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### Acting design in "That Championship Season"

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ACTING DESIGN IN "That Championship Season"

by

Paul William Shapiro

B.A. Kalamazoo College, 1970


Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

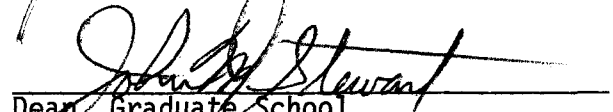
Master of Fine Arts

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

1975

Approved by:

  
Chairman, Board of Examiners

  
Dean, Graduate School

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Shapiro, Paul W., M.F.A., June 1975

Drama

Acting Design in "That Championship Season" (34 pp.)

Director: Frank Jacobson



The thesis project consisted of performing a major role in the Fall 1974 theater production, "That Championship Season". The project also consisted of maintaining an actor's journal and describing the research and preparatory work involved in the creation of that role.

The rehearsal period was three and one half weeks. The production was under the direction of Gordon V. Hayes. The other roles were performed by John Keegan, Randall K. Pugh, David MacIntyre, and Kent Epler. The play was performed on October 30,31, and November 1,2,3,8, and 9, in the Masquer Theater at the University of Montana.

University of Montana, School of Fine Arts, Department of Drama  
*Masquer Theater Series presents*

THAT  
CHAMPIONSHIP  
SEASON

by JASON MILLER

Winner of the 1972 Pulitzer Prize, Tony Award  
and N. Y. Drama Critics Circle Award

*Directed by*  
GORDON V. HAYES\*

*Scenery Design by*  
NEAL HIRSIG

*Lighting Design by*  
RICK MEIS

*Costume Design by*  
ELIZABETH POORE

CAST

Coach ..... RANDALL K. PUGH\*  
Phil Romano ..... PAUL W. SHAPIRO\*  
George Sikowski ..... D. HARLAN MacINTYRE  
James Daly ..... JOHN KEEGAN  
Tom Daly ..... KENT EPLER  
Martin Rhodes ..... GREG DeHOOGH  
Opposing Team ..... J. LEE COOK

Place: The Coach's Home

Time: 1972, evening

There will be a 10 minute intermission between acts.

Please refrain from smoking in the theater.

The taking of photographs during performance is prohibited.

\*In partial fulfillment of requirements for the Master of Fine Arts Degree.

October 30, 31, November 1, 2, 3, 1974 Masquer Theater 8 P.M.

## OUTLINE OF THESIS PROJECT

- I. Purpose
  - A. To understand the process involved in the creation of a major acting role
  - B. To perform the role of Phil Romano in "That Championship Season"
- II. The Rehearsal
  - A. Creation of the vocal character
    - 1. Rhythm
    - 2. Intonation and pitch
    - 3. Inflexion
  - B. Creation of the physical character
    - 1. The body
    - 2. The gesture
  - C. Creation of the psychological character
    - 1. Intentions and beats
    - 2. The emotional gesture
  - D. Actor/Director relationships
- III. The Performance
  - A. Make-up
  - B. Costume
  - C. Warm-up
- IV. Evaluation

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## Chapter 1

### PROJECT STIMULI/LIMITATIONS

The growth of an artist, aside from the profoundly psychological aspects, is dialectical in nature. Faced with projected limitations, the artistic endeavor transcends or, in fact, absorbs inevitable conflicts in its attempt to communicate. My goal for the project was to create a believable character who was individual yet was at the same time, an integral and complimentary element of the production of "That Championship Season". I also wanted to create a performance which was human, understandable, intelligent, humorous, and moving.

In the dialectical sense, there were four elements of the production which became obstacles. At the same time, however, they provided positive stimuli. These four elements were 1) the rehearsal time allowed for the production 2) the utilization of the Masquer stage 3) the melodramatic tendencies of the script and 4) the other actors involved in the production.

In this university's theatre productions, the time allotted for a production is generally 5-6 weeks. In any production, a minimum amount of time is needed in order to set lines, to establish blocking patterns, to understand the rhythms and movement of the play. The actor's job, in one sense, is to discover the potentialities of his character. Ideally, this process is an organic one. Slow, careful research and exploration must be pursued until the final creation is arrived at. That our production only had a 3½ week rehearsal period meant that I needed a strong foundation from which to begin my exploration. Gordon

spent the first two rehearsal periods, luckily, establishing just this sort of foundation. We answered many of the basic questions of individual characters and their interrelationships. My role, then, was to interpret the character of Phil Romano, physically and vocally. Although the brief rehearsal period meant that there would be little time for varied forms of character probing, it forced me to utilize each rehearsal period to its fullest. This meant that I needed to arrive at each rehearsal warmed-up, my concentration precise, my research completed, so that each time a scene was rehearsed, I could play it with an entirely new intention until the final choices were discovered.

