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Exploring the Art of Connections: Directing Sarah Ruhl's Dead Man's Cell Phone

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Exploring the Art of Connections:
Directing Sarah Ruhl's *Dead Man's Cell Phone*

by

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A Proposal Submitted to the Honors Council
For Honors in Theatre

April 1, 2015

Approved by:



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Abstract

In the March of 2014, the Department of Theatre and Dance at Bucknell University selected me to conceive and direct a production of *Dead Man's Cell Phone* by Sarah Ruhl. This production would be the winter Main Stage show of the university's artistic season in February 2015. This project would not only serve as an honors thesis project, but also as a THEA 319 Independent Study for the culminating experience of my theatre degree. In preparation for this project, I conducted significant research of both the play itself and the initial design concepts that I felt best supported the piece. I also set out to accomplish two goals: first to direct a piece that would resonate and speak to an audience consisting of my generation and the Bucknell community, and second, to accomplish, as the director, the establishment of a strong and productive ensemble. Working with an advisor and a production team consisting of faculty, staff and students, I became the leader of a yearlong process that included holding auditions for the Bucknell student body, leading and designing five weeks of workshops and rehearsals, and ultimately ensuring a successful run of four shows.

The script book for Sarah Ruhl's *Dead Man's Cell Phone* opens with an epigraph of a quote from *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens. He writes, "every human creature is constituted to be that profound secret and mystery to every other." *Dead Man's Cell Phone* captures the essence of this quote, as protagonist Jane and the audience begin to learn the profound secrets and mysteries of a dead man's life. In our daily lives of classes, meetings, work, personal commitments, and relationships, we journey through

the lives of many other people. We see ourselves as always connected, always part of a community- but could that be wrong? Could we, members of the technological age, be more isolated than ever before? How do we have so much information available to us yet still feel we know so little? How do we have so many friends and acquaintances and yet Dickens' assertion that, "the three passengers shut up in the narrow compass of one lumbering old mail-coach; they were mysteries to one another, as complete as if each had been in his own coach..." often still holds true (Ruhl 2008)? This is why I have taken on this show and why I have decided to explore the art of human connections. I wanted to direct this piece at Bucknell because I believe many Bucknell community members can move through our time here meeting many people but only truly knowing a few. This thesis will explore my process as I perused these artistic endeavors.

Proposing a THEA 319

The process of directing *Dead Man's Cell Phone* began in December 2013 while discussing my goals for my theatre degree and the remainder of my time at Bucknell with Prof. Gary Grant. After successfully directing a junior showcase within the department, I was eligible to apply for a THEA 319 Independent Study in directing. He and I discussed shows that I could begin to consider and we made a short list of playwrights and their works. Amongst this list was American playwright Sarah Ruhl who has published several notable pieces in the last decade. Among her works is *Eurydice*, which I performed in a high school production of. Ever since that production, I always found her work to be unlike any other current playwright. Her dynamic use of language and unconventional storytelling techniques help establish exciting moments in the theatre. Being somewhat familiar with her works and style, I naturally gravitated toward the familiar and read several of her pieces to be considered for a proposal.

Immediately, I felt that *Dead Man's Cell Phone* stood out as a feasible and exciting opportunity for multiple reasons. First, I really wanted to work with a medium sized cast (five to nine actors). Having been in several large productions at Bucknell, such as *Macbeth* and *Pride and Prejudice*, which averaged around 25 to 30 actors each, I felt that it would be a nice change of pace to work in a much more intimate ensemble. Second, I really wanted to find a piece that dealt with a topic of interest to both my generation and to the Bucknell community. *Dead Man's Cell Phone* analyzes the role of technology in the 21st century and how it has begun to change human relationships.

Bucknellians are living in the most technology-saturated age to date and this reality poses many unanswered questions in regards to what impacts, positive or negative, such a social environment presents. Third, I quickly found artistic inspiration in Sarah Ruhl's storytelling. Ruhl graduated from Brown University with a concentration in playwriting despite having originally enrolled to study poetry (Lahr 2008). Regardless of this change of focus, Ruhl never lost her poetic nature. As I continued to explore this script, I found myself picturing how I would direct and design a production of it. From the most intimate moments in the stationary store scenes to the hilariously uncomfortable funeral, I was excited by the possibilities the play presented for the actors and the designers. In February of 2014, I submitted a formal conceptual proposal to the Department of Theatre and Dance's play selection committee (Appendix 1). After several weeks of discussing this proposal with the committee and several faculty members, it was approved as the winter Main Stage production for the department's 2014-2015 artistic season in Tustin Studio Theatre. Prof. Anjalee Hutchinson agreed to serve as my advisor for the project.

Pre-Production and Design

My research process began in the summer of 2014 following my spring semester abroad with Bucknell en France. I began to research as much as I could about Sarah Ruhl, her other works and the relevant themes of the piece. I read bibliographical pieces on this relatively young playwright, as well as recent academic analyses of Ruhl's plays. Reviews of prior productions of *Dead Man's Cell Phone* helped provide initial insight into approaches and design conceptions that had been explored by both amateur and professional theatres in the past. Having been first performed in only 2007, the play is very young so I was fairly limited in the material available to me. Nevertheless, two academic works stood out, Leslie Atkins Durham's work *Women's Voices on American Stages in the Early Twenty-First Century* and *Sarah Ruhl: A critical Study of the Plays* by James Al-Shamma (Appendix 2). I particularly enjoyed Al-Shamma's work because of his focus on Ruhl's personal story in the context of her full body of work. He writes about how Ruhl insists, "that a good writer knows when to keep his or her mouth shut so that the line can sing" (Al-Shamma 2011, 8). I found this to hold true: her scenes are short and to the point, allowing each line to hold weight and meaning. Her characters, as result, are powerful, even when at their weakest moments. He also suggests that, "In addition to magic realist tendencies, Ruhl may be classified as post-modern in her employment of intertextuality and her playful sense of time" (Al-Shamma 2011, 98). When I read this, I felt like he had answered a major question for me. While beautiful, her work can be intimidating to any member of a production. She often writes in what I

like to call “explicitly vague” terms that evoke a clear end goal but lack any explanation of means or method. For example, the final stage directions of Part I read:

*“The phone rings.
They kiss.
Embossed stationary moves through the air slowly,
Like a snow parade.
Lanterns made of embossed paper,
houses made of embossed paper,
light falling on paper,
falling on Jean and Dwight,
who are also falling.”* (Ruhl 2008, 37)

One can see that she still writes in poetic structure and very figurative (yet also potentially literal) language. Al-Shamma appropriately describes this as her “poetic sensibility” that has persisted since her time at Brown (2011, 8). For some, this language may be confusing or intimidating, but I knew for me and for Bucknell’s department it would be a perfect artistic playground. Bucknell actors and designers are used to challenging themselves in the theatre and I believe Ruhl presents an exciting and rewarding challenge.

In addition, I began to explore two important sources for design inspiration. First, throughout the script, including in the epitaph, Ruhl mentions the works of the prolific American artist Edward Hopper. His artistic style includes moments of isolation and personal reflection alongside shadows and sharp edges of light. This distinct look clearly spoke to Ruhl and I felt it only proper to present his works as a part of my initial design concept. I chose for each scene at least one of his paintings that I felt evoked something appropriate from the text. This could be the mood, lighting, costuming, spatial

composition (or a combination thereof) found within the portrait. I shared these selected works in a PowerPoint early on with the entire production team not only so they could understand my initial thoughts on the design, but also so they could offer their opinions, feedback and own approaches to the text (Appendix 3).

The second major source of inspiration came by recommendation from Prof. Paula Davis. She mentioned during a Play Selection Committee meeting that many moments of *Dead Man's Cell Phone* reminded her of Spike Jonze's 2013 film *Her*. Following this suggestion, I watched the film and quickly understood why she felt this way. The story follows Theodore, played by Joaquin Phoenix, as he begins to fall in love with his phone's artificially intelligent operating system, Samantha. Set in the near future, I was inspired by both the thematic elements of the plot as well as the costumes and set designs. Most notably, the story demonstrates some of the complications technology has begun present in modern human relationships. In my opinion, the transition from a "face-to-face" society to "Facetime-to-Facetime" presents many unanswered questions about the trajectory of human interaction in the coming decades. I feel that the story of *Dead Man's Cellphone* helps begin a similar conversation about this topic (see Appendices 1 and 30 for a more developed discussion of my conceptual approach). In regards to costuming, properties and set design, *Her* takes on a "retro-futurism" style- combining modern fashions, hairstyles and décor with those of 1960's and 1970's. Not only did I find this to be aesthetically appealing but also to be a referential nod to two of the final decades of "face-to-face" only relationships. I presented these design elements in a second PowerPoint for my production team (Appendix 4). Together, my research on

Edward Hopper and *Her* helped create an early design and concept vocabulary for the production team.

Throughout this research, I often returned to my proposal and my spine to both ground my thoughts and refine my approach. For me, the spine is the end goal of the piece and, as the name indicates, the metaphorical backbone of our artistic approach. While of course I wanted a production that an audience could appreciate and enjoy, I also wanted to make sure that it “said” something to them. My initial spine read: *Modern communication profoundly isolates and unites humanity*. It was from this perspective that I continually developed the production. While my spine would later change, it served as the through-line of our production.

It was also during this time that, after talks with my advisor and our technical coordinator Mark Hutchinson, I asked Issey Blatt’16 to join the production as our stage manager. Having worked with Issey as my stage manager during my junior showcase, I was confident she would be the best partner to help me lead and organize this process. Early on, she began documenting some research and my communications with the department.

Early design meetings began in the 2014 fall semester and focused around two key elements: set and costume (Appendix 5). Prof. Elaine Williams designed the set for this show and she and I worked together in the early weeks to discover exactly what type of conceptual and visual approach we wanted to take. While I felt strongly about many elements of the show during the proposal process, I really had no idea what I wanted the set to feel like. Ruhl provides many general details about the setting of each scene, by no

specific layout or design. Those choices, therefore, were left up to Prof. Williams and me. One important decision she and I made during the first design meeting was to remove all masking from the Tustin Studio Theatre. This meant that the six curtains used as wings, as well as the curtains that run the length of the walls of the theatre, would be removed. In doing so, the stage was bare and the walls were completely exposed. Our playing space grew substantially as a result and it meant we needed to find a set and lighting design that supported this decision. One of the driving factors behind this choice was my interest in incorporating projection into the production. The Department of Theatre and Dance was able to secure funding to bring Sven Ortel, a projection designer and professor at UT Austin, to work on the spring Main Stage production. He agreed to also work on *Dead Man's Cell Phone*. I began considering the use of projections on the floor and on the walls. Despite many early talks, however, we came to the conclusion that projection seemed to not fit into the piece as a whole. After a few early design meetings, projection still felt like an element I was just "throwing in." It lacked artistic justification and, after a few conversations about it, I decided to remove projection as an element in the production.

As a result, I realized that a whole new "playground" opened up for the designers and me. Now that projections were no longer a factor, many more decisions could be made in relation to other design elements. I met with Prof. Williams and she presented to me her initial design concept: two units that could be moved as needed around the stage to form walls and backdrops. One unit was a corner piece that could be turned around to reveal a stationary store. The other was a simple 2x10x10 wall fixed to the stage floor at

one end and could be pivoted 360°. The result was a versatile playing space with endless arrangement combinations between the two units. She and I then, using a scale model of the units and the theatre, went through the script, scene by scene, to determine the look of each moment (Appendix 6). After several discussions, we presented our design concept to the production team who received it warmly. The set was soon under construction and lighting was able to begin to roughly plot around these scene designs. Having these decisions made before winter break provided everyone involved, including me, with a lot of necessary information to move forward in the process.

Lastly, many significant decisions were made about costuming before the break as well. Emmy LaFriniere served as the head costume designer and she seemed excited by the early conceptual ideas I had presented. We both found the “retro-futurism” concept to fit the show’s quirky nature and, more importantly, that it helped remove the piece from a specific time period. While of course having a cellphone on stage really limits the play’s setting to within the last 15 years, it also did not rule out the piece being set in the near future either. I found the lack of specificity to help further the piece’s commentary on technology, specifically the role it plays not only in today’s world but also in the future. Emmy conducted her own research and started to compile photos, colors, and styles to present to the production team as early source materials (Appendices 7 and 8).

Process of Auditions and Callbacks

As the pre-production and design process continued, it was time for auditions to take place. One advantage of our February run date was being able to hold auditions in the November prior. While rehearsals would not start until after winter break, being able to hold auditions and meet with the cast several weeks before the formal rehearsal process provided a helpful timeline. Since many design elements, especially costumes, can depend on the composition of the cast, it was nice to have a separation between casting and rehearsals. The publicity team for the Department of Theatre and Dance helped promote the auditions to the campus, which were open auditions for all students regardless of major or prior experience (Appendix 9). The auditions followed Bucknell's typical format, two nights of general auditions followed by one night of callbacks. For the general audition, students read monologues from the show itself. I picked two monologues for female actors and one monologue for male actors. I felt these would best demonstrate what I needed to see in order to determine whom I would ask to return for a callback. While copies of the full script were available for anyone to borrow in the weeks leading up to the auditions, those auditioning did not have the opportunity to read the specific monologues I had chosen for auditions before arriving. Every actor filled out an audition form, which provided Issey and myself with contact information, any previous experiences and potential schedule conflicts (Appendix 10).

The general audition process is always interesting, especially when actors must "cold read" sides from the play rather than performing a prepared monologue that they

personally selected. Some actors excel with quickly performing this new material while others (including myself) stress about this type of process. Despite my personal inclinations, I knew having all actors read the same sides would help me to make comparisons between everyone auditioning as well as help the less experienced do their best. While strong talent certainly helped, it was not the only criteria I looked for. Every actor was allowed to read twice, once as they felt appropriate and again after I gave them some form of direction to follow. This method allowed me to gauge their ability to take risks and follow direction- two important qualities for an actor. I chose not to have actors read with each other until callbacks simply for time efficiency. Before their reading, I also tried to take the time to talk with any individuals that I did not already personally know. This helped me remember them later on and relieved some of their nervousness.

After two nights of general auditions, I had narrowed down the field to a select group of actors who I wanted to have return for callback list. I learned from my junior showcase to be as selective as possible when determining callbacks. While I wanted to give everyone a chance that I felt deserved it, I also knew that calling back too many actors would not only make for a longer process, but it would also complicate my final decision. After deliberating with my stage manager, I emailed everyone who auditioned the callback decisions (Appendix 11).

I strongly felt everyone that I called back for a second audition was capable of playing the role for which they were called and I shared that belief with the actors at the auditions. Callbacks are not a competition but rather a chance for the director to see actors on stage together and to understand their strengths and weaknesses. Actors read

scenes together and everyone watched each other perform, clapping and supporting each other as the night went on. Issey helped me stay on time and ensure the smoothest process possible (Appendix 12).

The final casting decision was made that night. I paired actors together to best see who worked well with each other. Because *Dead Man's Cell Phone* has very defined relationships between characters, it was important to find an ensemble of actors that could build these relationships on stage. While physical composition was important, my decisions were really made by trusting my gut and internally answering the questions "Who do I believe as this character?" and "Who fits well with the other characters?" This was not an easy process but after seemingly endless pairings and readings, I felt I had reached the point where I could confidently make decisions (Bloom 2001, 112-116). I ignored any bias I may have felt towards friends or "class superiority" and chose a cast solely because of how I felt they would function as an ensemble. The final cast list was shared with the actors and the production team via email later that night (Appendix 13).

A few weeks following auditions, the actors, stage managers, and myself met for a read through over dinner. This meeting allowed me to share initial conceptual and design ideas with the actors and for Issey to go over scheduling and expectations. All of us signed actor agreements that served as contracts for the production (Appendix 14). One of the most important decisions we had to explain was asking our actors to be off script by the first rehearsal, January 11th. This decision did not come easy because I was asking actors to put in a lot of independent work over their winter breaks. Despite this, it was ultimately necessary. Our rehearsal calendar was relatively short and required that we be

ready for dress rehearsal after only four weeks. By being off script, actors were able to work without books in their hands from day one and they had to really engage with the text before ever rehearsing it with me or another actor. The ensemble understood and respected this decision. We also read through the entire script. After months of reading, analyzing and discussing this text with the production team, it was so exciting to hear the voices of the actors would eventually be on stage. Seeing their initial reactions to the story and their characters reminded me why I loved this piece.

Lastly, my stage manager and I shared with the cast our tentative rehearsal schedule and block break up (Appendices 16 and 17). While these were still works in progress, it allowed us to share our initial rehearsal plan and make sure any conflicts could be managed before it was too late. This calendar was still tentative, subject to change as Issey and I continued to prepare for rehearsals during winter break. The actors all also agreed to return to campus early for our first rehearsal/workshop on Sunday, January 11th. While this is a large commitment to make, the extra three days of work in the space would allow us to hit the ground running into our quickly paced rehearsal schedule. The entire ensemble agreed to make these commitments and I am still extremely thankful for their dedication.

Preparations over Winter Break

In anticipation of returning to campus and beginning rehearsals in full swing, I prepared a lot during the winter break. I continued to research the show and I also began to really dig myself into the text. While my proposal and pre-production work revolved around the large concepts and overreaching themes of the show, I needed to explore the text on a much more detailed level- scene-by-scene and beat-by-beat. Ruhl wrote *Dead Man's Cell Phone* episodically with several separate scenes making up two acts, or as she titles them "parts." This structure was very helpful for my analysis and it saved me from having to wade through a much longer, free flowing text where scenes are not necessarily separate entities. Nevertheless, I still needed to interact with the text on a personal level and develop a report with the story and its characters so I could design my rehearsal technique and to refine my conceptual approach. For example, I decided to break up two scenes (Part 1, scene 5 and Part 2, scene 5) into two smaller parts each. This allowed me to accomplish two important things: first, it allowed the actors and design team to understand that there would be dramatic shifts in these scenes, both in staging and mood. Second, it permitted me to break the longest scenes into slightly more manageable parts for rehearsal purposes- that way actors would not have too much to prepare or have to spend large quantities of time at rehearsal when they really were not needed. I also assigned every scene a title and short summary so that anyone involved in the process could easily refer to one document to understand the organization of our production (Appendix 15). I also worked with stage manager Issey Blatt to finalize our rehearsal

schedule. Issey also created a contact sheet as a quick source of reference for communication (Appendix 18).

Another important piece of the production that I wanted to begin to establish during the break was the ensemble. To me, the existence of an ensemble is one of most critical components of any theatre-based work. An ensemble has a sense of mutual support, common goal, team mentality and, most importantly, trust. Having this atmosphere allows the theatre to be a safe space for artistic exploration. It allows everyone in the room to make bold choices on stage and to feel confident that they are in a supportive environment. Theatre requires lots of risk taking, experimentation and failure to be ultimately successful. The ensemble helps create an environment where these demands can be met without the fear of judgment or ridicule. In addition, having a sense of ensemble means the actors feel comfortable around each other. This show, like many others, required the actors to touch, and in some cases kiss. Therefore, it was important that I established a sense of security and familiarity in the room. While some members of our ensemble had worked on shows together in the past, several others had not worked with any of the other actors prior to this production. While any group of people with scripts can call themselves a cast, an ensemble requires detailed craftsmanship and continual effort.

Over break I met with Prof. Kali Quinn of Brown University via Skype. Kali served as a guest director at Bucknell during the 2012-2013 academic year and I worked with her on the Main Stage production *Masks, Movement, and Mayhem* as her Assistant Director. She has an extensive career in theatre, specifically in ensemble and grouped

based work; I was grateful when she agreed to serve as our Workshop Advisor for this production. Our conversation over Skype lasted close to an hour and a half. First, she and I went over my goals for the workshop and the ensemble as a whole just to make sure we were on the same page. We then discussed some of the techniques and activities she had used during the rehearsal process of *Masks, Movement, and Mayhem* to build that unique ensemble. These techniques ranged from directing methods, guided discussions with the ensemble about the production, and physical exercises that focused on ensemble building. In addition, Kali had led a weekend workshop for Bucknell's Cap and Dagger theatre society in November of 2014. My discussion with Kali allowed me to establish a "toolbox" of sorts. The techniques we discussed would become resources for me to use while directing. They could serve as means of building an ensemble while also becoming touchstones for the actors later in the process, potentially as ways to problem solve or troubleshoot. Kali calls this toolbox "a common physical vocabulary" and she believes that it is essential to any ensemble. I wanted my workshop to establish this physical vocabulary amongst our cast of *Dead Man's Cell Phone* and to make sure that when rehearsals started, everyone felt comfortable working in the room together. Following my conversation with Kali, Issey and I created a workshop itinerary to share with the cast and I created a rough workshop agenda to help guide this process (Appendices 19 and 20).

Finally, I created a Character Worksheet for my actors to have prepared for the workshop (Appendix 21). This worksheet was designed to begin the character development process and to provide me with some initial insight on their personal

approaches to the text. Character development is a long process and every actor (as well as director) approaches it differently. I have always found it helpful to push the actor to think about their character beyond the text while still using the text as a framework for exploration. For example, on the worksheet I asked the actors to list three confabulations (Ruhl's word for lies) that their character has told outside of the play's plot. The confabulations Jean tells throughout the play not only help advance the narrative, but expose her true intentions and moral character. They are never intended to be harmful but they do sometimes produce serious consequences. The climax of the play, when Jean meets Gordon in the afterlife, comes about as a culmination of her confabulations. I wanted all of the actors to explore how their character would tell a confabulation and, more importantly, explore when and why they would tell one. By having the actors write down their answers and arrive at the workshop having already begun this exploratory process, I knew that we would be better prepared for rehearsals.

