an entertaining and comic theatrical experience, often designed for children.

Comedy: Comes from the Greek word *komos* which means celebration, revel or merrymaking. It does not necessarily mean funny, but more focuses on a problem that leads to some form of catastrophe which in the end has a happy and joyful outcome.

Romantic comedy: A medley of clever scheming, calculated coincidence, and wondrous discovery, all of which contribute ultimately to making the events answer precisely to the hero's or heroine's wishes, with the focus on love.

Comedy of situation: A comedy that grows out of a character's attempt to solve a problem created by a situation. The attempt is often bumbling but ends up happily.

Comedy of manners: Witty, cerebral form of dramatic comedy that depicts and often satirises the manners and affectations of a contemporary society. A comedy of manners is concerned with social usage and the question of whether or not characters meet certain social standards.

Commedia dell'arte: Very physical form of comedy which was created and originally performed in Italy. Commedia uses a series of stock characters and a list of events to improvise an entire play.

Musical comedy: Comedy enacted through music, singing and dance.

Melodrama: Originally, a sentimental drama with musical underscoring. Often with an unlikely plot that concerns the suffering of the good at the hands of the villains but ends happily with good triumphant. Featuring stock characters such as the noble hero, the long-suffering heroine, and the cold-blooded villain

Tragedy: A drama that treats in a serious and dignified style the sorrowful or terrible events encountered or caused by a heroic individual.

Tragi-comedy: A drama that has a bitter/sweet quality, containing elements of tragedy and comedy.

Fantasy: The creation of a unique landscape on a which a hero goes on a quest to find something that will defeat the powers of evil. Along the way, this hero meets a variety of weird and fantastic characters.

Morality play: A morality play is an allegory in which the characters are abstractions of moral ideas.

Opera: Theatre in which the emotional content is conveyed primarily by music, and most or all of the dialogue is sung rather than spoken.

Rock opera: Same style as opera, except that the musical form is rock music

(from www.biocrawler.com/encyclopedia/theatre)

Additional definitions:

Science Fiction: The exploration of the unexplorable, a fantasy constructed around actuality, it deals with unrealities in a mood of total conviction.
(www.youngplaywrites101.com)

Silent Movie: Story told without spoken words that sometimes uses instrumental music and subtitles on cards to replace dialog (KS)

Mystery: A drama that centers on solving a crime or mystery (KS)

Soap Opera or Sentimental Drama: Serious subjects are treated in a serious manner. Plot and character are more important than theme. There is usually a heavy emphasis on the emotions of the character. (Everything about Theatre! Robert L. Lee)

Action/Adventure: A fast-moving story, May involve a chase, a quest, a search, and some elements of danger in an exciting location (KS)