Because I was accustomed to performing in the University Theatre, performing in the Masquer Theatre demanded an acting style of which I was not familiar. The intimacy of the theatre demanded total physical and emotional commitment. The slightest raising of an eyebrow or twitch of a finger could and, in fact, was regarded by the audience as a point of communication. The style of acting was almost cinematic in form. What I mean by this statement is that, generally, when I work on vocal production and gesturing of a character, I tend to eliminate minuteness and create broad and somewhat generalized forms. This is motivated not because the character I was portraying would utilize these forms, but because the clarity of presentation must be perceived by the most distant audience member. Yet, in the intimacy of the Masquer Theatre, the least movement, motivated internally and under proper restraint, could be perceived. In this intimate theatre, the actor as artist does not paint with large sweeping brush strokes, but rather must intricately weave a delicately textured web.

The third stimuli/limitation was the melodramatic tendencies of the script, itself. These tendencies create a subtle dichotomy between the stylistic realism of the play's form and the obvious contrivances found frequently in the plot. This tendency is also found in the language and character development. Although the play's melodrama cannot be avoided, it must be understood and utilized with the utmost care. The most melodramatic moment may, potentially, be a moment of extreme poignancy or high comedy. The difference lies in the ability of the actor to believe his intentions not only for himself as an actor but for himself as the character. The slightest flinching from this necessary commitment could create a contrived and totally unbelievable moment.

Finally, the most inspiring stimulus was the inspiration and commitment of the actors in the production. The creative process is one of stimulus/response. It is one of shared moments and undeniable joy. Each of the other actors provided me with varied intentions and responses with which to work. With the help of these people, the development of the production became an artistic creation based on a strong foundation of trust and respect. Most inspiring was the constant probing. The actor may search and explore in his own mind, but the most effective exploration occurs in the rehearsal. Most enlightening was our scene work. A scene would never be repeated in the same manner. Each time, it was attacked with a new intention and new goals, always in an improvisatory manner, until each moment was carefully selected. Most important of all, was the attitude of the actors, that acting is a shared endeavor, the orchestration of the ensemble.

## Chapter 2

### INTRODUCTION TO THE JOURNAL

The function of the actor's journal is to record the process of development, and to serve as a possible reference. In other words, ideas or suggestions, which in the complicated rehearsal process may be forgotten, can find a permanent home in the journal.

Each actor maintains and develops his own techniques, just as the painter selects the colors with which he most likes to work. Personally, I experienced mixed feelings about the maintenance and utilization of the journal. Most often, I found it tedious and irritating. Occasionally, I found that I was able to zero in on a particular idea because I was forced to transcribe it from gray matter to white matter. Since I was aware that the journal would be included in this paper, I tended to be less honest, less personal and more academic than I might otherwise have been.

I did maintain an alternative journal, but alas it is neither typed nor written. And I hope that it remains that way. This journal was written in many places with many people. I believe that people are the territory of an actor's research, bus stations and alleys and with trusting and stimulating people and not hunched over a notebook.

## Chapter 3

### THE JOURNAL

#### Rehearsal 1

The objective, which I set for this first rehearsal, was to discover any patterns in Phil's thought process. Secondly, I wanted to discover what the other characters said about Phil when he was absent from the room. Thirdly, I wanted to discover a system of values for Phil. Fourthly, I wanted to begin the process of asking questions of the other characters. In order to discover their conception of Phil, I began inquiring not from the standpoint of character to character but rather actor to actor. I made the following discoveries:

1. Tom and George discuss Phil's physical relationship with other people. He hugs and kisses everybody.
2. Both Tom and George have a seemingly perverted respect for Phil which is centered around Phil's money and power.
3. They also suggest that Phil is not very intelligent.
4. Phil values the appearance of people.
5. Sexuality is an important motivating force for Phil. He has a history or perhaps a reputation for promiscuity.
6. Phil's relationships with people around him and his self-perception revolves around their interest in his money.
7. In high school, Phil's centrality within the adolescent society rested on a system of thought in the 1950's i.e., having money put Phil in a position of power which necessitated either the creation of illusory sexual conquests or real promiscuity.

8. Phil's Italian background indicates flamboyant hand gestures, hugging, kissing, etc. It suggests extremely physical relationships not only with people but with objects as well.