Workshop and Rehearsals

Following our itinerary and agenda, the ensemble returned to campus for our first day of workshop on Sunday, January 11, 2015. This first day was our most extensive day of work. Issey and I first went over expectations for the workshop and all subsequent rehearsals. These included attendance policies and use of technology (mainly cell phones and laptops) in the rehearsal space. We then warmed up, physically and vocally, as well as practiced Prof. Anjalee Hutchinson's meditation technique that we often use in the department. The day lasted from 9am to 4pm with a one and a half hour break for lunch. Our exercises included group activities and challenges so the ensemble could become familiar working with each other, games that would be used as warm ups later in the process, and character exploration techniques.

Our second day of workshop consisted of monologue rehearsals. These were not full-blown rehearsals, but they were text focused. I guided actors through a "Head, heart, gut" exercise designed to help them explore text through emotionally driven physicality. By linking specific moments in the script to a character's head, heart or gut, an actor can often discover his or her character's body language, breath and vocal pattern. Monologues serve as a good starting place for this exercise because they contain many emotional shifts and points of critical character development for both the actor and the audience. Working one-on-one with several of my actors, the second day of workshop sought to further the character development process and expedite the rehearsal of these lengthier moments in the text.

The final workshop day, the Tuesday before the first day of classes and the beginning of formal rehearsals, was a chance to revisit what had been started on day one. We continued character development exercises and I also led the ensemble through a lengthy vocal and physical warm-up that included meditation. This served to introduce the actors to every method of warm-up that we would use during rehearsals. While I did not plan on using it all every day, I felt it was important to have a large number of familiar warm-up techniques that we could rotate between.

Lastly, we created ritual. Rituals are often found in theatres, both amateur and professional, and can range from goofy sayings to detailed physical traditions. I had selected two categories previously introduced to me by Prof. Anjalee Hutchinson. The first was personalized “handshakes” between pairs of actors. Each actor created three unique means of saying hello with ensemble member. These hellos could include physical and/or vocal components and served simply as a way welcome each other back to rehearsal. The actors were allowed to make the handshakes as goofy or as serious as they wanted to, as long as they could be succinctly performed each warm-up. The second type of ritual was a “hello” to the physical theatre itself. Through a physical exercise that I guided them through, the actors each chose a tiny part of the space (such as a paint spec on the floor or a fixture on the wall) to be their own. They could say “hello” to this simple part of the theatre by giving a touch or by waving at it, however they felt appropriate. Every rehearsal, I began with warm-ups, which included me leading the actors through these rituals. While to an outsider ritual may seem odd or insignificant, I know from personal experience it is a critical touchstone for any actor (and ensemble) to

have each time they return to the space to work. By practicing these rituals, actors have a means of checking back into the production, helping to separate the time they spend in rehearsal from the time spent in class or studying.

Formal rehearsals began on the first day of classes. Before every night, the stage managers were responsible for taking attendance, preparing the space by checking props and sweeping the stage, and communicating updates to the actors and the production team. Every rehearsal was documented by either Issey or one of her assistant stage managers in the form of a rehearsal report which were electronically shared with the production team (Appendix 22 shows reports from both an early rehearsal and later full-run rehearsal). Rehearsals always began with warm-ups and check in's to help bring everyone back into the space, mentally and physically. Warm-ups varied depending on the demands of the scheduled scenes, as well as the mood and energy levels of the actors. Having a smaller ensemble allowed me to tailor these warm-ups to their needs each day. We would then rehearse that day's scheduled scenes and Issey would keep everyone on time and ensure I completed everything I wanted to accomplish. The assistant stage managers helped record blocking notes as well as makes notes of props or technical elements that needed to be discussed with the production team (Appendix 23).

Early rehearsals began with discussions about the intentions and objectives of each character in each scene. We also discussed the "state of being" for each scene since they were not rehearsed chronologically. Before each rehearsal, I had pre-blocked every scene so I could guide the actors through a basic idea of their movements. I introduced our set designs to the actors and worked with them establish the unseen world around

them. Having an abstract set meant that it was not always clear what the layout of the “room” they were in was or where they could enter and exit. It was critical, however, that the actors understood these constraints early on in the process so they could then constructively explore and use the stage. For several of the scenes, I had a clear idea of what the basic blocking would entail. I shared this with the actors while still allowing them to discover their own motivations to move within the text. I made it clear from the first day that while I was leading the process, I did not yet know everything. Actors were encouraged to move when their character felt compelled to move and to offer suggestions to me about blocking. Much of rehearsal is trial and error for a director. I never assumed that my early inclinations were going to be the final outcome of the rehearsal process. Rather, I created initial constraints and structure on blocking as to serve as a foundational playground for further exploration.

As rehearsals continued, production meetings were held weekly with the production team, stage managers and myself in attendance. Issey led these meetings, acting as secretary, and they allowed everyone to check in with each other. Rehearsals often reveal new questions and “problems” to be addressed and these meetings served as opportunities to discuss them. Rehearsal reports served as documentation of these issues throughout the week. In addition, there were several “stumble through” rehearsals where the entire script was run, chronologically, so I could see our progress. The entire production team was invited to attend these runs so they could see our progress as well, and raise any questions or concerns. Technical elements were often discussed after these runs and designers were able to collaborate their efforts as they made progress on their

individual tasks. Because these meetings were held on Friday afternoons, they allowed me to present a recap of the week's progress and discuss needs and plans for the week ahead. Minutes were taken of each meeting and were made available to the entire team (Appendix 24).

Towards the later portion of the rehearsal process, we began to rehearse the piece chronologically every day, working one act at a time, with chances afterwards for me to call specific scenes or transitions if they needed special attention. During these rehearsals I would take notes on the performance and then discuss them with the ensemble after the run. Early on, I was often on stage with the actors, walking the scenes with them, and stopping the action as necessary to build movements and clarify blocking. As we progressed towards full runs of the acts, I refrained from interrupting the action of the rehearsal. I would sit in a different part of the house each night in order to gain different visual perspectives as well. After these runs, the ensemble and I went over my observations and I offered corrections, advice and praise for the night's work. Actors also could raise questions about moments during the show that were unclear or in need of more rehearsal. Our ultimate goals during this period were to smooth out any issues and to polish the entire show.

It was also during the later weeks of rehearsal that I began to collaborate with our student choreographer, Maddie Kroll '15. Maddie is a dance minor and has choreographed several pieces while at Bucknell. She joined our production through the recommendation of Prof. Er-dong Hu and Prof. Kelly Knox of the dance department. I shared the script with her early on and she agreed to choreograph the "Cell Phone Ballet." As indicated in

the script, a “Cell Phone Ballet” occurs while Jean and Gordon are in the afterlife. Ruhl leaves the organization and look of this ballet up to interpretation, but asks that spoken text, or “fragments of lost conversations,” play during the dance. Maddie seemed excited by the room for creativity the script allowed her and I let her hand pick a group of student dancers to perform. She and I researched potential music for the moment and we settled on a somber piano waltz. From this, Maddie worked around our stage designs to choreograph the dance and I worked with our costume designer to create their look. From this dance, I decided with sound designers Heath Hansum and Joe Duvall to continue to incorporate piano through the entire production as to tie everything together. Towards one of our final rehearsals before dress week, Maddie, her dancers, and the ensemble met during a rehearsal to practice the logistical elements of the dance.

Through all of this rewarding, yet exhausting, process, the ensemble remained strong. At no point did we have any major conflicts or negative issues come up. Actors routinely came to rehearsal on time, ready to work and left their troubles at the door. Everyone seemed to respect one another and take every moment of the process seriously, regardless of their role. I was nervous that directing my peers would present conflicts of authority, but instead I found them responsive to a mutual understanding of respect and teamwork. Just because it was my honors project and my THEA 319, it was still *our* show and *our* creation. I could not have asked for a stronger ensemble or a smoother process.

As opening night approached, we arrived at tech week. This period is a major point of development for the production in multiple ways. The first rehearsal of the week

was dry tech were I worked with the lighting and sound designers alongside my stage management team to “build” the tech of the show. Lights and sound were incorporated into every moment of the play so we had decided how these moments should feel, sound and look for the audience. This required us to meet the artistic demands of the piece itself, our production concepts, and the logistical demands of transitions and blocking. It is a time consuming process that requires detail and precision. Heath worked to create distinctive feels for each setting, including, for example, special ordering lighting instruments to create beautiful cathedral windows. We also made sure we were fulfilling the design inspiration of Edward Hopper’s use of windows and cuts of light. Issey also need to learn the cues of the show, as she was responsible for calling the show each night. Her job required understanding the timing and feel of each moment in the script as it related to the technical elements. I was amazed at Heath’s lighting designs and how quickly they pulled together every other aspect of the show. The stage now breathed with life in every moment as the actors were transported from a stage at Bucknell to the world of *Dead Man’s Cell Phone*.

Our next rehearsal was “cue-to-cue”. Actors often dread this rehearsal because it is a slow and “start/stop” process that takes several hours. This is a chance for the stage manager to record the call times for every cue in the script as well as for the designers to make edits to the moments built the day before. Patience is key here. We had a fairly smooth rehearsal and were able to have a full run later that night. The primary focus was not acting but instead learning together how the technical components fit into the show. Actors were interacting with lighting and sound cues for the first time so they needed to

learn what to look for or hear before moving forward in the text. While tedious, this is a crucial learning curve before going into dress week. I felt confident at the end of these two rehearsals that not only would we should look and feel like I had imagined, but that we could, as an ensemble, work out all of the kinks before opening night.

Hair, make-up and costumes were slowly incorporated during each dress rehearsal and actors worked with the run crew to learn their costume and make-up transitions. They also were working with props and furniture that had previously been mimed or substituted with a simpler stand-in's. Now, actors were responsible for multiple elements each run. Every dress rehearsal ended with me giving notes so we could be prepared for the next rehearsal (Appendix 25). Often at this point in the process, the stress and the fatigue of constant rehearsal and a looming opening night can be overwhelming. It is a constant struggle to keep energy up and stress at minimum for everyone involved. All in all, the ensemble and the design team handled the week very well. By our preview Thursday night, we were ready to invite an audience into the house.

Techniques of the Ensemble

In order to better exemplify my approach to establishing and maintaining the ensemble of *Dead Man's Cell Phone*, I would like to detail a few of the techniques that I brought into the process. Ensemble building is tricky and requires not only careful construction but also detailed maintenance. While many problems can be avoided with mindful casting, issues within an ensemble can still arise. I believe a proactive director, however, can quickly handle these problems with a patient and professional response. He or she must also keep in mind the differing concerns and perspectives of all involved parties. Despite this, the best way to avoid conflict is prevention. As the director I actively worked to build a team that functioned productively, creatively and respectfully together in the space. While I could write endlessly on the many techniques and tools I incorporated into my directing method, I will focus on just a key few in this section.

Recognizing every person in the room had different strengths and weakness to contribute to the process, I needed to find ways to build and maintain this team. One of the best approaches, in my opinion, is to find, as Kali Quinn often describes it, a common physical vocabulary. Clive Bloom writes that a "purpose of games session is to create a common vocabulary, based upon shared experience, with which to discuss the process of human action and interaction and the work of the actor" (1977, 66). This vocabulary that Quinn and Bloom advocate consists of warm-ups, games, and exercises that the ensemble explores and practices together. By having

this physicality as part of the process, I find that actors are more trusting of everyone in the room, more likely to take artistic risks in rehearsal and are more likely to be inspired by each other while developing moments in the script. In other words, each actor goes through “a process of self-awareness and discovery” that in turn helps “create a shared body of experience which one uses to build up relationships within the group and to develop the ensemble” (Bloom 1977, 66). With this in mind, I devoted our time in workshop and warm-ups to the building of the ensemble.

First and foremost, we began the workshop and each subsequent rehearsal with breath technique. Breath is central to acting. It releases tension, it aids in projection and it helps increase stamina. Finding one’s breath is paramount when developing a character. Because breath comes from the core of the body, it can act as a center of focus in character development. Actors need to be trained, however, to take strong, deep breaths from the diaphragm. Since most of us go through the day breathing from elsewhere in the body, even the most experienced actor will still need reminders to breath properly in the theatre (Thomas 2002).

Every rehearsal began with some form of a breathing exercise. Sometimes these exercises were linked to vocal warm-ups, other times they were meditative and focused on relaxation and centering. I decided each day what approach we would take based on the collective energy in the room. For demonstration purposes, I will limit my explanation here to meditation. Meditation exercises can be simple or very detailed and can last anywhere from five minutes to an hour. Because of time

constraints, we often limited these sessions between five and 15 minutes, depending the needs of the day. Actors lied down on the stage floor, eyes closed. I instructed the cast through a series of breathing techniques in order to energize and focus the room. First, I asked them to focus on their breath and clear their minds. A key part of meditation is to focus all thoughts on each inhale and exhale, nothing more. This first step allowed them to return to the space mentally and to remind them of how to breath properly when performing. The second part of these exercises was focused on relieving tension and stress within the body. Whether they had actually physical tightness or simply emotional deposits of stress, focusing the center of breath in those areas often helps alleviate them. Mentally combing through the body from head-to-toe is a relaxing mental exercise that, when combined with deep breathing and a quiet room, can provide energy and focus to begin any rehearsal. The third and final part of our mediation was collective breathing. Breathing deeply in unison creates a sense of “togetherness” and group energy. During this portion actors followed my count for several inhales and exhales while focusing their minds on slow and deep breaths from their diaphragms. Immediately followed by stretching and other warm-ups, this process centers the energy in the theatre on stage and between the actors, exactly what an ensemble needs before each rehearsal and performance.

Beyond breathing, there was still much to develop. One key physical vocabulary tool I had learned from both Prof. Anjalee Hutchinson and Kali Quinn was what I like to call “center work.” This technique is a powerful tool when

beginning character development and when working on detailed moment building later in the process. A fundamental explanation of this concept can be rooted in the teachings of Michael Chekhov and his “imaginary center”. The idea is simple: every human body has a “center” that can be mentally relocated based on a myriad of factors. Chekhov encourages actors to imagine a “soft, warm, not too small center in the region of your abdomen” and then move that center around to other limbs and extremities (2002, 81). In addition, emotional status, physical well-being, levels of stress or confidence can all affect how a body looks and moves based on its center. For example, a powerful, driven woman may find her center in her core and abdomen that propels her confidently into any situation. Meanwhile an old, fragile man may have a center high in his arched-over spine, ready to topple his body over if he missteps or loses his cane. It is a physical technique that actors can use to begin to explore the physicality of a character. I find this technique extremely effective because it also requires a great focus on breath and can be used at any point in the process as a physical check-in (Chekhov 2002, 80-83).

During our workshop, I lead an object-centered exercise. Actors had selected a specific physical item to bring to the workshop that in some way related to their characters. For example, Hannah Cordes brought a small bottle of tequila and Jason Hammet brought an old Nokia cell phone. The exercise would begin with focused breathing to relax and center the mind and body. Each actor practiced this technique on their own, with the rest of the ensemble watching as an audience. The actor would then stand, in character, and “place” their object in their body as a

center. Imagine how an actor's body would move if they had an old cell phone in their elbow, or a tutu in their left foot? This type of imagery can quickly evoke a physical response that may inspire a character's body language, breath and emotional centers. While this exercise is largely exploratory, the importance of an object and a character's center can be a helpful reference at any point in the rehearsal process. For example, Ms. Gottlieb, played by Cordes, drank hard liquor during several key moments while Gordon, played by Hammett, let his life be led by his business, which was symbolized by his cell phone. Bloom best describes the goal as, "to make it possible for the actor to be able to produce as wide a range of movements...so that he can select from all these possibilities when he comes to a specific role or activity" (1977, 65). Being able to link early character development to key moments in the final performance makes for a stronger ensemble vocabulary and frame of reference.

Being able to imagine the center of the body wherever felt helpful, actors had endless options to explore while developing their characters. As mentioned earlier, one technique I used during the monologue workshopping and subsequently throughout the rehearsal process was "head, heart, gut". I asked actors to find how their character talks, breathes and moves when thinking and feeling- first from their head, then from their heart, and lastly from their gut. As one might imagine, each actor developed three distinct "physicalities" to work from. Because monologues are long and often have quickly shifts in emotion and storytelling, it is important to locate and highlight those variances. Kali Quinn had taught me how to lead an actor

through a section of text using the “head, heart, gut” technique. Actors must constantly identify from which of those three regions they are thinking, feeling and speaking and let their voice and physicality flow from there. By practicing, line by line, the dramatic shifts between the head, the heart and the gut, an actor can discover spontaneity and rhythm within their delivery. While practicing this technique will not resemble the final product, it is a strong method of character development that can help construct a character’s internal storyline and can be a helpful touchstone during difficult moments later in rehearsal.

With this in mind, it is important to note that a lot of our ensemble work was just plain fun. Games are central to theatre and, while they may seem superfluous to an outsider, they can often be the core of a strong ensemble development. In addition to allowing actors to become used to being creative, imaginative and goofy around each other, games also get actors warmed-up and ready to move with energy and motivation in rehearsal (Bloom 1977, 66). A game we often began with was “Go!”. “Go!” is played in a circle and involves both physical and vocal work. One player begins the game by shouting and motioning the word “go” to a player next to them. This can be done many different ways, such as a lighthearted request with their arms extended or serious, confident demand. The next player continues the game by saying “go” to the subsequent player in the same direction until “go” is passed completely around the circle. Actors are encouraged to project their voices and to try to actually send energy with each “go” sent around the circle. The game really livens up when other commands are introduced such as “no”, “try again”, and “you”.

“No” requires the “giver” to reverse the direction of the “go” while “try again” requires the actor to find a different, maybe more convincing way of passing along the “go”. Lastly, “you” sends the “go” across the circle with the point of the figure to another, non-adjacent player. Not only does it energize the actors, but it also requires they interact and listen to one another. Breath work and centers can also be incorporated for a more dynamic experience.

A final example, and key component of the ensemble, that I will discuss was how I handled myself, as the director, during rehearsals. Anne Bogart writes about two different forms of attention, focused and free-floating. She describes focused as when “you tune out the surroundings and concentrate on one thing at a time” while free-floating is what “you use when you drive a car. You soften your gaze and take in the myriad bits of information” (2007, 54). Aware of this, I conducted rehearsals conscious of the demands I was putting the actor’s focus. Making sure we had an environment that supported focused attention was necessary every night. Electronics, such as cell phones and laptops, were to be left in the other room. Homework or anything non-production was not to be done in the theatre space. This helped provide a focused rehearsal space that we could work in. I, as the director, also needed to be “fully present, spontaneous, and ready to switch directions, responsive to every minuscule change, sensitive to energy shifts, ready to laugh” (Bogart 2007, 55). In addition, I made sure our attention was a balance of focused and free-floating so the ensemble would not exhaust itself. By bringing my

own positive energy and expectation to the process the ensemble similarly responded in their efforts.

Elements of Staging and Transitions

The overall look and feel of any show is largely driven by the stage composition: the arrangement of actors, set pieces, furniture and lighting relative to each other. This is something that can be pre-blocked by a director before actually working with an ensemble on stage, but it is likely to undergo many changes before the final composition is determined. Working with Prof. Williams, we had created specific arrangements of furniture while deciding on the positioning of the wall units before winter break. Using this as a template, I first worked through each scene on paper to make sure all major demands were met, such as movements clearly defined in the script. I then began to try to determine the most effective and visually appealing blocking possible, making sure that all action was visible to all of the audience and that actors did not have to make awkward or difficult movements across the stage. I also wanted to ensure there was visual variety throughout the entire piece.

To exemplify, in Part I Scene 2, Jean attends Gordon's funeral at a traditional, Catholic cathedral. Tustin Studio Theatre features two "balcony" doors on the stage left and right sides, near the front rows of the audience. I decided to place Hannah Cordes, who played Mrs. Gottlieb, in the stage left doorway to perform her eulogy. This allowed Jean to be at her kneeler in the upstage right corner, creating a strong diagonal across the theatre. In addition to being an interesting visual, placing Mrs. Gottlieb above the audience helped establish the dominance and superiority she believes she holds over

almost everyone. Combined with Heath Hansum's stained glass lighting designs, the cathedral was one of the most stunning visual moments in the piece.

In addition, Part II, Scene 1 was Gordon's monologue. This scene is an interesting challenge for any director or actor because it consists of four pages of Gordon talking, by himself. While lengthy, the monologue provides several crucial moments of plot and character development. As a result, I knew from the beginning that the monologue needed to remain consistently interesting for the audience throughout its near 10-minute run so they would follow along. The text presents the challenge of shifting between several locations (his house, the subway, a sushi restaurant, the café). I decided early on we needed to find unique ways to present each of these locations while transitioning between them seamlessly. The end result was including two other actors in the monologue, Gwenn Gideon as Hermia and our assistant stage manager Brendan Trybus as "Subway Passenger". Both actors not only appeared in the monologue in character, but they also helped transition the set between the locations. Mid-way through the monologue, the large wall shifted 90° to indicate Gordon's entrance into the café from Part I, Scene 1. This not only required the wall to pivot but for furniture pieces to be moved off stage as well. While it was time consuming to choreograph, the end result was a beautiful timed moment of several pieces moving around Gordon as he approached the climax of his monologue- his death. This scene required the ensemble to problem solve together and we all felt very proud with the finished blocking.

This type of scene constructing process continued throughout several rehearsals for many of the dynamic moments of staging I sought to create. I discovered, as a

director, that it is impossible to plan or foresee every part of the blocking before the rehearsal process. Working on paper will never match working on one's feet with the actors in the performance space. I also found helpful a lesson that Kali Quinn taught me when I was her assistant director: It's okay to say, 'I don't know'. Just because the director needs to make the final decisions, it does not mean the decisions need to originate from the director. Many times I would talk with my actors to get their opinions on how a scene felt physically or to find a solution if the flow of the scene was off. They know better than anyone else in the room what is working and what is not. Working from this premise, the opinion of the ensemble was crucial to my ability to direct *Dead Man's Cell Phone*.

