

# "Immodest things should have modest names."

—Folk saying

**T**he story on the radio was about a bank that wanted to raise its employees' morale and give them an aura of professionalism. It boiled down to a way of improving the employees' self image and public image at the same time. The answer: CAREER APPAREL.

Some among you may say that career apparel is just a fancy name for uniform, but there is a whole career apparel industry and even a Career Apparel Institute, all working hard to elevate our opinion of those dressed in matching blazers, pants, and skirts, color coordinated ties and hair ribbons. Uniform is too lowly a word for this finery.

By now we should be accustomed to occupational euphemisms. Career apparel can take its place along side of sanitary engineer, word processor, consultant, and scenographer. Besides, we, of all people, are aware that image is more important than substance. It is therefore odd that show biz is so far behind the rest of society in the use of euphemism.

The fancy way of describing a simple thing is most often used for hiding unpleasantness. (The government says it is raising taxes by "revenue enhancement." The ads say bathroom tissue instead of toilet paper. Only one of those is really unpleasant.) Maybe it is because the entertainment industry is used to taking its lumps in public that we have never felt it necessary or possible to hide behind euphemisms. What can we say when newspapers, TV, and radio comment on our work. Since everyone reads of our successes or failures, it is difficult to fool anyone by applying a nice name to an unpleasant fact.

But difficult as it may be, it is time that show biz entered the modern world of language. We are in a technical age of computers while our language lives by gaslight. We, too, must soften the blows of unkind reality by obfuscating. Following are a few modest suggestions for a modern theatrical lexicon.

There he is in the middle of his long speech when he goes up in his lines, jumps to the end of the speech, and gives a cue that is not supposed to come for three minutes. The stage manager panics, gives some cue number or other, and by the time the actor gets off stage is furious. The actor explains, "Don't get excited, it was only reduced mnemonic script compression.

Our poor stage manager not only has to deal with the actors, he is also having a problem with *chemically generated cue variations*. Simply put, he has a high control board operator.

She is trying to play Juliet although she is closer to 114 than to 14. So much makeup has been applied that it requires rebars. Corsets of great engineering complexity have been fastened in place. And now she insists on those nice little pink lights to erase the gulleys from her face. The resulting glow is *rubious generational diminution*.

When this same actress does a film, she also wants to avoid the harsh examination of the camera. She is photographed through every soft focus device known to technology. This is called *haze induced desuperannuation*.

Directors have a complicated job. As is often the case, they have little technical knowledge to help them to explain to others the gap between their original version of a show and what is actually evolving. This can be rough on everybody with redoing this, changing that, fixing, adding, starting over. Instead of saying, "That stupid director can't make up his mind," we must say we are faced with an *indeterminate governor delay*.

Once in a while we must deal with *gross construct difficulties*. These problems arise from a slight mis-sighting of a scale rule or a small mathematical reversal in the shop. On stage it means that pieces don't fit because, "The damn set is too big."

Costume designers have all had trying moments with stars who take out their frustrations on the innocent designer. Straight from a row with the director or producer, the star rejects the most beautiful, most flattering, best fitting costume in the world. To be kind to everyone it is better not to say, "She won't wear the costume." Substitute a phrase such as, "We are having a slight problem of *luminary raiment non-compliance*."

The board electrician has a cold and has taken antihistamine. Or the stage manager was the center of attention at an orgy the night before. For whatever reason, the cues are all a split second off. Actors move into areas still moving up from darkness. Practicals snap on slightly after the switch on stage has been thrown. The stated excuse is, "We are experiencing *visual access torpidity*."

When the curtain goes up there are more actors on stage than people in the house. This can be dismissed as a *paucity of performance auditors*.

No one has come to the performance because of *media disapprobation*. That means the critics have savaged the production leaving not one quotable line for the ads. The leading man has been described as recovering from lobotomy, while the ingenue is said to be a reject from the American Kennel Club.

There usually comes a time in every production when one more special is needed for the third act, or a bare spot up right must be filled with a Biedermeier sofa, or the father needs a tuxedo for his last entrance, or the bouquet of flowers must be real instead of plastic. At this point the manager says, "No." What has happened is a *supra disbursement caused purchase arrest*. The production is over budget.

Stage lovers sometimes continue their make believe relationship off-stage. The signs are when both begin to arrive in the same car. One or another is wearing clothes worn the day before. They disappear together during rehearsal breaks. And stage kisses are slightly longer than necessary. None of this is in itself bad until they start being allies in intra-cast battles. Feeding each others' egos, they can team up against the director or make other cast members uncomfortable. When this happens it is a *limited societal disorder due to extra professional cohabitation*.

Another difficulty that deserves to be dignified with a euphemism is one that concerns *Lighting Dimensions'* readers from time to time. The control board can be an auto transformer or a memory board, it makes little difference. Somehow the wrong switch, a button, or a lever is pulled. It is purely a human mistake. A light goes on that shouldn't, one that should doesn't. This is termed a *digit based circuit by-pass*.

When the play is just awful, and the writing is the work of a scribbler, there is one word which, while not a euphemism, is obscure enough to mask a recognizable and therefore more painful description: "This play is cacography." "A fine example of cacography." "A play in the new cacographic style."

Now that you are armed with an euphemism for almost every unpleasant situation, I hope that you all *experience a pleasant 24 hours*. ■