9. For Phil, money means freedom. It is the crux of his physical, as opposed to emotional, existence.

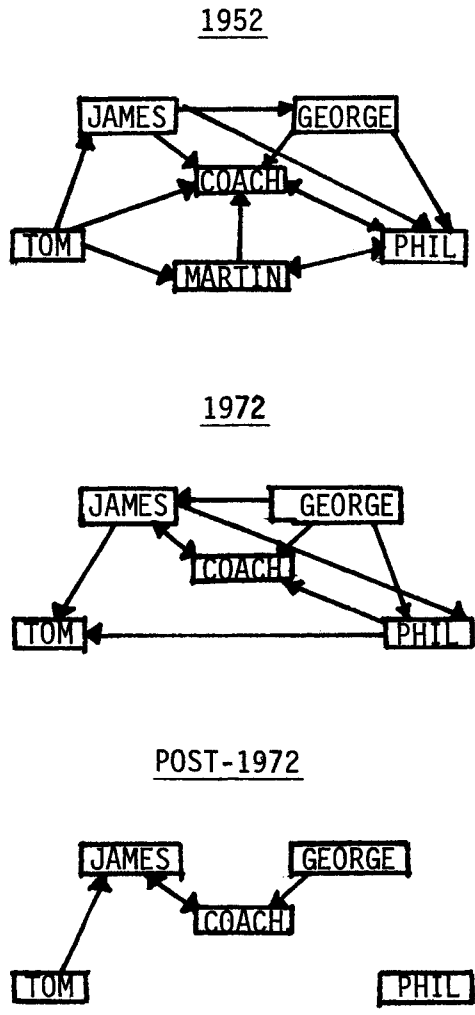
10. The answer to much of Phil's emotional life lies in discovering the relationship which existed between Phil and his mother.

11. All of the characters have learned well from the coach. In his basketball philosophy, the coach declares that the players must discover their opponents weaknesses and attack them at that point. All of the characters follow this idea in their relationships with each other.

Reactions to the first rehearsal. Phil offers me a tremendous challenge, because the character is a flamboyant one. There is a great deal of work to be done in terms of gesture. I feel that there is the suggestion of Italian mannerisms in his physical character. My objective is to include these mannerisms into the character without distorting the clarity of communication.

Phil's physical character also includes a distinctive vocal pattern and texture. I feel that there is the suggestion of Italian-American rhythms and inflections. I also found Phil's tremendous sexuality very exciting to work with. Much of this sexuality relates to Phil's deep psychological involvement with his mother.

Figure 1. The relationships of the six men 1) at the time of the state championship, 2) at the time of the play, and 3) in the months following the time of the play. (sociometric form)



## Rehearsal 2

For this rehearsal, Gordon asked each of the actors to create a system of relationships which existed during the championship season, their relationships on the night of reunion and the direction of the relationships after the night of the reunion. For this purpose, I developed the diagram on the preceding page. The direction of the arrow suggests that the impetus for interaction flows from one character to another. A two-headed arrow suggests that the relationship was mutually re-inforced. The unknown factor in the first diagram is Martin. We know little about him. However, the script implies that all the characters revered Martin and that he was an independent figure as suggested from his inability to accept the championship trophy.

As the diagram suggests, Phil's relationship with Martin and the coach were mutually re-inforced. Phil respected the coach as a father figure, perhaps, and the coach was interested in Phil as a player, student, and individual. Phil respected and admired not only Martin's ability as a ballplayer but also Martin's independence. Martin and, perhaps, Tom were the only members of the team who were not attracted to Phil because of his father's money, and Phil's possessions.

James and George were attracted to Phil because of his material wealth and peer-group social status. Although their relationship was a close one, it never developed a depth which could only have been possible with the coach and Martin.

Phil's relationship with Tom was not overtly significant as it might have been with the other members. Perhaps this intuition could be attributed to Tom's age. Being two years younger and not a direct



member of Phil's peer group, I'm sure, would suggest a one way interaction from Tom towards Phil. I would suggest that the relationship was, and became, more mutually re-inforced due to Tom's independent attitudes. This trait, most likely, acted as a counterweight.

During the second rehearsal we began to explore ideas as to the self-perception of the individual characters but focused more on each actor's concept of their particular character's perception of each of the other characters. As can be expected, I found that, for example, John's idea of who he thought Phil was and the complexities of their relationship did not always coincide with my own thoughts on the subject. Each actor gave each other actor a good deal of concrete suggestions for the development of their specific relationships.

The most stimulating idea for me was Randy's suggestion that his physical and vocal image of Phil was that of Walter Matthau. A real shocker for me, I worked on that for a few days and perhaps it led to a few insights but I discarded it quickly because it was strongly conflicting with my own intuitions about Phil and I was beginning to find myself developing a mushy sort of self-perception. No slight to Walter.