Once we had blocked the basics of every scene, Issey and I began to address transitional and logistical concerns. Because every scene was a different set design and required different furniture and props, the stage managers and myself had to find the most efficient means of transitioning. Transitions often go overlooked by the audience because of their insignificance and, as our technical coordinator Mark Hutchinson always says, the show is about what happens *between* the transitions, not during them. Creating these moments is like choreographing a dance- except for the "dancers" are in poorly lit conditions and are often carrying large, sometimes breakable, objects. Therefore, a large effort was put into building and rehearsing our transitions to make them as seamless as possible. In order to do this, I made clear to the actors from day one that transitions were just as important to learn as their lines or their blocking. We dedicated several hours of rehearsal, early in the process, to learning and rehearsing transitions alone. On top of this,

actors also had ensure their props were set for the next moment and that, if need be, they had time to change their costume. I worked with Emmy to block costume changes and to ensure the costuming was functional and efficient for the play's episodic nature (Appendix 26).

Between each scene, walls needed to be repositioned and furniture needed to be rearranged or struck. Because the actors, not a stage crew, were performing the transitions, special attention also needed to be paid to who did what. For example, Jason who played our dead man, Gordon, only helped transition before his scenes. Despite the fact that he speaks in front of the audience, I could not justify the "dead man" reappearing between scenes to carry on a chair or pivot a wall. I also tried to prevent actors from having to transition items immediately following a scene in which they appeared. I wanted the actors to be able to exit, in character, without having to break their movement to pick up an item. As a result, the tracking of these movements underwent many revisions and "trials and errors." I delegated the bulk of this process to my stage manager, knowing that Issey's organizational skills and attention for detail would be best suited for completing this task. She and her assistants did a fantastic job of continuously updating the actors on changes to their responsibilities and making sure we were transitioning as efficiently as possible (Appendix 27).

Pre- and Post-Performances

One of the best parts of the Department of Theatre and Dance at Bucknell is the publicity team staffed by several students and a faculty advisor. They are responsible for designing programs, posters, message center posts and Facebook event pages for all productions and events. As mentioned earlier, I worked with this phenomenal team to decide on basic elements of the design of performance poster and the final program for the show. The team hung up posters around campus, including in residential buildings and a large poster in the LC Mall (Appendix 28). We also coordinated a visit with a writer from *The Bucknellian* to attend a dress rehearsal so she could publish a preview article (Appendix 29). The final program included bios from each of the actors, the names of everyone who worked on any aspect of the show, and my director's notes. These notes are an opportunity for the director to convey to the audience a basic introduction about his or her approach to the piece and provide any information he or she wants the audience to have prior to seeing the show. For me, these notes can often be intimidating to write. I know that I, as an audience member, love to see what a director has to say about the production I am about to witness. It is a crucial part of my understanding to not only the story, but also of the artistic approach. Director's notes should be interesting and informative and also not overly detailed or too dense. It is a tough balance to discover, but I eventually decided to convey in my notes why I felt this piece was relevant to all of us, especially us members of the Bucknell community (Appendix 30).

As the ensemble transitioned into tech and dress week, Issey and I developed the pre-run structure of each night. Actors arrived one and a half hours before curtain to warm-up. I led these warm-ups as I had always done, trying to keep everyone in as much routine as possible despite the hectic nature of the week. We put special emphasis on vocal warm-ups and energy games. Unlike in regular rehearsals, the ensemble needs to be pumped up for that night's performance. Following this, the actors checked that all of their props were set in their proper locations before heading down to the dressing rooms to prepare hair, make-up and costumes. Sound and light board operators went over their cues and hardware to ensure proper functionality. Assistant stage managers also prepared the stage by sweeping and mopping the floors and pre-setting the stage for the opening scene. Our house manager arrived during this time too and made sure that the seats were clear of any trash or left behind programs and that the lobbies were in presentable condition. Thirty minutes before curtain, the house would open for the audience to enter the space. Preshow music introduced them to the use of piano throughout the show and the lighting was soft but appropriate. At 15 minutes before open, I would meet with the actors downstairs to give them any final notes and play through one last warm-up. Shortly before curtain, Issey would give the call for places and the show would begin.

Each performance was also followed by a unique event. After opening night, a small reception was held by Cap and Dagger for the families and friends of the cast and crew, as well as the department faculty and staff. Saturday night was our talkback night. Following the performance, actors changed out of their costumes and met back onstage with the audience, stage managers and myself. I lead a conversation with the audience,

first by giving some opening remarks and then by opening the discussion to any questions the audience had about the performance or our process. I really enjoyed hearing from the audience and seeing how the ensemble responded to specific questions. Sunday was photo call where production photos were taken for documentation of the performance. Lastly, Monday night was set, props and costume strike. The cast, crew and technical TA's tore down the set and stored costumes and props. By the end of this night, the theatre was again "neutral" and the show had officially closed.

Experiencing the Performance

When I proposed this production in February 2014, I did not even know if it would be given any serious consideration. I felt at times my proposal was weak and had some conceptual holes and contradictions that I had not yet had a chance to address. I was not sure how the committee would respond to the writings of Sarah Ruhl or my initial design concepts. Opening night was not just far away, but as far as I was concerned, also unlikely to ever come to fruition. I knew that my fellow rising seniors had made other strong proposals and could do a just as good, if not better, job at directing a THEA 319. Being abroad I also felt isolated from Bucknell, continuously out-of-touch and one step behind despite the continuous efforts of the Department of Theatre and Dance to make sure I was being equally represented on the committee. When I met with Prof. Anjalee Hutchinson over Skype and she informed me that my proposal had been approved, I was genuinely surprised. Directing a THEA 319 had always been a personal goal for me from the first day I learned about it in my freshman year. So on opening night, when I sat down next to my parents and sister and the lights went down, the reality that I had directed the show I was about to experience still seemed surreal.

As each performance progressed, especially opening night, I was always curious and excited to see how the audience would react. One of the greatest joys for anyone involved in any part of a theatrical production is finally getting an audience. You work on a show for so long that you often forget how enjoyable the story is. An audience, however, brings all of that joy and energy back. Seeing what moments receive laughs,

gasps, shifting, or intent silence is always interesting. I constantly reminded the ensemble to never have expectations of the audience during any of the shows. What may garner a large response in one performance from the audience may receive the exact opposite response in the next. Anticipation cannot only throw an actor off, but also cause unnecessary pauses or shifts in the energy on stage. The actors responded well to this advice and they quickly adjusted between the loud and energetic house on Friday night to the quiet, yet engaged, house during the Sunday matinee. While each performance, of course, has its unique moments, I was most impressed by the consistency displayed by the ensemble each night. They had taken what they discovered in our workshops and rehearsals and ran with it. They understood every moment of the play, to the point that they could recreate it each performance. That is not easily accomplished and I was proud that we had been able to arrive at that level of engagement with *Dead Man's Cell Phone*.

I was also interested to gauge the response of the audience to Ruhl. Her plays demand whimsy and quirk, lightheartedness and yet deep inner-reflection. She does not let her audiences become too comfortable or complacent with the constraints of her plots or worlds. Instead, she guides the audience on a roller coaster of action and storytelling that leads to a satisfying, yet often thought provoking, end. To those who study theatre or dramatic literature, this experience proves to often be thrilling and refreshing. For the average audience member, however, their reaction tends to be much more varied. Some find Ruhl's style to leave them excited and entertained, others confused and offset, yet still pleased. Sitting amongst them, I felt the audience react to each moment of the script and discover the mystery that often is Sarah Ruhl.

As a result, the response I received each night was of overwhelming satisfaction. It seemed that everyone could walk away with something they found really enjoyable. For many it was the humor spread throughout a play about a much more serious topic. Others found the visual components, such as the sets, costume and lighting, to be beautiful creations of art themselves. I interacted with the audience each night, before and after the performance, and found that the piece had spoken to everyone in a variety of ways. Overall, I was impressed by their level of engagement throughout the entire performance and how well our message had been conveyed in just under two hours. The audience is the prize. Without them, the work we had done would never be shared outside of the inner circle of the ensemble and the production team. Being able to share it four times with my family, friends and professors was not just rewarding, but also justification for the endless months poured into this independent study.

Reflection and Conclusion

Outside of directing a successful theatrical production, I had two main goals for this piece: First, to truly attempt to “say” something in this performance that would speak to my generation and the Bucknell community, and second, to accomplish as the director the establishment of a strong and productive ensemble. In reflection of the entire process of bringing *Dead Man’s Cell Phone* to life, I feel that I was very successful in those two endeavors.

Throughout all of the academic year, I met regularly with my advisor, Prof. Anjalee Hutchinson. While she attended all production meetings as well as a few rehearsals, she and I privately met as need be, once every two or three weeks. One question she raised early on in the process was in regards to my spine: How can something, in this case technology, be both isolating and uniting? At first, I had no response. I had been focused on my spine (*Modern communication profoundly isolates and unites humanity*) for several months and I was certain it was a concrete declaration of the production’s mission. She understood my hesitation to questioning it and yet still encouraged me to think about what I really wanted to say and, what the text was really saying. She reminded me that a spine is always in evolution and that it was okay to explore it as the process continued. As we reached the mid-point of rehearsals, I revisited her question and thus the central argument of my spine.

As a result, I realized isolation and unity are opposites, and maybe the illusion of one can overlap the other. Nevertheless, it is impossible to find unity within isolation and

vice-versa. By reanalyzing the progression of the story and its detailed ending contained in the final two scenes, I began to rework my spine. By a week before dress rehearsals, I had established a new working spine: *Modern communication profoundly isolates but, by choosing to connect with one another outside of technology, individuals can discover a truer unity.* I feel this spine better represents my approach to the script. The cell phone, as a symbol of the invasion of technology in our modern lives, has become an isolating device. One can escape into its tiny screen for hours, avoiding any direct or “face-to-face” forms of communication. As a result, actually engaging with another human, in person, has had to become a conscious decision. Oddly enough, it seems that, because of the isolation technology often provides, tangible human relationships are even stronger and more profound as evidence in the play’s resolution. While the questions this piece raises do not all have clear answers, I hope that by exploring the art of connection in our production I was able to begin a thoughtful conversation about the role of technology in our lives. I added this new approach to my original proposal. That proposal was also a continual source of reference and consideration while making decisions in rehearsal and alongside designers. It too received several updates and rewordings as opening night approached (Appendix 31).

My second goal was to build a strong and productive ensemble. As a student of directing, I am always looking to improve my skills and to learn more about this ever-changing craft. Seeing the effectiveness of, and yet difficulty to construct, an ensemble in the past, I knew that establishing one would be an appropriate challenge for this independent study. In talks with my advisor and with Kali Quinn, I slowly established my

“plan of attack” for creating the ensemble I knew this piece needed and deserved. While I generally felt we had a strong ensemble overall, the only really way to gauge my success was to ask the ensemble members themselves. In preparation for this thesis, I surveyed the cast and the stage management team about their experiences in regards to the ensemble (Appendix 32).

For example, Delaney Clark '18, who played Jean, wrote, “Overall, I thought that the cast atmosphere was focused, supportive, and fun. One thing I particularly found remarkable about this production was that the sense of ensemble extended to the stage management team as well.” I particularly enjoyed this response because stage management is crucial to any production and they often perform the most thankless jobs. Having such a strong stage management team was crucial to the success of this show and I am glad they were able to be a part of the ensemble. Assistant stage manager Brendan Trybus '18 wrote, “Personally, I felt like I was part of the ensemble. Although I was an ASM, I felt included during the entire process and there was never a division between actors and crew” Knowing that my actors and crew enjoyed being around each other and working together was essential to establishing the ensemble I wanted. The workshop was also crucial to this process and, on that subject, Delaney Clark wrote, “The director focused on ensemble work from the moment we began rehearsals: our first two rehearsals actually focused on ensemble building and character work, rather than on working with the script. The cast did not pick up a script until we were capable of working together and felt comfortable around each other.” I know that having the “toolbox” that Kali Quinn and I built over winter break was a defining factor in starting the rehearsal process off

right. Given the relatively problem and negativity free nature of the entire production, I am very satisfied with my efforts to establish a productive ensemble.

For any student taking on the enormity of a project such as a THEA 319, the amount of work and commitment can be intimidating. The proposal process serves as a wonderful opportunity for a student to demonstrate to the department his or her intentions for such a project and the artistic conception that he or she wants to pursue. Any student selected for a THEA 319 must be able to work well with professors in a professional setting as well as be able successfully lead a collaborative effort amongst his or her own peers. Having spent the last year working on this production, I can say it is an incredible learning experience.

I discovered, first and foremost, that it is impossible to know everything. A director cares so much about the production and he or she never wants to be caught off guard. The truth is, however, these moments are inevitable. As a director, I found that I could endlessly prepare for production meetings, design meetings or rehearsals, and there were still days that I had to stop myself and say, "I don't know". Whether it was in relation to a scene's blocking or an actor's costume change, I quickly realized it was okay to not know. As I mentioned before, both Kali Quinn and my advisor helped me discover this reality of directing and encouraged me to be honest with my team when unknowns arose. I learned that instead of creating panic, these unknowns should be embraced with an air of discovery. I often found myself responding, "I don't know, but let me go figure it out." When a question came up that I could not answer, I approached it as an exciting challenge, a chance to go explore. I also learned in these moments that I did not need to

be the only voice in the room. I often found myself asking my cast members and designers what they were feeling or how they viewed a problem that was presented to us. Often their perspectives could inspire a solution and, together, we could resolve the concern. I am glad I put endless hours in creating my proposal, analyzing the script, creating pre-blocking and working with the designers early on. These efforts made sure I was as prepared as possible for every rehearsal and meeting that I had to lead. At the same time, despite all of these efforts I still did not (and could not) know everything, nor be prepared for all the challenges that develop in any artistic endeavor. The process demands that any student directing a THEA 319 be willing to accept the unknowns and use that uncertainty to their advantage.

Looking back on my experience, I do not know if I would change anything too terribly about the way I lead this process. Our production did not have any major hiccups or road bumps that could have been avoided. The ensemble worked cohesively and did not experience any major conflicts or drama. The supportive environment created by the ensemble and by the production team allowed me to lead effectively. I worked hard to always show respect to anyone that was a part of the process and, in return, I found I was respected in return, both by my peers and by my professors. Knowing now that a director cannot prepare for everything, I wish I could have had that mindset early on in the proposal process. I often found myself stressing that my proposal had too many holes or that my initial concepts were too vague and disconnected. By no failing of the department, I often thought I was out-of-touch or “one step behind” while working with the play selection committee while studying abroad. I often found myself wishing I could

just step into Prof. Hutchinson's or Prof. Grant's offices and have a face-to-face conversation with them about my proposal, rather than having to discuss it over email or Skype.

As a result, I think I would advise future students who want to submit a proposal to speak with former student directors on their experiences going through the process. While every student will have a different approach to how they want to present his or her ideas to the department, speaking with someone who has made a proposal in the past can help strengthen one's efforts. For example, I often discussed over email with Victoria Moyer'12 about her THEA 319 process. She not only provided me with encouragement, but she also was willing to share her successes and challenges as examples from which I could learn. She was a constant source of support and I am glad I had the opportunity to learn from her this past year.

In addition, one needs to be honest about why they want to propose the specific piece they have in mind: Why would you enjoy directing this show? What about your previous experiences well prepares you to take on this specific script? One must also ask: Why is this show a good choice for the Department of Theatre and Dance? What opportunities does it present for potential actors and designers? Why would it be good for the Bucknell community? Addressing these types of questions will ensure a sounder proposal and a more successful process.

Overall, this was truly the best possible culminating experience for my time with Bucknell's Department of Theatre and Dance. Learning how to work with and direct my own peers was a daunting, yet rewarding, opportunity. Being able to also sit in a

production meeting and collaborate with professors and other students was an eye opening experience. This process demanded teamwork, patience, tough decision-making, compromise, time management, and hard work. I will always be thankful for the opportunity the department gave to me when they accepted my initial proposal. They trusted me with great responsibility but they also showed they supported me the entire way.

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Supplementary Materials: Production Photos



















Appendix 1
Initial concept and production proposal
Submitted to the Department of Theatre and Dance Play Selection Committee

Dead Man's Cell Phone by Sarah Ruhl

(Working/Tentative) Spine

Modern communication profoundly isolates and unites humanity.

Artistic Intent

I write this proposal to not only express my desire to produce this piece, but to also express my desire to create and participate in a culminating experience of my career at Bucknell. My education so far with Bucknell has been a true liberal arts experience both within and without of the department and I aspire to demonstrate that through this production.

The script book for Sarah Ruhl's *Dead Man's Cell Phone* opens with an epigraph of a quote from *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens. He writes, "every human creature is constituted to be that **profound secret** and **mystery** to every other." *Dead Man's Cell Phone* captures the essence of this quote, as protagonist Jane and the audience begin to learn the profound secrets and mysteries of a dead man's life. Our dead man, Gordon, is a human organ trafficker, buying and transporting human organs from living persons in order to save the life of a patient in need, as well as often the life of the organ donor who is in need of financial assistance. His practice is illegal, international, and underground. When Jean, a stranger, finds him dead in a café, she comes into possession of his cell phone, and his life. She begins to connect with his family and his business, both of which she knows nothing about. From his overbearing and offsetting mother, to his jealous and distrusting widow, Jean attempts to console and comfort his "loved ones" whom she has never met. Ruhl notes that Jean never lies, but rather creates confabulations and makes memory a "malleable, imaginable construct" (Al-Shamma, p.84), to make right Gordon's wrongs: his adulterous relationships, his strained relations with his brother and mother, and his dark dealings with the illegal organ trade market. As Jane journeys through this adventure, she also begins to discover herself and love. Alongside Gordon's brother, she explores that love and meaningful communication can still be tangible and personal in today's technological age. Ultimately, Jane must decide who Gordon is after his death and, more importantly, what kind of woman she is.

Dead Man's Cell Phone speaks to me because in our daily lives filled with classes, meetings, work, personal commitments, and relationships we journey through the lives of many other people, thinking we know them and their story.

- We see ourselves as always connected, always part of a community but could that be wrong?
- Could we, members of the technological age, be more isolated than ever before?
- How do we have so much information available to us yet we still know so little?
- How do we have so many friends and acquaintances and yet Dickens' assertion that, "the three passengers shut up in the narrow compass of one lumbering old mail-coach; they were mysteries to one another, as complete as if each had been in his own coach..." can still be true?

Despite Gordon's blood relation to his family members, they were all traveling in their own coaches hiding parts of their lives from one another. Ruhl examines modern relations through the eye of modern technology that supposedly brings us closer more and more everyday.

I want to direct this piece at Bucknell because I believe many Bucknell community members, as busy as we are, can move through our four years here meeting many people but only truly knowing a few. As a member of this department I have always felt we have strived to question and break the boundaries of social norms, of the “Bucknell bubble”, of accepted and “normal” views of the world. *Dead Man’s Cell Phone* allows for the often unanswered life questions a family has upon the death of a love one to be answered by the most unlikely of persons- a complete stranger. The cell phone, a device invented solely to communicate, both unites and isolate those who use it. Jane contemplates:

“Like if your phone is on you’re supposed to be there. Sometimes I like to disappear. But it’s like — when everyone has their cellphones on, no one is there. It’s like we’re all disappearing the more we’re there.”

Maybe in this, an age of technology, Facebook “friends” and rapid communication we are still in our separate cocoons, traveling our own routes, and not taking the time to know and love those around us. Ruhl questions relationships, both romantic and familial, and their (de)construction as a result of technology. She also explores the natural pecking order that can develop in families (the power of Gordon and his mother in comparison to the weaker Dwight, Hermia, and Jean). All of this converges through Jean’s adventure and I will explore and expand these questions through this 319.

As evident in this proposal, the piece contains many themes from Dickens works, particularly *A Tale of Two Cities*. These themes, among many, include: isolation, resurrection, and self-identity.. I am excited by the possibility of exploring how the themes of a 150 year old classic can still apply to technology only widely used in the past two decades. I am fully aware that the series ends this Spring 2014 but I hope to continue the dialogue in a different manner.

Methodology

I have worked with many methods of directing and acting here at Bucknell. From Chekhov, to Adler, to devising, to Hagan and improvisation I believe I have experienced many of the views from which theatre can be conceived. I have always enjoyed both improvisation and devising in the theatre space, especially when confined to constraints, such as a script or a prop. I honestly do not have any one method that I seek to follow but I would like to work with my advisor to build a method study to use throughout the process. This study could be just one technique or a mélange of several as we see fit.

Some basic thoughts on design and production

Sarah Ruhl provides director’s notes that detail her ideas and intentions for many of the key moments of the script. From a design perspective, the most descriptive instruction she provides is: “Transitions are fluid. Space is fluid. There is not a lot of stuff on the stage.” Much like my showcase, I would want to direct this piece with smooth and seamless transitions that rely equally on movement and technology (lighting, sound and projection). I always seek to challenge myself so unlike any of my previous works, *Dead Man’s Cell Phone* may include moments of dance and choreographed movement. This includes the “Cell Phone Ballet” in Act II. I look forward to working with the dance professors and/or dance students to choreograph and design this dance and movement. I was heavily inspired by John Thiel’s work in Victoria Moyer’s 319 *The Lovesong of J. Robert Oppenheimer* and hope to continue the excellent and harmonious relationship dance and theatre maintain at Bucknell University.

