ACCENTS & DIALECT ONSTAGE

* Speech differences clear in pronunciation and selection of words and in the inflection of sentences
* Listen for changes in quality, pitch, timing, stress, & rhythm….and substitution of/omission of sounds
* When beginning a role with dialect shift…
  + Listen to people (recordings) who use the dialect
* Dialects used onstage are rarely authentic…but are accepted stage versions of dialects
  + A dialect that is too precise can be distracting to the audience
* Dialects difficult to master – often many roles for actors who can handle accents well

ENGLISH

* British English is the basis for stage diction
  + British use a higher tonal pitch and wider range than American
  + Several differences in pronunciation
  + Cockney – distinct version British dialect – difficult to master - yet one of most common stage dialects commonly drops initial and final consonants from words
* Irish dialect
  + Much variety in pitch and inflection
  + Pace is a little faster than American speech
* American English dialects
  + vary in practically every state in US – a few distinguishing characteristics that apply to whole areas
    - farther a person is from an urban area, the slower and more nasal the speech
    - southern and western accents known for drawl – speaking slowly and inflecting the vowels (changing tone or pitch of voice)
  + Commonly used stage dialects: southern, Brooklyn, New Jersey, & Boston

EUROPEAN

* too difficult to imitate w/o listening to people who use them regularly
* Italian – musical and patterned with many inflections
* German – guttural, many of the sounds are made with the back of the tongue
* Swedish – inclined to be high in pitch with recurring rising inflections and a flat tone that is not nasal
* Yiddish – increasingly popular stage dialect – mixture of High German and Hebrew
  + American stage version – pitch much higher than American speech, often rising into a falsetto and rarely dropping to low pitch levels; most sentences end with a rising pitch; quality is nasal and pace is fairly slow

* All European accents based on inflections, rhythms, and word order of the original language (frequently differs from English)