With that being said, I do want to utilize technology in this piece as much as possible. I believe some very beautiful moments could be created through the use of lights, sound, and digital projection/video. Ruhl provides many of these moments through her director’s notes and her whimsy and

creative stage directions. I would love to work the cast, design team, and guest artists to develop and build these moments. I have been heavily inspired by Ruhl's inclusion of Edward Hopper's work and I think his color patterns and use of light/shadow would be a great starting point for our light and projection design. I'm interested to see how these paintings could be brought to life, both by actors and projections on stage (potentially interacting).

As for properties, costume and set design, I was inspired by the 2013 film *Her*. While a time period is never indicated in the movie, I think it is safe to say it is set in a realistic version of the USA 10 years from now. This time period provides room for lots of creativity and I think enhances Ruhl's poetic and light nature. I want to keep true to her notes and remain simplistic: a lot can be said with very little. I am aware that 2024 greatly contrasts with Hopper's time period and color so I would like to explore both inspirations.

Timeline (tentative)

- **October 2014:** Early production and advisor meetings
- **November 9-10, 2014:** General Auditions
- **November 11, 2014:** Call Backs
- **November/December TBA, 2014:** Initial Read-Thru (production team invited)

- **January 11, 2015:** Rehearsals begin (Off-script)
- **January 14, 2015:** Classes begin
- **February 7-8, 2015:** Cue-to-Cue/Tech weekend
- **February 9-12, 2015:** Dress rehearsals

- **February 13, 2015:** Opening performance
- **February 14, 2015:** Performance and talk-balk
- **February 15, 2015:** Matinee performance and photo call
- **February 16, 2015:** Closing performance and strike

Bucknell theatre resume

Theater Cast:

Show	Role	Location (Date)
<i>Pride and Prejudice</i>	Sir William Lucas	(Fall 2011)
<i>Almost Maine</i>	Steve	(Winter 2011)
<i>Macbeth</i>	Lennox	BU (Fall 2012)

Theater Crew:

Show	Role	Location (Date)
<i>The Wild Party</i>	Stage Make-Up Crew	(Spring 2012)
"Seeing the Light"	Director	(Fall 2012)
"Mask, Movement, and Mayhem"	Assistant Director	(Spring 2013)
"Waiting" from <i>Almost an Evening</i> 2013)	Director	(Fall

Classes:

- RESC 098: Discovery of the Expressive Self (Fall 2011)
- THEA 249: Mask and Make-up Design (Fall 2011)
- THEA 220: Theater Thinkers and their Methods (Spring 2012)
- THEA 240: Directing the Play (Fall 2012)
- THEA 256: Rituals, Festivals and Institutions (Fall 2012)
- THEA 258: Modernism in Performance (Spring 2013)
- DANC 120: Modern I (Spring 2013)
- THEA 260: Theatre in Revolution (Fall 2013)

Other Experiences

- Bucknell University TA Academic Assistant
Fall 2013- Present

- Answering phones, ordering scripts and royalties, money handling copy making, mail duties, organizing paperwork, documents

- Oregon Shakespeare Festival Summer Seminar for High School Juniors
Seminar Student 2010

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Appendix 2

Early research notes- examples

Notes and quotes from *Sarah Ruhl: A critical Study of the Plays* by James Al-Shamma

Introduction

- “The alluring melancholic turns suddenly, inexplicably, repulsively happy.” (5)
- “Ruhl captures the complexities of life in her onstage relationships” (6)
 - Life seen through relationships?
- How to carry heavy subjects with light hands? (7)
 - Death of father, loss of a friend
 - Present the taboos of life in a tangible, “PC” way
- Ruhl’s “Poetic Sensibility” (8)
 - Background as a poet
- Ruhl has a “vision for every line” (8)
 - “a good writer knows when to keep his or her mouth shut so that the line can sing” (8)
 - How much impact can a line have?
- Her characters are in reality but functioning in a “suspended state” (9)
 - What does this mean for the world around them?
 - And thus the design?
- “Transformation, language and playfulness” as part of her upbringing (10)

Ch. 4 Falling in Love with Long Distance: *Dead Man’s Cell Phone*

- “memory serves as the very fabric of relationship and personality” (84)
 - That Jean can begin to mend and weave with the phone
 - Becomes a “malleable, imaginable construct” (84)
 - How do memories change after death?
 - What false realities do we embrace to comfort ourselves (or others) in grief?
- “Jean...constructs a romantic image of Gordon with which she falls in love, but which is at odds with what she learns” 985)
 - Imaginations v. reality
 - Image v. Fact
 - She wants his loved ones to believe they were the most important, even though she learns he was too self-centered for any of them
 - He connects with his mother only because she fulfilled is selfish needs
- **Personality of the deceased**
 - How does Jean construct this? Does this really exist?
- Love in afterlife
 - Does it exist? Couldn’t it turn miserable? (86)
- “The Cell Phone both connects and isolates” (86)

- Closes distances of thousands of miles but takes away face to face
- Life in a cell phone
 -
 -
 - “the matrix of all of Gordon’s business and social communication and houses valuable data in the form of his associates’ contact information” (86)
 - Jean is able to shape this knowledge to “rehabilitate Gordon” (86)
 - The phone for her is power
 - But she constructs her Gordon and wants to keep *him* alive, not knowing whom he really was...
 - She loses power when she loses the phone (87)
 - But finds something stronger in love, in human connection
- Gordon and his stationary room (Paper v. Digital juxtaposition)
 - “a pre-technological sanctuary” and a “paper-based sanctuary” (87)
 - The paper, especially the embossed paper, is tangible
 - It puts words on your fingers tips and provides a unique sensory experience
 - It has life while a screen doesn’t
- “The pace of modern life violates the integrity of body and soul” (87)
 - She misses the slower pace of life that allowed for human relationships to develop at a different rate without technological devices
 - “the promise and limitations of technological communication.” (88)
- Theme of isolation (88)
 - Dickens and eulogy
- Character pyramid or food chain (89)
 - Gordon and mother on top, “top predator” (89)
 - Vegetarian, quite Jean on bottom
 - Meat v. vegetarianism
 - A transformation**
 - “Released from the clutches of the alpha male, she is free to mate with the less dominate Dwight” (90)
- Perceptual Relationships
 - Construct of Jean’s Gordon
 - Gordon’s construct of humans as money makers and organs as diamonds
- Creation of a “platonic love” (92-93)
 - “nonsexual love” between speaker and worthies
 - Jean and Dwight

Appendix 3**Design inspiration: Edward Hopper PowerPoint
(Kranzfelder, 1995, Levin 1980, 1984, 1985)***Dead Man's Cell Phone*

By Sarah Ruhl

Works by Edward Hopper

Each of these works have been assigned a scene in Ruhl's *Dead Man's Cell Phone*.

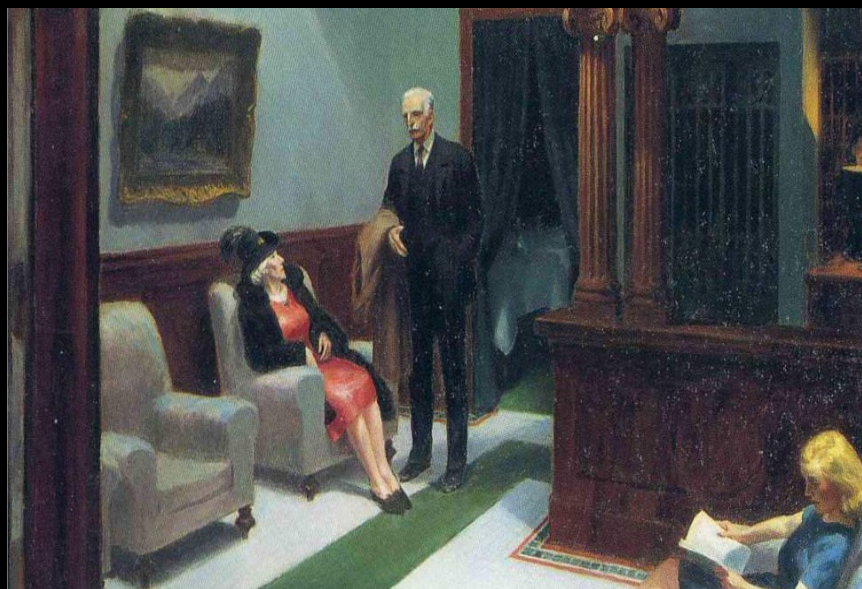
I want to make clear that these should be used to help contextualize scenes, not define them by any means.

Some may have more literal correlations and others may simply capture one element of that part of the script.

Viewer's discretion is advised.



Part I Scene 1



Part I Scene 2



Part I Scene 2, image 2- LighCng angle



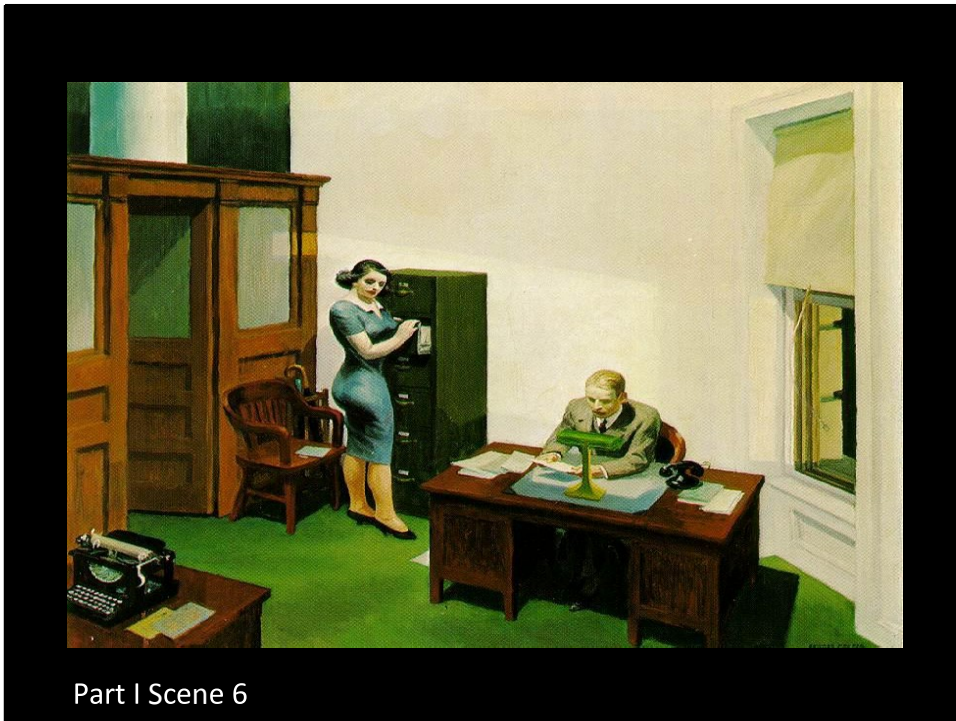
Part I Scene 3



Part I Scene 4



Part I Scene 5



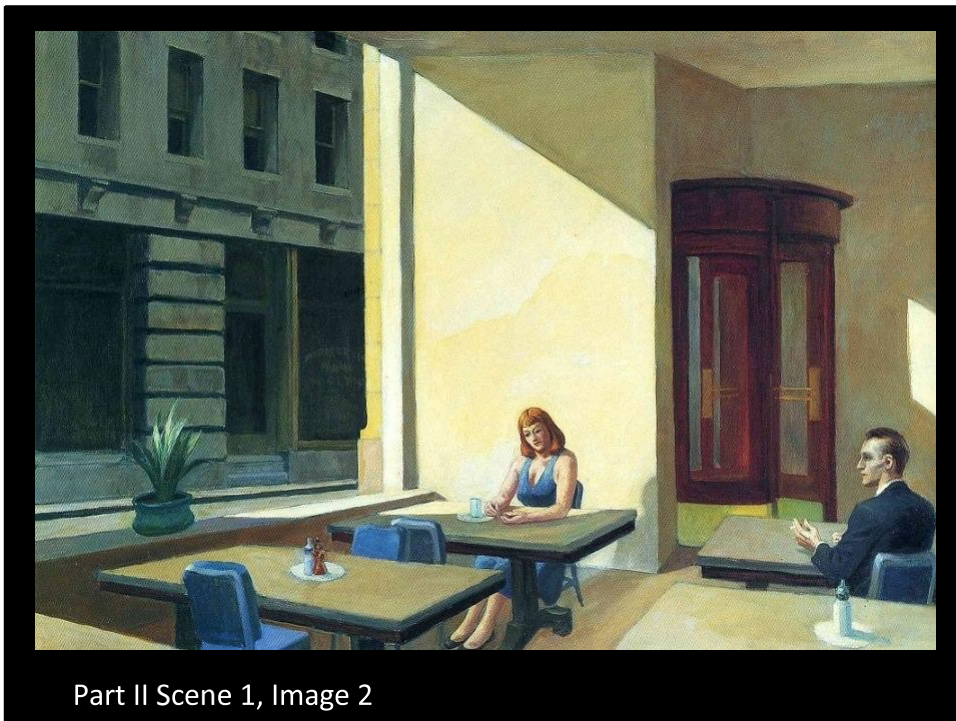
Part I Scene 6



"Intermission" (This is actually entitled intermission)



Part II Scene 1



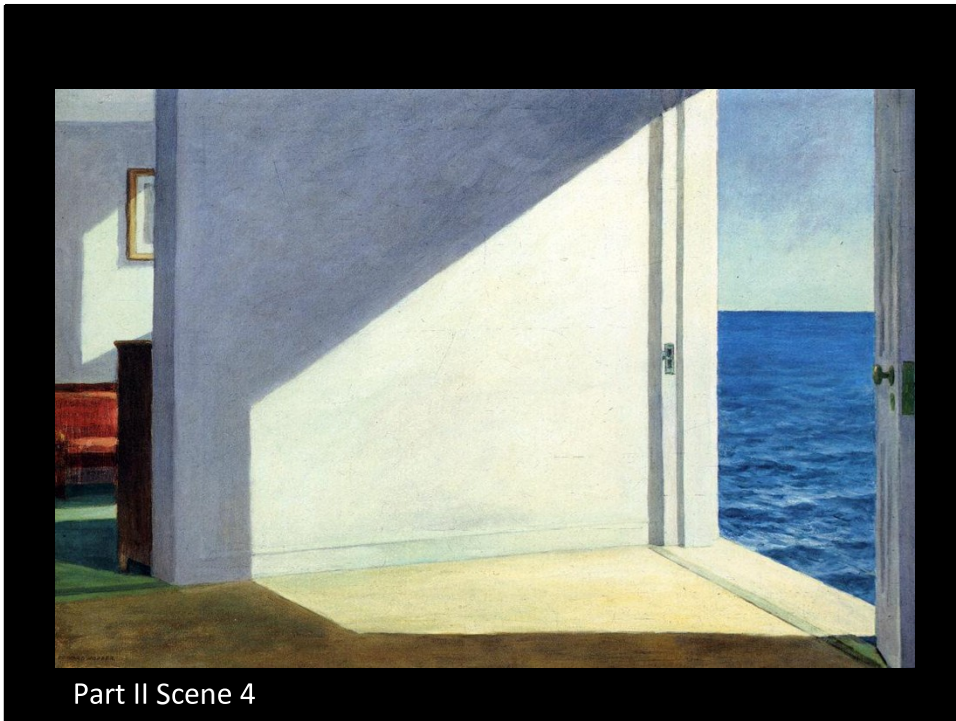
Part II Scene 1, Image 2



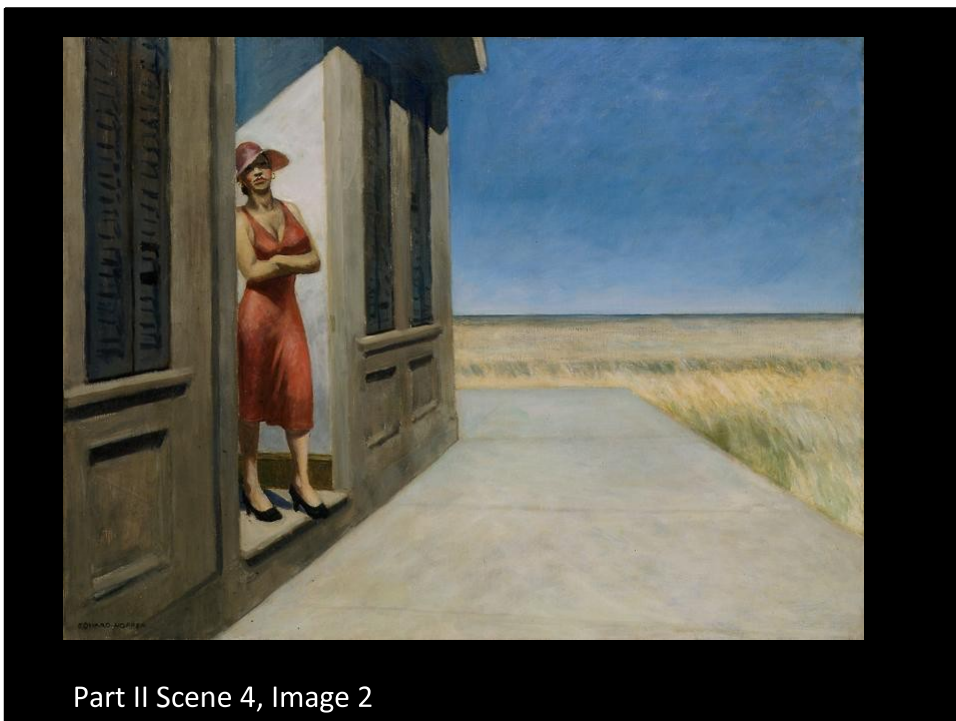
Part II Scene 2



Part II Scene 3



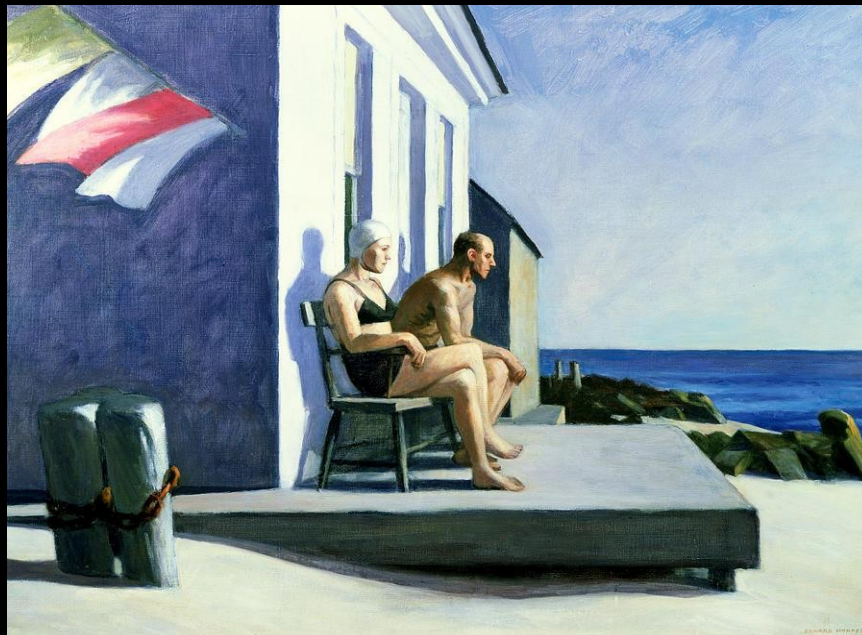
Part II Scene 4



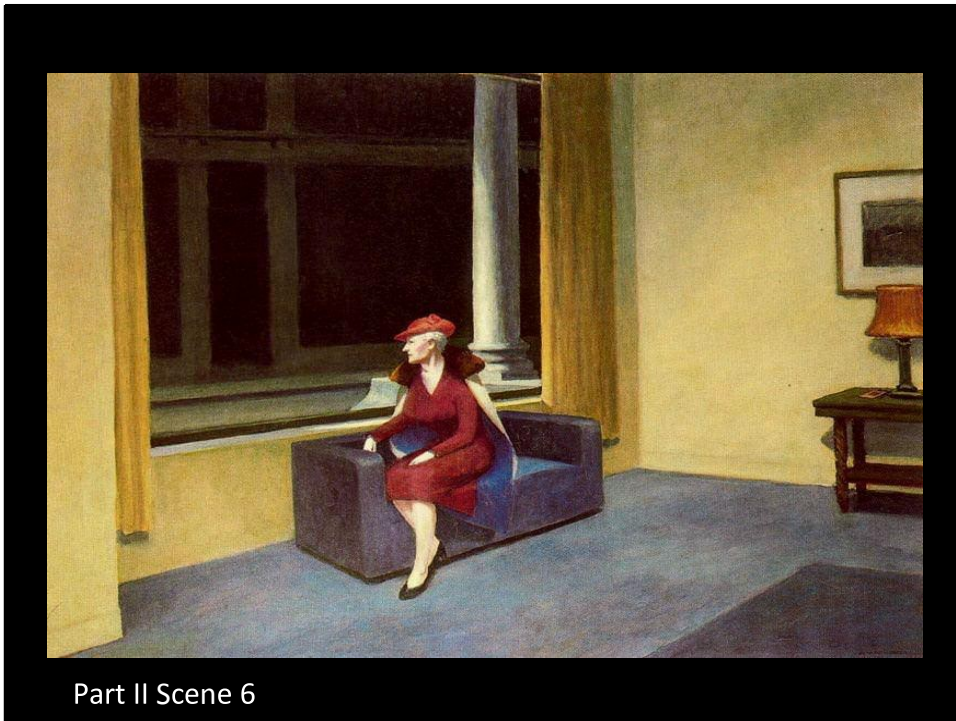
Part II Scene 4, Image 2



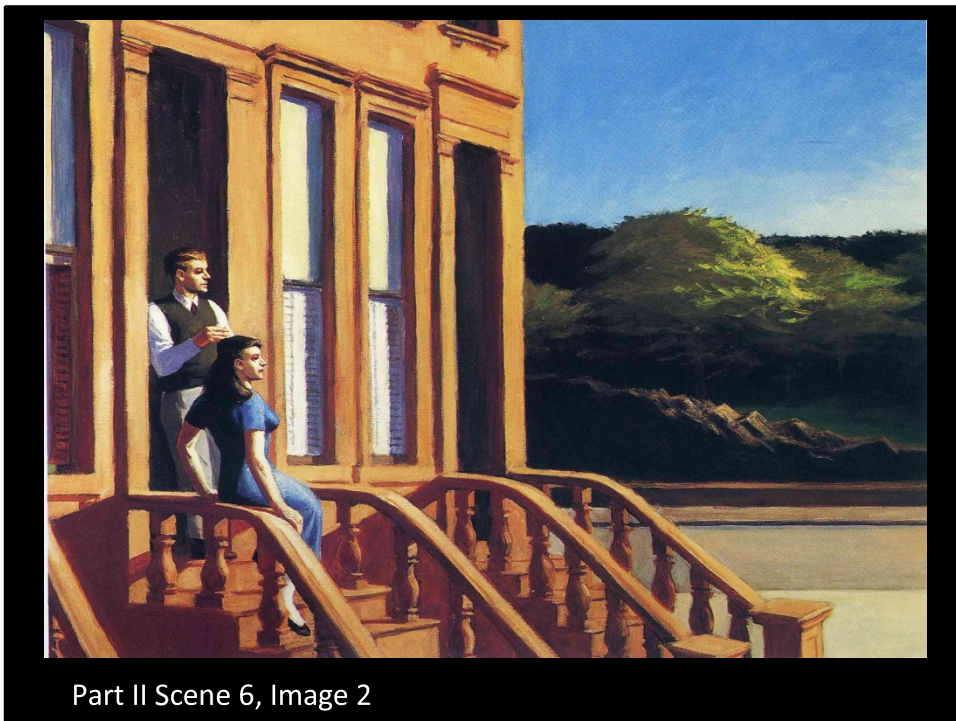
Part II Scene 5



Part II Scene 5, Image 2



Part II Scene 6



Part II Scene 6, Image 2

Appendix 4
Design inspiration: *Her* PowerPoint

***Her* inspirations and stills**

John Brunner
THEA 319
Spring 2015

Retro-futurism?

Credit to Kyle Buchanan
of vulture.com

<http://www.vulture.com/2013/12/her-movie-high-waisted-pants-spike-jonze.html>

NYT Interview with Casey Storm

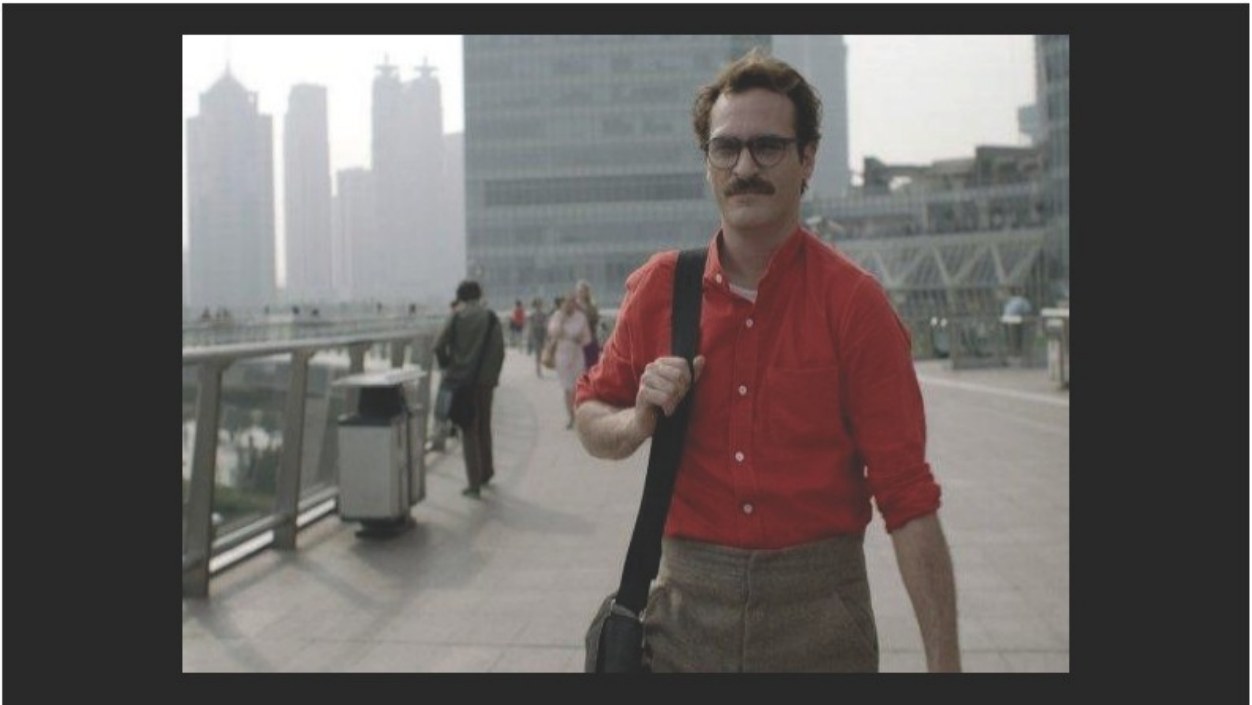
Her costume designer

http://carpetbagger.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/02/21/clothes-and-character-her/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=0

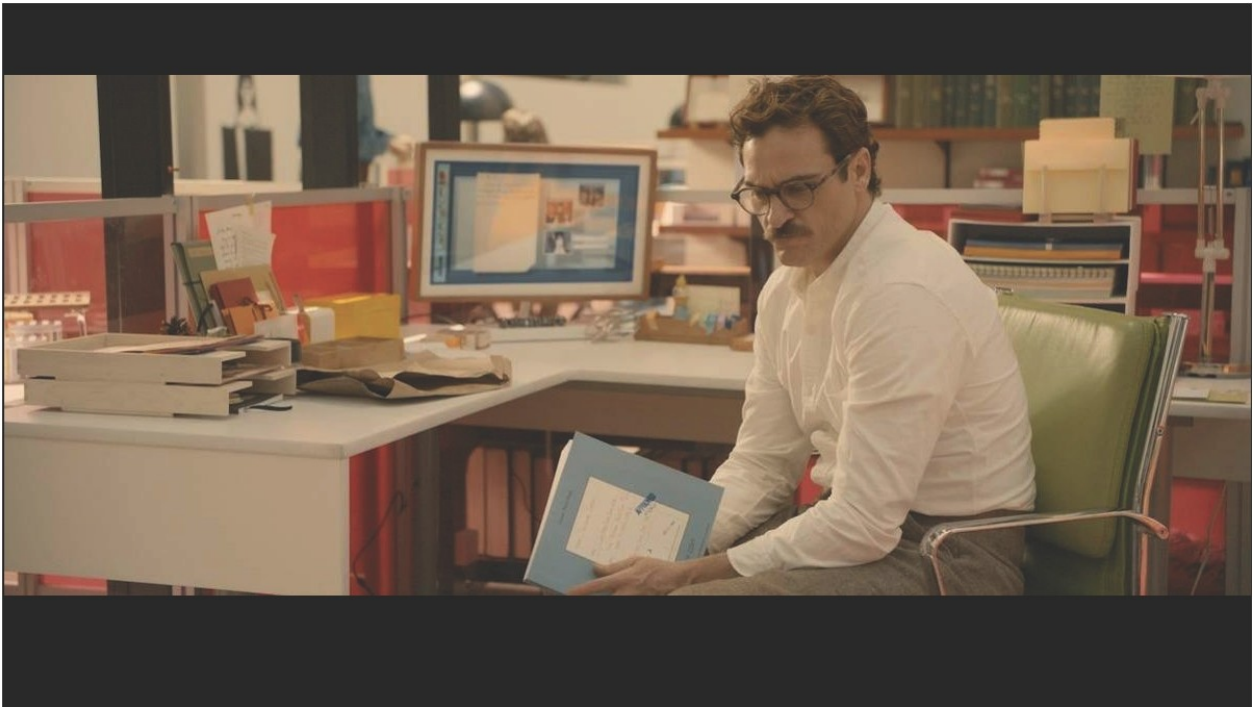
Looking at the future, today

from Digital Trends

<http://www.digitaltrends.com/mobile/spike-jonze-her-future/#/10>









Appendix 5

Early design meeting notes

Dead Man's Cell Phone – Winter 319

Director: John Brunner

Stage Manager: Issey Blatt

Projection Meeting/Design Meeting 1

October 21, 2014

12pm – 1:30pm

Present:

Director: John Brunner

Stage Manager: Issey Blatt

Projection Designer: Sven Ortel

Advisor: Anjalee Hutchinson

Costume Designer: Emmy LaFriniere

Set Designer: Elaine Williams

Prop Technical Assistant: Jamie Jablonsmki

Absent:

Set Designer: Brett Walter

Technical Director: Mark Hutchinson

Lighting and Sound Design: Heath Hansum

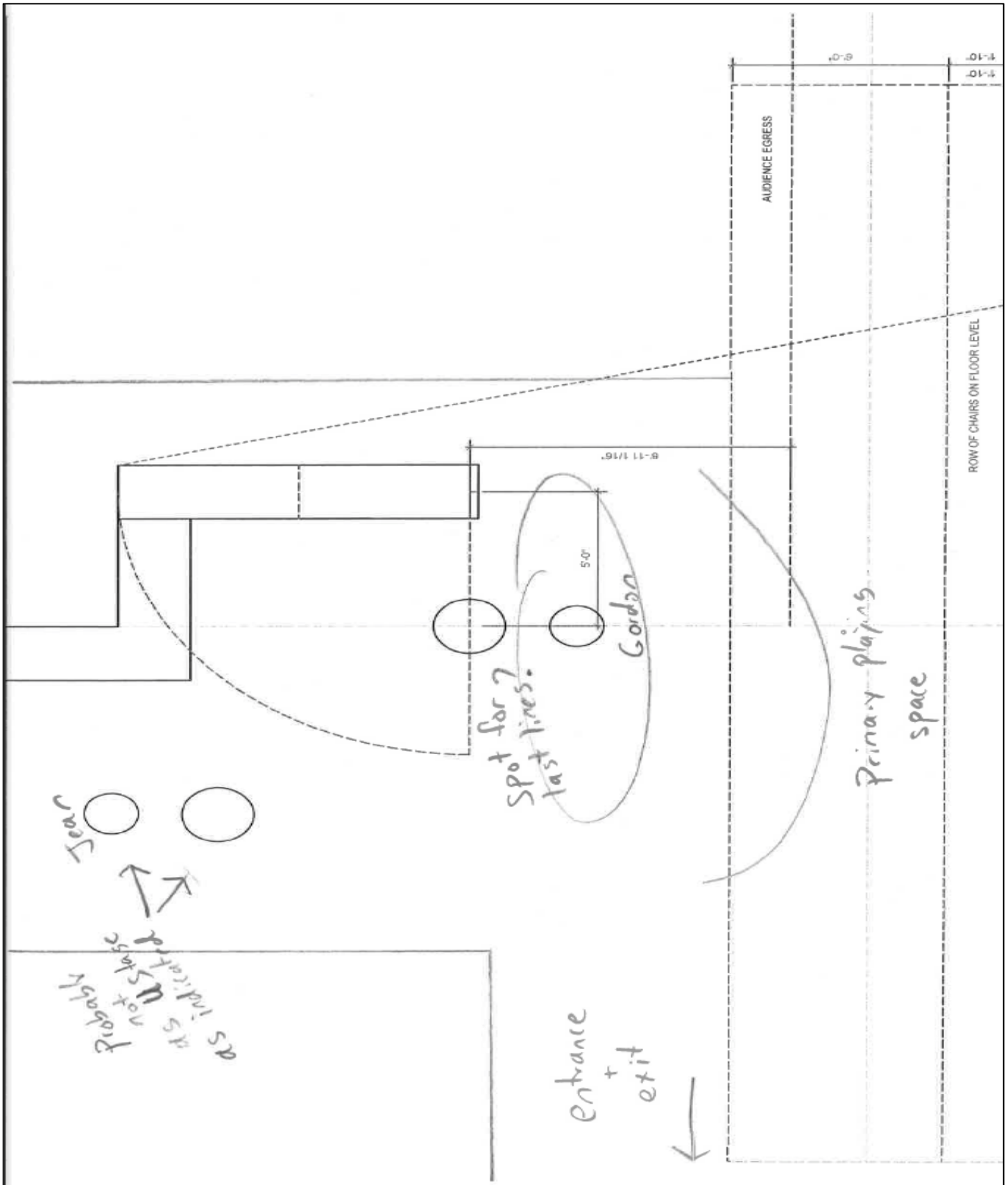
Meeting Minutes:

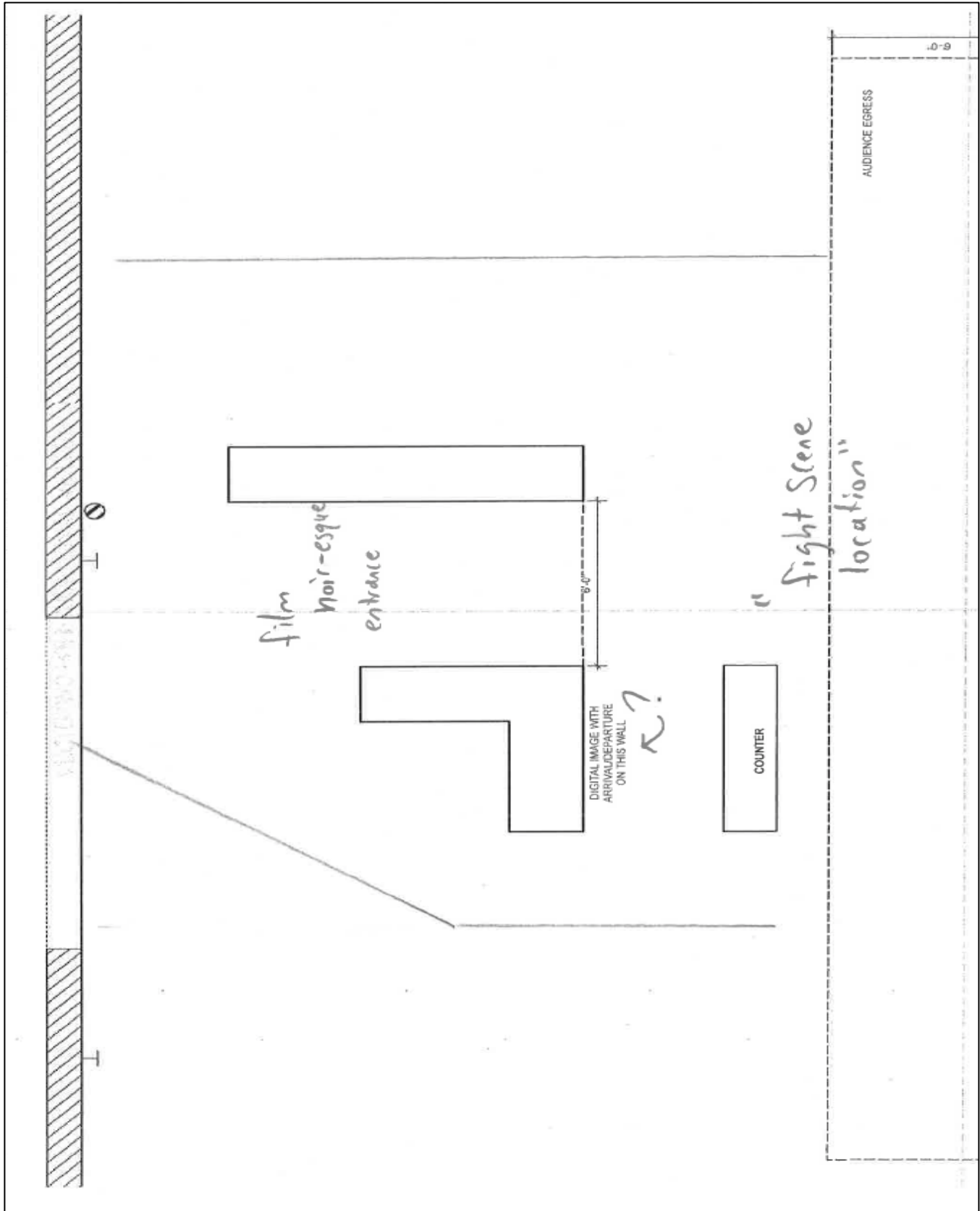
- 1) Introductions
- 2) Discussion about how would like as much done regarding set prior to winter break because Elaine will be away for the month of January;
 - a. Jamie, Brett, and Allison will take over for the month.
- 3) Google Drive Information
 - a. All designer have access
 - b. Revised copy of proposal, including schedule for this semester/next semester
 - i. Note that we be returning the Sunday before classes begin
 1. Housing/logistics need to be looked into
- 4) Spine of the Show
 - a. “Modern communication profoundly isolates and unites humanity”
 - b. Role of technology
 - i. Relationship to Bucknell – “Bucknell Bubble” and idea of surface-level conversations and friendships
 - ii. Potential message of the show about how technology defines relationships
 - c. Traditional ideas on relationships and new ideas coming together
- 5) Inspirations
 - a. Movie *Her*
 - i. Explores how technology has changed relationships

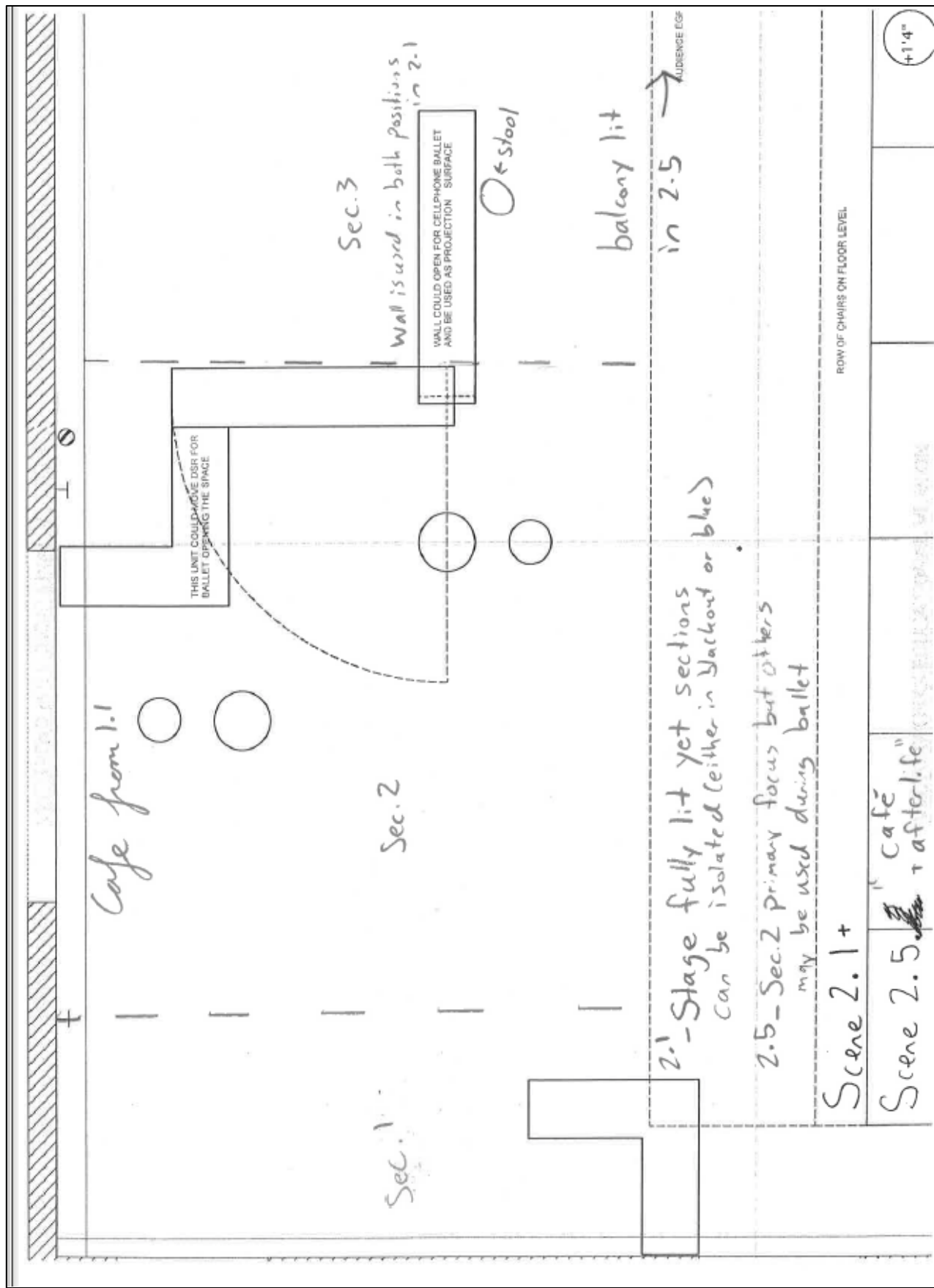
- ii. Design influence
 - 1. Future but tangible future, anywhere from a week away to 15 years
 - 2. Costume design: retro futurism? Also great slight whimsical nature
 - 3. Set design: fro-yo place, stream line and simple but also retro influence
 - b. Edward Hopper
 - i. Mentioned by Ruhl
 - 1. Reflections of specific scenes and general feel
 - ii. Design: jumping point for color, shadow, and light (quality of light)
 - iii. Life in isolation, loneliness in social life/a city
- 6) Why projection?
 - a. Flow and not much clutter on stage, so set should be simplistic and defined
 - b. Projection to help with flow, poetic with the way the piece moves
 - c. Projection as reflection of new technology position
 - d. While studying abroad saw piece by the Jabberwock Company and liked how it integrated projection.
 - i. Projection on the floor
 - ii. Shapes defining acting areas and moving spaces
- 7) Discussion of Potential Projection
 - a. What role should it play?
 - i. Conscious use of technology, deliberateness instead of pure integration
 - b. Use of projection before final, workshop in early stages
 - i. Inform how piece is looked at and direction of potential movement
 - ii. Could do a workshop during the days we are back early
 - c. Shape vocabulary, relation to scenic environment
 - i. What vertical surfaces will be used?
 - ii. Shapes tied to visual things
 - 1. i.e. wall moving and floor projection moves to signify space change
 - 2. connections
 - d. Visibility and sight lines
 - i. Tustin
 - e. What if not just the light moves?
 - i. Any things possible mentality
 - ii. Shows flexibility and flow
 - iii. Sketches to see what this could actually look like
- 8) Suggestions to John
 - a. As doing analysis, note potential points when would want something
 - b. Story boarding it/modeling
 - c. Discussion on Hopper with Elaine
 - d. Do we see the physical space of the theater?
 - i. More aware then not but needs to think about more
 - ii. Shaped completely by space? v. void?
 - iii. Balcony doors used
 - iv. Exploit space to the fullest?
 - e. What are you trying to say and how?
- 9) Sven's role
 - a. Advisor to Noah?
 - i. Process made easier

- ii. Allows for experimentation
 - iii. Allow building knowledge base as an institution
 - iv. Can be there in production meeting
 - v. Can have undergrads assistant
- b. Plan B would be for Sven to be managing from afar

Appendix 6 Examples of set designs and pre-blocking







Appendix 7
Costume renderings
Credit to Emmy LaFriniere
Assistant Costumer, Bucknell University

Looks

1.2 → Look as shown w/ hat/veil

1.4 → Add huge fur

1.5 → Same 1.4

Part II

2.5 → red robe?

DEAD MAN'S CELL PHONE

Mrs. Gottlieb

1 Look



- Fur (sm.) collar

- Turtleneck blouse

- Wool suit

RED (tweed?)

- Band w/ darker color

↳ collar similar same

Emmy LaFriniere

Part I

- 1.1 → Coat/hat
- 1.2 → Blue rain coat (weaving?)
- 1.3 → Same
- 1.4 → Cargo coat/dress - Sweater
- 1.5 → Just dress

Jean

Look 1 (base)

- Dress



- Simple pattern (slight, not large)
- Plaid?

- Contrasting collar/cuffs

- ↳ lining ↑
- ↳ 3/4 sleeve - rolled

Side pockets? →

- ↳ Drop waist or natural

Color

- blue/slate grey
- cool

- Ballet flats

Emily Johnson

DEAD MAN'S
CELL PHONE

JEAN



Emily
J. [Signature]

Appendix 8
Costume design Powerpoint examples
Credit to Emmy LaFriniere
Assistant Costumer, Bucknell University

Dead Man's Cellphone
Costume Design

Jean

2 looks

+ Inspiration

Over-all look(s)



Contrasting collar

Add different layers to show passage of time.

Part I Look-base



Smaller pattern

Small, simplistic plaid

Shirt dress

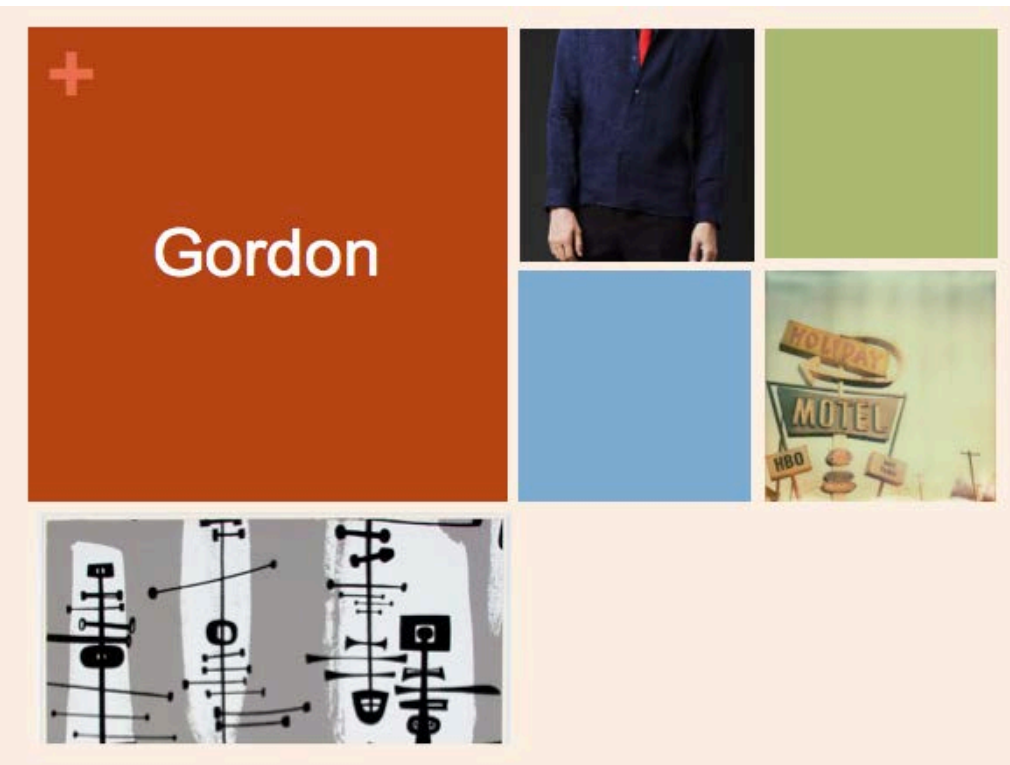
Part II Look



Add cardigan/sweater to differ looks

-Pants
-Blouse/shirt

Gordon





The Department of Theatre and Dance Announces:

Auditions For Dead Man's Cell Phone

By Sarah Ruhl

Directed by John Brunner, '15

Sunday November 9th and Monday
November 10th, 2014

No preparation required. All levels of
experience are welcome!

QUESTIONS?
Email Stage Manager
Issey Blatt
At ihb002@bucknell.edu

7-10pm
General Auditions
Tustin Acting Studio

Callbacks will be Tuesday November 11th, 2014
7-10pm

No sign up necessary.

Scripts are available on the Harvey Powers call
board (across from Coleman rm136)

Tustin Black Box
Show dates are February 13th-16th, 2014

Appendix 10
Audition form

Dead Man's Cell Phone Audition Form

NAME _____ CLASS _____ MAJOR _____

EMAIL _____ PHONE _____

BOX# _____ HEIGHT _____ HAIR COLOR _____

Acting Experience/Training (roles recently played, etc.)

Physical Theatre Experience (Dance, mime, stage combat, pratfalls, etc.)

Special Skills (dialects, random talents, etc.)

I understand that rehearsals begin on January 10th and would **require me to return from winter break early**. I would be able to attend these mandatory rehearsals and return to Bucknell on Saturday Jan. 10th

Yes No

If not cast, would you still be interested in being involved with tech for the show?

Yes No

Please turn page over for conflict calendar.

Please “X” out the times of the week you have class or other mandatory obligations on the schedule below. PLEASE BE HONEST WITH YOUR CONFLICTS.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
8-9 AM							
9-10 AM							
10-11 AM							
11-12noon							
12-1 PM							
1-2 PM							
2-3 PM							
3-4 PM							
4-5 PM							
5-6 PM							
6-7 PM							
7-8 PM							
8-9 PM							
9-10 PM							
10-11 PM							

Additional conflicts that *I cannot possibly miss* between January 10th and February 16th (weddings, funerals, your birth, etc.):

Conflicts that I would prefer to go to if possible, but I can miss if necessary:

Please also *circle* any conflict dates on the attached rehearsal calendar.

Audition Agreement

I understand that, upon auditioning for *Dead Man’s Cell Phone*, I was given a rehearsal/performance schedule to consider. I have filled out the above conflict calendar to the best of my knowledge and ability. Should I miss a rehearsal for any reason that is not listed above, I understand that one of two things may happen:

- 1) I may be recast, no matter where we are in the rehearsal process.
- 2) I may not be cast in any other Bucknell Theatre Department production henceforth.

If I have a night class, I understand that it is my responsibility to talk to my professor if cast and be excused from this class during Tech Week and performances.

Signature _____

Date _____

January 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Rehearsal Begins	19	20	21	22	23	24
18						
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

February 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
					Performances	
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Performances						
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

Appendix 11
Callbacks Email

Mon, Nov 10, 2014 at 11:18PM

Good evening everyone!

Thank you so much for coming out last night and tonight for auditions. We had an amazing turnout which made these decisions very difficult. Thank you so much for making the effort! In addition to this email, callbacks will be posted on the callboards in the Coleman green room and in Tustin lobby by tomorrow morning.

To those called back: Congrats! Callbacks will be Tuesday from 7-10pm in Tustin Black Box. We will start promptly at 7 so please be there early and ready to work. We will do our best to get you out as soon as possible but please be prepared to stay to 10 just in case. If for any reason you can't make any part of callbacks, respond ASAP. We really need you there.

To those not receiving a callback: We know this isn't what you want to hear but, honestly, it wasn't you- it was us. We had an extremely large turnout and had to be picky. No one gave a bad audition, we just had to pick very selectively. Please continue to audition for future shows!

Callbacks:**Jean**

Delaney Clark
Bronwyn Barnwell
Gwenn Gideon

Mrs. Gottlieb

Casey Venema
Delaney Clark
Hannah Cordes
Bronwyn Barnwell

Hermia

Zoe Davidson
Emily Mack
Gwenn Gideon

Other Woman/Stranger

Zoe Davidson
Alejandra Fuente Robles
Casey Venema

Gordon

Evan Turissini
Jason Hammett
Tom Murphy

Dwight

Alex Wade
Jason Hammett
Eric Gowat

Again, thank you to everyone!

--

John Brunner

Bucknell University Class of 2015 Theatre and Political Science Major Department of
French TA
Office of Admissions Tour Guide Department of Theatre and Dance TA

Appendix 12

Plans for Callbacks

Opening (5 minutes)

- Explaining how call backs will work
 - Cold readings in group and monologues
 - Actors can leave as soon as I've seen what I needed to see
 - Remind them that just because you are not asked to stay to the end, it doesn't mean anything
 - This is not a competition but a supportive environment
 - Clap for each other
 - Everyone will watch everyone else
- My goals for the night
 - Find the right pairings. I truly believe you could all play the roles that you have been called back for. So tonight is just a way to see what pairings of actors will work best together to form a cast.

Warm-ups (10 mins)

- Vocal
 - Tongue twisters
 - Vowels
 - Breathing
- Movement
 - Walk around the room
 - Trees and stumps?
 - Basic stretches
 - "Go, no, you"

Cold Readings (As long as necessary)

- Start with Jean and Stranger pairings
- Start men with Gordon monologues
- Jean and Dwight monologues
- Jean and Gordon pairings
- Jean and Hermia pairings
- Jean and Gottlieb pairings
- Gottlieb monologues
- Jean monologues?

Appendix 13
Cast List

Dead Man's Cell Phone

By Sarah Ruhl

Directed By John Brunner '15

Cast List

Jean – Delaney Clark

Mrs. Gottlieb – Hannah Cordes

Other Woman/Stranger – Zoe Davidson

Hermia – Gwenn Gideon

Dwight – Alex Wade

Gordon – Jason Hammett

Funeral Vocalist – Emily Mack

Appendix 14
Actor's Agreement

Dead Man's Cell Phone
ACTOR'S AGREEMENT

The following shall serve as an Agreement between _____ and the Production Staff at Bucknell University.

The Division and the Director reserve the right to adjust the rehearsal schedule when necessary. Actors are expected to be available during the hours of 5pm and 9:00 p.m. Sunday through Friday. Rehearsals during daytime hours may also be scheduled around the conflict schedule given on the audition form. These rehearsal times and locations are subject to change and actors will need to make the necessary scheduling adjustments in order to be available at rehearsal. Actors are expected to be in attendance for the duration of each rehearsal unless otherwise indicated. Any rehearsal conflict must be specifically outlined on your audition form and must be approved by the director and stage manager in writing prior to the casting of the show. Should a new conflict arise during the process, it must be cleared by the director before you will be allowed miss rehearsal. Conflicts that are not emergencies and that have not been expressly detailed in your initial conflict sheet will not be accepted. You must also give 24 hour notice to the stage manager. Missing rehearsal without notice and/or due to a conflict that has not been cleared by the director may result in being replaced in the show.

Stage Manager: Issey Blatt (973) 830-7391

COMPANY RULES INCLUDE BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO THE FOLLOWING:

- 1.) You must be on time to all performances, rehearsals, fittings, interviews, photo calls, and to all production-related activities.
- 2.) You must be appropriately dressed for rehearsals.
- 3.) You must have the script memorized prior to the rehearsal indicated by the director and/or stage manager.
- 4.) You must be thoroughly warmed up, vocally and physically, prior to rehearsals/shows and perform the play as directed and written to the best of your ability.
- 5.) You must have choreography and dialect/pronunciation mastered by the rehearsal indicated by the choreographer, vocal/dialect coach and director.
- 6.) You must refrain from directing, coaching or advising other actors during the rehearsal and performance process.
- 7.) You must properly care for all costumes and props.
- 8.) You may be required to cut or dye your hair to fulfill the requirements of a role.
- 9.) You are required to be available for publicity photos.
- 10.) You must not alter your physical appearance in any of the following ways without permission from the Director and Designer: cutting, coloring or chemically altering hair, tanning, piercing or tattooing gaining or losing weight to a degree that necessitates costume alteration. **INITIAL HERE:** _____
- 11.) You must respect the physical property of the production and theatre and abide by all rules

and regulations of the Bucknell University. Any absences, lateness, or failure to come to rehearsal prepared will be noted and reported to the director and may affect your standing in the show.

During Rehearsal/Performance:

- Once you have signed in, do not leave the rehearsal or performance space without consulting the stage manager/assistant stage manager.
- Never sign in for another actor or crew member.
- No computers, cell phones, iPods or any other electronic devices in the rehearsal space except for the director and stage management.
- Computers may be used in the green room during break only. If waiting for time on stage, work on play or engage with other ensemble members in person. Stage management will not be online unless on break.
- Quiet must be maintained in the rehearsal and performance spaces; this includes any backstage areas.
- The cast and crew of a show are responsible for the cleanliness of the spaces they are using: rehearsal, performance, dressing rooms, closets and bathrooms.
- Props will be preset before rehearsals and performances. No prop should be moved before it is needed onstage. It is also the actor's responsibility to check personal props and costumes prior to rehearsal and performance.
- Props should be returned to their assigned space after use.
- Costumes should be hung up carefully and immediately after use.
- Any damage to props or costumes should be reported to the stage manager.
- Please check the callboard daily and "initial" notices when requested.
- Smoking is not permitted in any of the indoor spaces.
- There will be no food or drink (except bottled water) in the rehearsal space. Food and drink other than water is only allowed in the green room.
- Smoking, eating, or drinking (anything but water) while in costume is not permitted.
- You must laugh at least once during every rehearsal and make other members of the production laugh as well. You will have fun! **INITIAL HERE:**_____

ACTORS ARE EXPECTED TO WORK COLLABORATIVELY AND GENEROUSLY WITH EVERY MEMBER OF THE PRODUCTION TEAM.

EVERYONE INVOLVED IN A PRODUCTION MUST BE RESPECTED.

AGREED AND ACCEPTED:

_____ on _____
(Signature) *(Date)*

(Printed Name)

Appendix 15
Scene score

Part 1

Scene 1.1	The cafe	pg. 11-14	In the opening scene we meet Jean and Gordon in their cafe. Gordon is already dead and Jane discovers this and his cell phone. She answers his phone, takes a message, and then proceeds to call an ambulance and leave, still in possession of his phone.
Scene 1.2	Gordon's Funeral	pg. 15-17	We are in a Catholic mass in a large cathedral. Mrs. Gottlieb gives an energetic eulogy that is more a rant than prewritten delivery. She curses a lot. She begins to allude to problems and interferences caused by cell phones. Jean receives a mysterious phone call and agrees to meet the caller at a cafe.
Scene 1.3	Gordon's Other Woman	pg. 18-21	A cafe, different than the last one. The other woman was a mistress of Gordon's. She is the only one we learn of but she is likely one of several. The other woman is bold and confident, she easily overshadows Jean's timidity. They put on lipstick together, something Jean is not good at, reinforcing her weak self-confidence. She misses Gordon and assumes Jean was another mistress of his. She is sad that he has died. Mrs. Gottlieb calls and Jean agrees to meet her at her house. The Other Woman wishes Jean good luck.
Scene 1.4	Gordon's Mother	pg. 22-25	A house that "smells of dry cracked curtains." Mrs. Gottlieb expresses her grief for her son. She is a very bold woman as well. She will mourn him for the rest of her life. She inquires both about his phone and Jean's life. Jean tells her that she and Gordon worked together (a confabulation) which apparently explains Jean's lack of children, although we still don't know what he really did. Mrs. Gottlieb invites Jean over for dinner, for lots of steak, and Jean reluctantly accepts.
Scene 1.5	Dinner at the Gottlieb's	pg. 26-30	In the dining room of Mrs. Gottlieb's house, although later that same day. Harriet and Dwight are there. Everyone is in black except for Mrs. Gottlieb who is in a bright red. An important

			contrast. Jean gets the hiccups but Dwight helps her recover. Mrs. Gottlieb and Hermia share a moment. They can be sad together for Gordon's death. It is the first time they've ever had something in common and one of the first times Mrs. Gottlieb has said something nice to Hermia. The dinner is awkward. Jane shares "gifts" that Gordon left his family (a confabulation). Salt for Hermia, a cup for Dwight, and a spoon for his mother "because of your cooking". This upsets and angers Mrs. Gottlieb and she leaves the table with Dwight following close behind. The dinner is over. Mrs. Gottlieb returns and asks Jean to leave but Dwight convinces her to lie down and to let Jean stay. She does, but reluctantly.
Scene 1.5.2	Jean and Gordon meet	pg. 30-34	Dwight and Jean are alone after the dinner. He gets her caramel popcorn, all there is to eat since she reveals she is vegetarian. Jean tells Dwight that she has left working at Gordon's company and has returned to her "old" job at the Holocaust Museum. They discuss the importance of memories and disconnect memories have with technology. They decide to go to get food eat and then to visit the stationery store where Dwight works. They leave as we hear Mrs. Gottlieb crying.
Scene 1.6	The Stationary Closet	pg. 35-38	Jean and Dwight are in the stationary supply store closet, feeling the paper. They appreciate each piece. Jean reveals she has never had a cell phone as she doesn't always want to be there. But she enjoys having Gordon's. She wants to keep him alive. Dwight reveals he was not the favorite child and often felt beneath Gordon. He braids her hair, he does it wrong but it's still nice. The phone rings but, for once, Jean ignores it. They kiss as embossed stationery flies around. Gordon walks on stage and opens his mouth. Blackout.

Part 2

Scene 2.1	Gordon speaks	pg. 39-42	Gordon details for us the final day in his life. We learn that he is an organ trafficker and he is responsible for paying individuals for their organs so he can sell them to persons in need. He makes
------------------	---------------	-----------	---

			a lot of money. He doesn't love his wife but he doesn't dislike. He is just more important. He expresses a belief that people in transit are disconnected with their souls. He explains that on his last day he wanted a bowl of lobster bisque so he went to a cafe. They had just sold their last bowl- to Jean. He instead takes the lentil soup only to have a heart attack and die. He thinks about calling someone he loves but he can't make up his mind before it's too late. The scene ends in the cafe where Part 1 took off.
Scene 2.2	A love haze	pg. 43-45	Dwight and Jean again in the stationary closet. They are in love. They decided their password will be the letter 'Z' so they can always find each other. The phone rings and Jean answers it despite Dwight's requests against it. It's one of Gordon's co-workers. Dwight forbids her from speaking to them again and attempts to take the phone away. She instead answers it when it rings a second time- Hermia is calling for a ride home.
Scene 2.3	A drink with Hermia	pg. 46-50	Jean and Hermia at a bar. Hermia is drunk and they are drinking cosmos. Hermia reveals info about her and Gordon's sex lives. They were never mentally present when sleeping together. Both fantasized about being with others. They were unhappy. Jean tells Hermia that Gordon wrote her a letter before he died (confabulation). She lost it but she tells her he wanted to express his love for her despite their emotional separation. Hermia is in love again. She reveals that Gordon was in organ trafficking, which shocks Jean. The phone rings. It's a co-worker again- Jean is instructed to go to South Africa for a Kidney she leaves as Hermia asks her if she owns a gun.
Scene 2.4	The Stranger in Johannesburg	pg. 51-52	Jean and the Stranger meet in the Johannesburg airport. Jean tries to convince the stranger to take her kidney. This fails and the stranger tries to take Gordon's phone. They fight and Jean is knocked out. The Stranger has the phone.
Scene 2.5	The cafe again	pg. 53-58	Jean and Gordon are back in the cafe. Gordon reveals they are in his pipeline. Reserved for him and whoever loved him most. Jean quickly realizes she doesn't like Gordon. He tries to show how they are equals but she denies it, now free from the

			power of his phone. Jean tries to figure out why they are dead together, they kiss but it is strange. They can listen to cellphones here and a ballet ensues until Mrs. Gottlieb interrupts it. Gordon realizes she is upset and that she loves him best. Gordon disappears into a different pipeline. Jean is alone until she calls out Z.
Scene 2.5.2	Jean and Dwight reunited	pg. 58-59	Dwight and Jean are reunited. He has found her in the Johannesburg Airport. He professes his love for her and they are reunited, stronger than before.
Scene 2.6	Loved ones reunited	pg. 60-63	Back at Mrs. Gottlieb's house. They explain the situation to her and she explains Hermia has ran off to return to her love, the ice follies. Jean is hungry and asks for a rare steak, like Mrs. Gottlieb. Jean reveals that she has met with Gordon and he is alone, waiting for his mother. Overcome with passion for her favorite son, Mrs. Gottlieb immolates herself to be reunited. This is oddly happy. Jean and Dwight are alone again, in love and determined to be so forever. Their love will be different, more tangible. They kiss. We end.

Appendix 16
Rehearsal blocks

<i>Dead Man's Cell Phone</i> Rehearsal Blocks

BLOCK A

Called: Clark, Davidson, Hammett

Scenes: 1.1, 1.3, 2.4

BLOCK B

Called: Clark, Wade, Hammett

Scenes: 1.5.2, 1.6, 2.2, 2.5.2

BLOCK C

Called: Clark, Cordes, Hammett, Gideon, Wade, Mack, Hammett

Scenes: 1.5, 2.5, 2.6

BLOCK D

Called: Clark, Cordes, Gideon, Hammett, Mack

Scenes: 1.2, 1.4, 2.1, 2.3

Appendix 17
Rehearsal calendar

Dead Man's Cell Phone Rehearsal Calendar (Tentative)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Sat.
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Workshop Rehearsal ALL CALLED	Workshop Rehearsal ALL CALLED	Workshop Rehearsal ALL	Rehearsal Block A 5:30-8:30pm	Rehearsal Block B 5:30-8:30pm	Rehearsal Block C 5:30-8:30pm	17
Rehearsal Block D 6:30-9:30pm	Rehearsal Block A 5:30-8:30pm	Rehearsal Block C 5:30-8:30pm	Rehearsal Block B 5:30-8:30pm	Rehearsal Block D 5:30-8:30pm	Full Run All Called 5:30-9pm	24
Rehearsal Block A 6:30-9:30pm	Rehearsal Block D 5:30-8:30pm	Rehearsal Block C 5:30-8:30pm	Rehearsal Block B 5:30-8:30pm	Rehearsal Trouble Shoot Call TBD 5:30-8:30pm	No rehearsal FIRST NIGHT 30	31 Rehearsal CALL TBD
Rehearsal Part I All Called 6:30-9:30pm	Rehearsal Part II All Called 5:30-8:30pm	Rehearsal Part I All Called 5:30-8:30pm	Rehearsal Part II All Called 5:30-8:30pm	Rehearsal Trouble Shoot Call TBD 5:30-8:30pm	Full Run All Called 5:30-9pm	7 Tech Call and Time TBD
Tech All Called Time TBD	Dress Rehearsal 6:30-10pm	Dress Rehearsal 6:30-10pm	Dress Rehearsal 6:30-10pm	Dress Rehearsal 6:30-10pm	Opening Night 13	14 Show and talkback
15 Show and photo call	16 Show and strike				Updated 1/13/15	

J a n u a r y

F e b r u a r y

Appendix 18
Contact sheet

<i>Dead Man's Cell Phone – Contact Sheet</i>
Winter 2015 Bucknell University

Name		Phone Number	Email (@bucknell.edu)
Cast Members			
Jason Hammett	Gordon	973-879-5580	jah075
Gwenn Gideon	Hermia	845-702-0862	gdg007
Delaney Clark	Jean	216-577-3519	dmc057
Zoe Davidson	Other Woman/Stranger	216-392-8333	zrd001
Hannah Cordes	Mrs. Gottlieb	401-829-5034	hnc002
Alex Wade	Dwight	425-205-3227	adw011
Emily Mack	Funeral Vocalist	518-339-3734	eem012
Production Team			
John Brunner	Director	479-644-2324	jpb044
Issey (Isabel) Blatt	Stage Manager	973-830-7391	ihb002
Brendon Trybus	Assistant Stage Manager	814-937-8865	bet006
Reid McLain	Assistant Stage Manager	201-572-5987	rjm059

Appendix 19
Workshop itinerary

Dead Man's Cell Phone

January Workshop Itinerary

All workshops will be held in Tustin Acting Studio. Wear clothes that you can move in. Also, bring a water bottle, something to write with, something to write in, and a snack. All times and calls are subject to change if need be.

Sunday 11 January 2015

9am-4:30pm (Lunch from 12-1:30pm)

ALL CALLED

Workshop I and ensemble building

7:30pm

Movie Night

Location TBD

Monday 12 January 2015

10:30am-4pm

Call: Cordes, Hammett, Gideon

Monologue workshops

Tuesday 13 January 2015

1pm-5pm

ALL CALLED

Workshop II and ensemble building

Appendix 20
Workshop agenda
Example from day 1

- 1. Talk/Expectations** (20 minutes)
- 2. Stretch** (15 minutes)
- 3. Name ball** (10 minutes)
- 4. Meditation** (15 minutes)
- 5. Play** (15 minutes)
 - a. By oneself**
 - i. One part at a time, what needs to stretch
 - ii. Making a game out of it
 - iii. Add sound, no words
 - b. With a partner**
 - i. Share game with a sound
 - ii. Try to learn/win
 - iii. Switch
 - iv. Make a sound to connect the two
 - c. With the whole group**
 - d. Friend/enemy game**
 - i. Keep away
 - ii. Friend in-between
- 6. Vocal Warm-ups** (10 minutes)
 - a. Tongue twisters
 - b. Vowels
 - c. Lips and tongue
 - d. Projection exercises
- 7. Group Activities** (20 minutes)
 - a. Memory Book** (15 minutes)
 - i. Favorite Actor
 - ii. Favorite Food
 - iii. Vacation Destination
 - iv. Favorite Book
 - b. Counting Circle** (5 minutes)
 - i. Count as group

8. Go circle (20 minutes)

(Where do these dynamics appear in the play? What are the feelings of this piece?)

- a. No
- b. You
- c. Anybody
- d. Fire
- e. Cocktail Party
- f. Toss in
- g. Bison Stampede
- h. 5,4,3,2,1
- i. "musical" chairs
 - i. All sit except for one person
 - ii. One person tries to sit while the others switch chairs
 - iii. (In Go game, add chairs until one still standing and suspend into it

Themes/dynamics Play

- Go circle
- Putting this dynamic in our bodies
- How does this moment in the play relate to the game?
- Play at levels 60% actor/ 40% character
- i.e. What animal does this remind you of? What's the opposite?

Character

- How to understand the character's POV rather than actor's POV
- Love, hate, hope, fear, laugh, good at
- Figuring out how I relate to them as a director
- End of play: what do you relate to more now? (Educational-ish)
- Two ways of standing (Positive/negative extremes)
- How does this change gesture, voice
- Playing min/max

Relationship

- Layer characters with their two ways

World**Story****Trust**

- Eyes closed, leading the other with forearm connecting
- Play with levels

- Swap roles
- Swap partner (blind stay blind)

Object Game

- Person who has object (phone) your connected to by puppet strings
- How does it affect people?

Puppeting

- One person is puppet and other is puppeteer
- Puppet by sound (moving from inside out, not reacting)

Roller Coaster-ing a Scene

- With a partner from the scene
- Or with a monologue
 - o Find X-number moments
- Cause and effect
- Goal is to embody language and find the track between words/sentences/moments

Ideas for Tuesday

Rope to demonstrate relationships

- Makes it tangible
- Shows the importance of space between actors
- Step towards/ step back
- Finding blocking through relationship (not where they think they should go)

Monologues

- Head (stick), heart (veil), gut (ball)
 - o Say it three times
 - o Say it with partner calling a location
 - o Say it alone with self switching
 - Amp-up
- Man on subway, priest, butcher
- Roller Coaster

THINGS TO SAY

- This is physical table work. Exploring ideas, themes, content.

- This is pre-blocking, A-Z that isn't defined
- Always ask how does this relate the play? How are you relating this?
- THIS ISN'T SEPARATE, THIS IS VOCAB BUILDING FOR REHEARSAL
- BUT IT WILL BUILD QUICKLY
- HOW DID TODAY RELATE TO THE PRE-WORKSHOP? (to ask later on and pull back material)
- How does this remind you of what we did in masks?

Questions for me

What are my (3) questions? What am I looking to learn and how can I get us there?

- Specific character questions

- Past, present or future

- Narrative based questions (I want to learn more about...rather than an objective question)

Appendix 21
Character Worksheet

Dead Man's Cell Phone

Character Worksheet

Please have this completed BEFORE our first workshop on January 11th. Print a copy and fill out your answers by hand (don't type). Be ready to hand this in to me. These may or not be shared with the cast. Don't stress about this assignment but do take sometime to think it through. Have fun with it and know that there are no wrong answers!

Character's name: _____

Approximate age: _____

Place of birth: _____

Place of death: _____

Favorite TV show/movie: _____

Favorite book: _____

Favorite color: _____

Favorite sport: _____

Favorite place to relax: _____

Favorite alcoholic drink: _____

Favorite sandwich topping(s): _____

Least favorite TV show/movie: _____

Least favorite book: _____

Least favorite color: _____

Name five unique or unusual things found in his or her bedroom:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Name three confabulations they've told (outside of this plot):

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Name three sounds he or she loves AND three he or she hates:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Name five non-physical qualities he or she looks for in a romantic partner:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

What is his or her most [vivid, profound, prolific, impactful] childhood memory:

Anything else we should know about your character:

Appendix 22
Examples of rehearsal reports
(As taken by stage manager Isabel Blatt '16)

Dead Man's Cell Phone
 Director: John Brunner
 Stage Manager: Isabel (Issey) Blatt
 Winter 2015 Bucknell University
REHEARSAL #5

Monday, January 19, 2015

Called: *Jason Hammett, Delaney Clark, Zoe Davidson*

Late: None

Absent: None

Start Time: 5:35pm

Break:

End Time:

Accident/Injuries:

Designers Present:

N/A

Guests: N/A

Rehearsal Plan Date		
Time	What	Who
5:35-5:50pm	Warm-ups	ALL
5:50-6:30pm	Scene 1.1	Clark, Hammett
6:30-6:35pm	Break	ALL
6:35-7:50pm	Scene 1.3	Clark, Davidson
7:50-8:00pm	Break	ALL
8:00-8:23pm	Scene 2.4	Clark, Davidson

Plans for Next Rehearsal January 20, 2015	
What	Who
Block C	Delaney Clark, Hannah Cordes, Gwenn Gideon, Emily Mack, Alex Wade, Jason Hammett

Notes:

General

- We have started to plan out transitions
- Friday's run will begin at 7pm

Actors

Director – John Brunner <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Need to find out how to sign “Are you deaf?”
Stage Manager
Scenery
Props <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Chalk cigarettes- Trays to carry props off in 1.1
Costumes and Make-up/hair
Sound
Lighting
Public Relations and Marketing N/A

Dead Man's Cell Phone

Director: John Brunner
 Stage Manager: Isabel (Issey) Blatt
 Winter 2015 Bucknell University
REHEARSAL #20

Friday, February 06, 2015

Called: Jason Hammett, Alex Wade, Gwenn Gideon, Delaney Clark, Hannah Cordes, Emily Mack, Zoe Davidson

Late: Emily Mack (5:34pm)

Absent: Reid McLain

Start Time: 5:30pm

Break: 6:50pm, 8:11pm

End Time:

Accident/Injuries: none

Designers Present:

None

Guests: None

Rehearsal Plan February 6, 2015		
Time	What	Who
5:30-5:44pm	Warm-Ups	ALL
5:44-6:20pm	Scene 1.6	Delaney Clark, Jason Hammett, Alex Wade
6:20-6:50pm	Scene 1.3	Zoe Davidson, Delaney Clark
6:50-7:10pm	Set for Play/Break/Fight Call/Trees and Stumps	ALL
7:10-9:08pm	Run (with slight corrections throughout)	ALL
9:08-	Notes	ALL

Plans for Next Rehearsal February 7, 2015	
What	Who
Dry Tech	SM, ASMs, Lights, Sound, Director

Notes:**General**

- Run time was 1 hour and 53 minutes with a 4 minute intermission and a couple stops/corrections)
- Dancers call time will be 8:30

Actors

Director – John Brunner
Stage Manager <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Get cue script ready- Make better color coded floorplans- Determine where backstage lights need to be- Get space prepped for tomorrow.
Scenery <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Emily need something to sit on the church
Props <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Compact broken at hinge- Gum for Other Woman- Is it possible for other woman to have lipstick that doesn't need to be twisted up?
Costumes and Make-up/hair <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Zoe (as Other Woman) needs a bag (size and shape similar to Delaney's- Can we see about muffling the sound of Hannah's shoes somehow? They are very loud.
Sound
Lighting
Public Relations and Marketing

Appendix 23

Props list

Prop	Scene
cell phone #1	1.1 1.3 2.4 1.6 2.2 2.5.2 2.5.1 2.3 2.1
cell phone #2	1.3 2.4 2.1
coffee cup #1	1.1 1.5 2.5.1 2.1
coffee cup #2	1.1 2.5.1
Napkin #1	1.1 2.5.1 2.1
Napkin #2	1.1 2.5.1 2.1
bowl #1	1.1 2.5.1 2.1
bowl #2	1.1 2.5.1 2.1
pen #1	1.1 2.5.1 2.1
pen #2	1.1 2.5.1 2.1
menu #1	1.3
menu #2	1.3
leather gloves	1.3
lipstick	1.3
clutch	1.3
Starbucks coffee cup	1.3
compact	1.3
cigarette	1.3
Thank you note	1.1 2.5.1 2.1
kidney shaped lamp (multiple)	2.4
gun	2.4
money bag	2.4
suitcase	2.4 2.5.2
stacks of paper	1.6
caramel popcorn	1.5.2
place cards (4)	1.5
cloth napkins (4)	1.5
water glasses (4)	1.5
pitcher	1.5
serving platter	1.5
knife for carving meat	1.5
salt shaker	1.5
New York Times	2.1
Brief Case	1.1, 1.6, 2.1, 2.5
spoon	1.5 2.1

bourbon cup	2.6	1.4
martini glass (2)	2.3	
wallet with 100 dollar bill	2.1	
bowl #3	2.1	
2 Trays		
ash tray	1.3	
umbrella x 6	2.1	

Appendix 24
Example of production meeting minutes
(As taken by stage manager Isabel Blatt '16)

Dead Man's Cell Phone
PRODUCTION MEETING MINUTES

Date: February 6, 2015

Began: 1:05pm

Ended: 1:22pm

In attendance: John Brunner, Issey Blatt, Heath Hansum, Elaine Williams, Emmy LaFriniere, Mark Hutchinson, Brendan Trybus, Pam Miller, Allison Freidlander

- I. Announcements to All
 - a. Run today GO at 7pm
 - b. Tech breakdown being sent out ASAP but tech begins tomorrow

- II. Set
 - a. Walls being finished today
 - i. May get some more layering in Monday
 - b. Discussion of Paper Lanterns in Stationary Story
 - c. Lanterns being brought to theater
 - d. Furniture
 - i. Dining room chairs being brought down

- III. Costumes
 - a. Will be using Delaney's bag for the show
 - b. Need a dresser
 - c. Tutu for Hermia

- IV. Movement
 - a. Dancers need call time 8:30pm
 - b. Coming at noon on Sunday for Q2Q

- V. Props
 - a. Dining room table cloth bought and dressings in process
 - b. Tea for brandy
 - c. Buy popcorn
 - d. Café table clothes
 - e. Origami houses being made Monday

- f. Kidney shaped lamp is a lava lamp
- g. John picking which gun for Zoe

Appendix 25
Example of director's rehearsal notes
Dress week

Run Notes 2.8.2015

1.1

- Delaney: Must speed up/shorten the time between the phone starting to ring and you answering it
- Delaney: Make the exit to look at street signs a beat longer

1.2

- Hannah and Emily: When Jean's phone rings during the eulogy, notice right away to help the audience
- Hannah: Beat before "Let's have a hymn, father?"

1.3

- Delaney: Faster entrance, be entering as lights come to full
- Zoe: Clean it up now, as best as you can
 - Find where your purse needs to be and when (I know you don't have your real prop yet)
- Zoe: Find the beginning, middle, end of "he said...he...loved...me"
- Zoe: Slower "exit" after What a Shit
- Delaney: Slower stand there^

1.4

- Delaney: Find beginning, middle end of "...died" to Hannah
- Delaney: Beat before "I'm so sorry..."
- Hannah: Don't wait for Emily before you start speaking when she comes for glass
- Hannah: Give us "something" on the word "metaphysical"

1.5

- Everyone: The chairs squeak when they drag on the floor, even the smallest amount. We'll try to get something on them to fix that but still be really conscious of it. If you can pick it up and then move, do it.
- Alex and Emily: Acknowledge each other on Alex's entrance
- Hannah: Tuck in your chair on entrance!! Gwenn needs to pass clearly by
- Gwenn: "Gordon used to sit there" → It's feeling a little off? Can you try it differently? Maybe give more of a pause before?
- Delaney: Response to Dwight's burbon trick is more of an "Ok?" than "Ok!"
- Hannah: "...dead" when speaking to Hermia → give us a beat before it (not easy for you to say)
- Hannah: Watch talking over your chair squeak when standing during Dwight story

- Hannah: "A hiccup?" → we lost it
- Alex: "Wow" is up to us
- Hannah: "Always wanted" is to us

1.5.2

- Alex: At the very beginning of your convo once you sit with the popcorn, make sure you're looking at her and not over her head
 - In general, talk to her more and less to us, be more aware of when and WHY you are talking to us

1.5.2 Con't.

- Delaney: Look at Alex until your line about "maybe the air remembers..."
- Alex and Delaney: What's your motivation to sit back down during the talk about paper? Maybe get excited more? Alex try crossing during her line after "I work in a stationary store"
- Delaney: Watch looking out after "send invites" → try looking out where Hannah exits
- Alex: Slow down zucchini offering and response "great" → actually hear her and respond
- Hannah: Don't be in curtain crack before cry, we can see you
- Hannah: The cry has to be louder, if you were just protecting voice then that's ok but if you don't feel comfortable going louder, see if someone else off stage want's to give it a try. Let me know.

TRANSITION:

- Brendan: Exit Stage left, don't cross through stationary store in blue

1.6

- Alex: Watch lengths of look out to us during braiding, you need to make them significant and motivated. Also, you've never braided hair before so you would probably need to really focus on it when doing it.
- Alex: Look at her hair after your cross and before you say "pretty good"
- Everyone: Thank you for your patience tonight with the end, we'll continue to find it

ACT II

2.1

- Jason: Pause between "Where are all the phone booths..." and "...all dead..." lines
- Jason: Don't move until after you say "a tomb for people's eyes", we need to give Brendan time
- Jason: Are we ok with the Chinese being in English or would you still like to learn it? Let me know, I need you to talk to Er-Dong ASAP if you are going to learn it.
- Jason: During the lentil soup bit, avoid looking at table for too long. You need to stay with us. When you do look at it, it will help if you make a gesture to it with your hand so we look at bowl and so we don't think you're just staring at the table.

- Jason: "Wife's not supposed to know..." Give us something more, it's important we learn that
- Jason: If you're going to talk to the front row during Dwight bit, make it clear but not intrusive or too close. Use your hands.

2.2

- Both: This is the best it's ever looked! (2x points if you get the joke reference)
- Alex: Don't throat clear when prepping to say Jean come here, or at least don't do it on her Catholic joke
- Delaney: React more to "It'll make me said" listen to him and find the B,M,End

2.3

- Delaney: Don't anticipate "come"
- Gwenn: Make the missed call more clear physically (let us see you "hit" the button more so Issey has a cue to stop the ring)
- Gwenn: Don't lose "Rome" on the first time → have fun with it
- Gwenn: When she's re-seating you, be aware of turning your face US or down to the floor
- Gwenn: Discover more the "O R G no D and God in the middle" lines
- Delaney: Overall listen more to Gwenn on all of the Organ lines (don't get too lost in your shock but still make it clear)

2.4

- We talked through most of it tonight, we should have (lava?) lamp soon

2.5

- Jason: Brillo pad needs to end differently. Hands?
- Delaney: Always cheat out to us. This is scene is tough for you in regards to that but you can't forget it. Ever.
- Jason: "Organ Donor" lines → Don't turn over your shoulder to her as much, stay out to us and all of us
- Delaney: Don't anticipate post- kiss awkwardness or his line
- Jason: Give "Aw mother" to her door

2.5.2

- Delaney: Mono spot was good but when you collapsed you were out of it, including phone. Just be one more step US in the spot.

2.6

- Delaney: Faster with your line after "Quiche?"
- Hannah: More concern with your confusion after her "pipeline/planet" line. It's too casual right now
- Delaney: Emphasize "*waiting*" on "waiting for you"

- Delaney: All of response to her death can be bigger and more tragic, but not corny → find B,M,End
- Delaney: "That's that" has more concern and question to it. It isn't until after his lines do you understand and begin to accept his complacency.
- Alex: Really strong night for you overall. Continue to work and find this great character you've created.

Appendix 26

Costuming tracking

		Dead Man's Cell Phone						I n t e r m i s s i o n
Sara Ruhl		Part One						
Actor	Character	An almost empty café	A church, mass	A Café	Mrs. G's House	Same, Dinner Table	Stationary Store, Same night	
Scenes		1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.6	
Delaney Clark	a women, JEAN	Look 1 -Collared shirt -Slacks -Rain Coat -Hat?	Look 2 -Add Black Sweater	No Change -Blue rain coat (on)	No Change Same as 1.1, Look 1 -No black sweater	Look 3 -add cardigan	No Change	
Jason Hammett	a dead man, GORDON	Look 1 -Suit -Trench(not on) -Hat					No Change	
Hannah Cordes	Gordon's Mother, Mrs. GOTTLIEB		Look 1 -Jacket -Dress -Sm. Heels -Hat? -Weasel Scarf?		Look 2 -add big Fur/Weasel scarf -no jacket??	No Change -Add jacket?		
Gwenn Gideon	Gordon's Widow, HERMIA					Look 1 -Blouse -Skirt -Belt -heels		
Alex Wade	Gordon's Brother, DWIGHT					Look 1 -Collared Shirt -Pants -Sweater Vest	No Change -Apron (On-stage)	
Zoe Davidson	the Other Woman/ the Stranger			Other Woman (Look 1) -Blue rain coat (Not on) -Black Dress -Heels -Clutch -Hat?				
Emily Mack	Funeral Vocalist		Singer (Look1) -simple black attire		Maid (Look 2) -Dress -Apron -Flats	Maid No Change		
Brendan T	Subway Man							

Updated 1/27/15

		Dead Man's Cell Phone					
Sara Ruhl		Part Two					
Actor	Character	Last day of Gordon's life	Back of Stationary Store	Drinking Cosmos	Johannesburg Airport	Café	Mrs. G's House
	Scenes	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.5	2.6
Delaney Clark	a women, JEAN	-Same as 1.1	No Change	No Change	No Change -Coat -Luggage	No Change	No Change
Jason Hammett	a dead man, GORDON	No Change -Trench -Hat -Briefcase				No Change	
Hannah Cordes	Gordon's Mother, Mrs. GOTTLIEB					No Change	No Change
Gwenn Gideon	Gordon's Widow, HERMIA			Look 2 -new blouse -same skirt -heels			Look 3 -ice follies costume? Just add dif. Dance-y skirt?
Alex Wade	Gordon's Brother, DWIGHT		No Change			No Change	Look 2 -No Vest -Add Grey Sweater
Zoe Davidson	the Other Woman/ the Stranger				Stranger (Look 2) -Pants -Red raincoat -Sunglasses		Carlotta -Same a Look 2 (2.4) -Sans Coat?
Emily Mack	Funeral Vocalist						Maid -No Change
Brendan T	Subway Man	-Navy Suit -Grey Shirt -Tie -Hat?					
Updated 1/27/15							

Appendix 27

Transition blocking

Dead Man's Cell Phone

Transitions:

Pre-Set Act 1: Orange

Item	Who	Where it goes
Wall 1	ASMs	Perpendicular to Audience
Wall Unit 2	ASMs	USC
Table 1	ASMs	USR
Table 2	ASMs	DSL
Chair 1	ASMs	DSL table
Chair 2	ASMs	DSL table
Chair 3	ASMs	USR table
Chair 4	ASMs	USR table
Chair 5	ASMs	Pre-set behind walls
Jean's coat	ASMs	Further's Upstage Chair
Gordon's coat	ASMs	DS Table on US Chair
Gordon's bag	ASMs	By US Chair of DS Table
Phone	ASMs	On DS table
Coffee Cup 1	ASMs	US Table
Coffee Cup 2	ASMs	DS Table
Napkin 1	ASMs	US Table
Napkin 1	ASMs	DS Table
Bowl 1	ASMs	US Table
Bowl 2	ASMs	DS Table
Thank you note	ASMs	US Table
Pen 1	ASMs	US Table
Pen 2	ASMs	DS Table

Scene 1.1 into 1.2: Red

Item	Who	Where it Goes
Table 1 and Table Props	Zoe (DSR)	Off
Table 2 and Table Props	Emily (DSR)	Off
Chair 1	Jason (Exit USR)	Off
Chair 2	Jason (Exit USR)	Off
Chair 3	Delaney (Exit USR)	Off
Chair 4	Delaney (Exit USR)	Off
Kneeler Chair	Gwenn (USR)	Stage right, upstage
Wall	Gwenn (2, Exit USL)	Angled
Kneeler Unit	Zoe (2, Exit USR)	Stage right, upper-middle
Cell Phone	Delaney (USR)	On Delaney

Corner Wall	Alex, Brendan (USL, exit USR)	Creates straight wall, US
Church Bench	Emily (ON)	Stage Left

Scene 1.2 into 1.3: Green

<u>Item</u>	<u>Who</u>	<u>Where it Goes</u>
Kneeler	Brendan (USR)	Off
Kneeler Chair	Delaney (USR)	Off
Church Bench	Emily (Exit USL)	Off
Table and chairs	Brendan and Gwenn (DSL)	Center
Corner Wall	Alex, Delaney, Zoe	Creates straight wall, DS

Scene 1.3 into 1.4: Yellow

<u>Item</u>	<u>Who</u>	<u>Where it Goes</u>
Table and Chairs	Emily and Alex	Off
Couch	Brendan and Gwenn	SR of wall
Bourbon Cup	Hannah	On Hannah
Parlor Chair	Emily	SL of wall
Wall	Hannah	Parallel to Audience
Corner Wall	Hannah and Delaney	Behind Wall

Scene 1.4 into 1.5: Purple

<u>Item</u>	<u>Who</u>	<u>Where it Goes</u>
Couch	Gwenn and Brendan	Off
Parlor Chair	Alex	Off
Chair 1 (On Stage)	Alex	B-Behind wall
Chair 2 (SL)	Hannah	Onstage to table
Chair 3 (SR)	Delaney	Onstage to table
Chair 4 (SL)	Gwenn	Onstage to table
Diner Table	Alex and Emily	Center Stage
Carmel Popcorn	Emily	Behind wall
Corner Wall	Hannah, Zoe, and Delaney	SL, attached to other wall

Scene 1.5 into 1.6: Teal

<u>Item</u>	<u>Who</u>	<u>Where it Goes</u>
Chair 1	Gwenn	Off
Chair 2	Gwenn	Off
Chair 3	Zoe	Off
Chair 4	Zoe	Off
Table	Alex and Emily	Off
Carmel Popcorn	Emily	Off

Appendix 28
Production poster

Department of
Theatre and Dance
presents

**DEAD
MAN'S
CELL
PHONE**

by Sarah Ruhl
Directed by John Brunner '15

Tustin Studio Theatre
February 13, 14, 16 @ 7:30pm
February 15 @ 2pm

Tickets
\$5 students/seniors
\$10 everyone else
bucknell.edu/boxoffice

Bucknell
UNIVERSITY

The poster features a dark, moody background with a grey sky and a cityscape silhouette. A black silhouette of a man is shown falling through the air, holding a blue cell phone. A large red umbrella is open, and a white umbrella is also visible. In the foreground, a woman with yellow skin and a black dress is running, also holding a blue cell phone. The title 'DEAD MAN'S CELL PHONE' is written in large, bold, black and red letters. The text 'Department of Theatre and Dance presents' is in the top left. The author 'by Sarah Ruhl' and director 'Directed by John Brunner '15' are below the title. The performance dates and times are listed below that. Ticket information and the website 'bucknell.edu/boxoffice' are at the bottom left. The Bucknell University logo is at the bottom right.

Appendix 29

Bucknellian article

DRAFT

By Rachel Chou
2/10/2015

The stage is set in complete darkness. There is a ringing of a cellphone echoing around the walls of the theatre, and you instinctively stick a hand in your pocket to check yours. That is, until you remember that you're sitting in Tustin Blackbox theatre watching a production of "Dead Man's Cell Phone."

"Dead Man's Cellphone" is a play written by Sarah Ruhl. Proposed by John Brunner Jr. '15 for his theatre honors thesis, the story encompasses a woman who comes across a dead man and his cellphone and the whirlwind of an adventure that she is taken on through encounters with his friends and family members.

Typically, one main stage is produced every year and this year Brunner was chosen out of a selection of applicants.

"I was in a Sarah Ruhl play in high school, and I have always enjoyed her work. Production of the play was challenging yet a lot of fun for both the cast and crew. It is a nice way to wrap up my time at Bucknell and I think it's also an appropriate piece for our campus." Brunner said.

Filled with dark humor, the play centers on our modern obsession with technology and incorporates romance, comedy, and drama.

There are around twenty students involved with the play, some being theatre majors and others not, creating a good variety of students and talents. The group started rehearsals two days before classes started and they got together for three hours of rehearsals every night, six days a week. Faculty from the theatre and art department were also involved with the production.

"Most theatre students at Universities don't get to work on this scale, so I'm honored to be able to direct a full production with my professors as collaborators and designers and assisting me along the way." Brunner said.

Dead Man's Cellphone will be playing in Tustin Blackbox theatre this upcoming Friday and Saturday at 7:30pm, as well as 2pm on Sunday and 7:30pm on Monday.

Appendix 30

Director's notes for program

Director's Notes

The script book for Sarah Ruhl's *Dead Man's Cell Phone* opens with an epigraph from Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*. He writes, "every human creature is constituted to be that profound secret and mystery to every other." In our daily lives of classes, meetings, work, personal commitments, and relationships, we journey through the lives of many other people. We see ourselves as always connected, always part of a community- but could that be wrong? Could we, members of the technological age, be more isolated than ever before? How do we have so much information available to us yet still feel we know so little? How do we have so many friends and acquaintances and yet Dickens' assertion that, "the three passengers shut up in the narrow compass of one lumbering old mail-coach; they were mysteries to one another, as complete as if each had been in his own coach..." often still holds true? This is why we have taken on this show. I wanted to direct this piece at Bucknell because I believe many Bucknell community members can move through our time here meeting many people but only truly knowing a few. As a device invented solely to communicate, the cell phone unites, and yet many times isolates, those who use it. Jean contemplates:

"Like if your phone is on you're supposed to be there. Sometimes I like to disappear. But it's like — when everyone has their cellphones on, no one is there. It's like we're all disappearing the more we're there."

Maybe in this, an age of technology, Facebook "friends" and rapid communication, we are still in our separate coaches, traveling our own routes, and not taking the time to know and love those around us. But also maybe we, both here at Bucknell and elsewhere, can quickly find a return to the tangible elements of human relations with a little self-discovery. Ruhl's whimsical stage directions, quirky characters and poetic natures provides an inspiring and comfortable playground for actors, designers, directors and- most importantly- audience members to explore the questions she raises.

As the director, I would like to say that I am proud to share this work tonight as my honor's thesis project and my THEA 319 independent study. I am proud of the endless hours of work put into this piece by the people found both off-stage and on. I am proud to call this the culminating experience of my four years at Bucknell University. And, most importantly, I am proud to call every name you see in this program tonight a good friend. Enjoy.

- John Brunner '15

Appendix 31
Revised spine and proposal

Dead Man's Cell Phone by Sarah Ruhl
 John Brunner THEA 319
 Spring 2015

Production Team:

Director: John Brunner '15
Stage Manager: Issey Blatt '16
Assistant Stage Manager: Brendan Trybus '18
Advisor: Prof. Anjalee Deshpande Hutchinson
Technical Director: Mark Hutchinson
Set and Properties Design: Prof. Elaine Williams
Set Design Assistant: Brett Walter '15
Properties Assistant: Jamie Jablonski '17
Lighting and Sound Design: Heath Hansum
Costume Design: Emmy LaFriniere

Spine (Working/Tentative)

Modern communication profoundly isolates but, by choosing to connect with one another outside of technology, individuals can discover a truer unity.

Artistic Intent

I write this proposal to not only express my desire to produce this piece, but to also express my desire to create and participate in a culminating experience of my career at Bucknell. My education so far with Bucknell has been a true liberal arts experience both within and without of the department and I aspire to demonstrate that through this production.

The script book for Sarah Ruhl's *Dead Man's Cell Phone* opens with an epigraph of a quote from *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens. He writes, "every human creature is constituted to be that **profound secret** and **mystery** to every other." *Dead Man's Cell Phone* captures the essence of this quote, as protagonist Jane and the audience begin to learn the profound secrets and mysteries of a dead man's life. Our dead man, Gordon, is a human organ trafficker, buying and transporting human organs from living persons in order to save the life of a patient in need, as well as often the life of the organ donor who is in need of financial assistance. His practice is illegal, international, and underground. When Jean, a stranger, finds him dead in a café, she comes into possession of his cell phone, and his life. She begins to connect with his family and his business, both of which she knows nothing about. From his overbearing and offsetting

mother, to his jealous and distrusting widow, Jean attempts to console and comfort his “loved ones” whom she has never met. Ruhl notes that Jean never lies, but rather creates confabulations and makes memory a “malleable, imaginable construct” (Al-Shamma, p.84), to make right Gordon’s wrongs: his adulterous relationships, his strained relations with his brother and mother, and his dark dealings with the illegal organ trade market. As Jane journeys through this adventure, she also begins to discover herself and love. Alongside Gordon’s brother, she explores that love and meaningful communication can still be tangible and personal in today’s technological age. Ultimately, Jane must decide who Gordon is after his death and, more importantly, what kind of woman she is.

Dead Man’s Cell Phone speaks to me because in our daily lives filled with classes, meetings, work, personal commitments, and relationships we journey through the lives of many other people, thinking we know them and their story.

- We see ourselves as always connected, always part of a community but could that be wrong?
- Could we, members of the technological age, be more isolated than ever before?
- How do we have so much information available to us yet we still know so little?
- How do we have so many friends and acquaintances and yet Dickens’ assertion that, “the three passengers shut up in the narrow compass of one lumbering old mail-coach; they were mysteries to one another, as complete as if each had been in his own coach...” can still be true?

Despite Gordon’s blood relation to his family members, they were all traveling in their own coaches hiding parts of their lives from one another. Ruhl examines modern relations through the eye of modern technology that supposedly brings us closer more and more everyday.

I want to direct this piece at Bucknell because I believe many Bucknell community members, as busy as we are, can move through our four years here meeting many people but only truly knowing a few. As a member of this department I have always felt we have strived to question and break the boundaries of social norms, of the “Bucknell bubble”, of accepted and “normal” views of the world. *Dead Man’s Cell Phone* allows for the often unanswered life questions a family has upon the death of a love one to be answered by the most unlikely of persons- a complete stranger. The cell phone, a device invented solely to communicate, both unites and isolates those who use it. Jean contemplates:

“Like if your phone is on you’re supposed to be there. Sometimes I like to disappear. But it’s like — when everyone has their cellphones on, no one is there. It’s like we’re all disappearing the more we’re there.”

Maybe in this, an age of technology, Facebook “friends” and rapid communication we are still in our separate coaches, traveling our own routes, and not taking the time to know and love those around us. Ruhl questions relationships, both

romantic and familial, and their (de)construction as a result of technology. She also explores the natural pecking order that can develop in families (the power of Gordon and his mother in comparison to the weaker Dwight, Hermia, and Jean). All of this converges through Jean's adventure and I will explore and expand these questions through this 319.

As evident in this proposal, the piece contains many themes from Dickens works, particularly *A Tale of Two Cities*. These themes, among many, include: isolation, resurrection, and self-identity. I am excited by the possibility of exploring how the themes of a 150 year old classic can still apply to technology only widely used in the past two decades.

Some basic thoughts on design and production

Sarah Ruhl provides director's notes that detail her ideas and intentions for many of the key moments of the script. From a design perspective, the most descriptive instruction she provides is: "Transitions are fluid. Space is fluid. There is not a lot of stuff on the stage." Much like my showcase, I would want to direct this piece with smooth and seamless transitions that rely equally on movement and technology (lighting, sound and projection). I always seek to challenge myself so unlike any of my previous works, *Dead Man's Cell Phone* may include moments of dance and choreographed movement. This includes the "Cell Phone Ballet" in Act II. I look forward to working with the dance professors and/or dance students to choreograph and design this dance and movement. I was heavily inspired by John Thiel's work in Victoria Moyer's 319 *The Lovesong of J. Robert Oppenheimer* and hope to continue the excellent and harmonious relationship dance and theatre maintain at Bucknell University.

With that being said, I do want to utilize technology in this piece as much as possible. I believe some very beautiful moments could be created through the use of lights, sound, and digital projection/video. Ruhl provides many of these moments through her director's notes and her whimsy and creative stage directions. I would love to work the cast, design team, and guest artists to develop and build these moments. I have been heavily inspired by Ruhl's inclusion of Edward Hopper's work and I think his color patterns and use of light/shadow would be a great starting point for our light and projection design. I'm interested to see how these paintings could be brought to life, both by actors and projections on stage (potentially interacting).

As for properties, costume and set design, I was inspired by the 2013 film *Her*. While a time period is never indicated in the movie, I think it is safe to say it is set in a realistic version of the city life roughly 10 years from now. This time period provides room for lots of creativity and I think enhances Ruhl's poetic and light nature. I want to keep true to her notes and remain simplistic: a lot can be said with very little. I am aware that 2024 greatly contrasts with Hopper's time period and color so I would like to explore both inspirations. Maybe we can find comfort in the things of times gone by.

Timeline

- **October 2014:** Early production and advisor meetings
- **November 9-10, 2014:** General Auditions
- **November 11, 2014:** Call Backs
- **December 5, 2014:** Initial Read-Thru (production team invited)

- **January 11, 2015:** Rehearsals begin (Off-script)
 - **January 14, 2015:** Classes begin
- **February 7-8, 2015:** Cue-to-Cue/Tech weekend
- **February 9-12, 2015:** Dress rehearsals

- **February 13, 2015:** Opening performance
- **February 14, 2015:** Performance and talk-balk
- **February 15, 2015:** Matinee performance and photo call
- **February 16, 2015:** Closing performance and strike

Appendix 32
Post-Production surveys
Cast and Crew

Post-Production Survey

Full name: Delaney Clark

How would you describe the ensemble nature of this production?

There was very much a sense of ensemble among the cast; for me personally, I found working with this ensemble to be the best cast experience I have ever had in a production. Although I entered the production having worked with a number of the actors and some of the stage management team, I felt that a tight ensemble developed rapidly even among the cast members who were unfamiliar with each other. Overall, I thought that the cast atmosphere was focused, supportive, and fun. One thing I particularly found remarkable about this production was that the sense of ensemble extended to the stage management team as well. In the majority of other productions I have worked on, the cast ensemble would sometimes include the director or the stage manager, and occasionally the ASMS. I truly believe that the close-knit nature of the cast extended to the stage management team as much as it did between actors.

What role did the director play in helping to create this sense of ensemble?

The director focused on ensemble work from the moment we began rehearsals: our first two rehearsals actually focused on ensemble building and character work, rather than on working with the script. The cast did not pick up a script until we were capable of working together and felt comfortable around each other. I would also say that the director emphasized exploring how characters connected or related during rehearsals, which helped both to build character and to strengthen the ensemble. Furthermore, the director encouraged cast and crew relationships outside the show by organizing cast dinners/lunches, setting up dinners with families during the show, and driving actors home after rehearsal.

What could have been done, if anything, to strengthen the sense of ensemble?

Nothing; it was great!

Post-Production Survey

Full name: Brendan Trybus

How would you describe the ensemble nature of this production?

Personally, I felt like I was part of the ensemble. Although I was an ASM, I felt included during the entire process and there was never a division between actors and crew.

What role did the director play in helping to create this sense of ensemble?

John did a great job of making every member of the cast feel like they were important. The actors and student working behind the scenes were brought together for a movie night, dinner outings, and a cast party. These events created a strong sense of community for all involved in the production.

What could have been done, if anything, to strengthen the sense of ensemble?

I have nothing negative to say.

Post-Production Survey

Full name: Gwenn Gideon

How would you describe the ensemble nature of this production?

I definitely think that there was a sense of ensemble. I think that it developed a little later on in the process because we weren't all called on the same nights- but it definitely developed and felt like a strong ensemble.

What role did the director play in helping to create this sense of ensemble?

Definitely a lot- there was a lot of cast bonding that I believe helped to create this sense of ensemble. Additionally, coming early to do workshops helped to create the sense of ensemble.

What could have been done, if anything, to strengthen the sense of ensemble?

I don't think that there really could have been too much more. A fun run at the end of the process could have been a great experience but not doing it didn't take away from the sense of ensemble.

Post-Production Survey

Full name: Issey Blatt

How would you describe the ensemble nature of this production?

This is one of the best casts I have ever worked with, and I think that is because they were truly an ensemble. The show could not have ran the way it did without every single person playing their role and each person relied on each other a lot. It was clear that it was an ensemble piece both on and off stage. Everyone worked as a collective unit working toward a single goal and fully supported each other. This also allowed a sense of comfort which gave people the ability to explore more with their roles.

What role did the director play in helping to create this sense of ensemble?

Even though the piece may not be considered a traditional ensemble show the way that John chose to direct it would not have worked if the sense of ensemble was not created early on. The first workshops and the way in which John ran rehearsals are what helped to build the sense of ensemble. I also think that having the actors do the transitions had a huge impact on the role of being an ensemble member because then it become less about playing a character in those moments and more about working together to make everything look so seamless and connected.

What could have been done, if anything, to strengthen the sense of ensemble?

I don't think anything else could have been done to improve the sense of ensemble.