"That Championship Season" is a profoundly sexual play, dealing in various shapes and sizes with homo- and hetero- sexual activity of both black and white tones. The second rehearsal began to explore both real and imagined sexual activities and attitudes. At this writing, it is impossibly difficult to communicate the great joy and confusion when Kent suggested that Phil's wife no longer found him sexually attractive. My God! Here we find money bags fucking and screwing himself from Broadway to Missoula and Kent has the audacity to suggest sexual unat-

tractiveness. Well, I felt an empty feeling right between my legs as if I had been the one castrated. Not only did I previously feel that Phil was sexually attractive but of Apollonian dimension. Was I mistaken! Then the rest of the cast joined in Kent's defense along with Gordon and Ken. We began to probe and discovered the following:

1. Sexually, although Phil is the most promiscuous of the men, his intimate attitudes were most likely the most moralistic.

2. Phil's promiscuity was motivated by some form of jaded idea, that he in fact was seeking an honest relationship.

3. Phil never recovered from his relationship with Marion, George's wife. It was Marion who deflowered Phil and who later rejected him.

During rehearsal, I made another interesting discovery. Perhaps a minor point. My discovery was that Phil's sarcastic lines, almost all of them throw away, are given to Tom. This minor point had major interpretive relevance. These lines are all humorous digs and they are meant to be heard by everyone. Yet, these lines must be given some importance. They are quips which are said to a confidante in passing. Neither George, James or the coach have this special kind of relationship with Phil. Thus, Tom being almost a non-participant and with cynical disposition himself becomes, for Phil, the logical choice for these statements.

After the rehearsal I jotted down some thoughts on what had been explored during this very important rehearsal. It appears, from my own thoughts and discussions of each actor's own attitudes towards these relationships, that Phil was highly popular in high school. His

relationships were based on a quality of acquisition (be it love or money). This theme may have, in the future, created a temper of distrust of local acquaintances and suggests his motivational need to "pick up strange young pussy" as a sort of subliminal need to correct hurt inflicted by Marion's rejection.

Phil, most likely, felt Martin to be his closest friend, though this idea can not be developed to a very great extent because Martin, throughout the play, remains the unknown factor. Phil probably felt a warm spot for Tom based on Tom's seeming independence and carefree attitudes. George's relationship to Phil has parasitic overtones, however, James' relationship and personality, both externally and internally, suggest a sense of independence.

After this rehearsal, I pondered certain unanswered questions and discovered four somewhat Freudian elements in Phil's character makeup. First, all of the men, during the play, infer directly or indirectly a lack of a strong father figure in their lives. Phil at one point, derides his father and states that his mother is the only woman he ever loved. Second, Phil's lifestyle is a manifestation of a very strong reaction formation against his own father's lifestyle. Thirdly, for some as yet unknown reason, Phil's life is in some way threatened by all the other men except the coach. Perhaps the reason lies in the fact that Phil is, in some subconscious form, a hero for these other men, yet he rejects this role. Finally, Phil constantly and unsuccessfully deals with his image as a modern man. He states, in his most intimate scene, that he is a modern man. Yet this, to me, only suggests the innumerable layers of dishonesty in Phil's character. He yearns for a rather trad-

ditional, monogamous, and hopefully fulfilling marriage rather than his presently promiscuous pseudo-liberated form.

### Rehearsal 3

Tonight we played basketball. I believe Gordon's objective was to get us working physically together and to create a situation in which we were able to create and develop character relationships on the court. It was a painful and unpleasant experience. David and I were the only two cast members who had had any previous basketball experience. John and Kent were very negative to this sort of experience, so it became very difficult to develop any shared experiences which could have been utilized in any following rehearsals. Perhaps something might have developed if Randy had slipped into character and taken charge as if he were the coach. I am sure he felt awkward in his position and never assumed the role. This rehearsal was a total failure. Yet, as an actor, I firmly believe in the validity and effective potential of this kind of improvisation situation, if handled properly.

### Rehearsal 4

Tonight we began blocking Act I. The kind of blocking technique Gordon used is one which I dislike. The process is as follows: Gordon reads a line and then places each actor on the stage in the place Gordon wants him to be during this line. I was able to tolerate this process because we have such a short rehearsal time and this method is, by far, the most expedient.

During the blocking process, I tried to be a non-character or rather this character's third eye. I involved myself with preliminary

decisions of transitions, character motivations, line interpretations, and very gently dealing with the physical character. I did not allow any sort of finalization but rather began to flow with the sensibilities of Phil.

#### Rehearsal 5

What should I say about this rehearsal! We are in the midst of the most uninteresting part of the rehearsal process, i.e., blocking. Tonight we blocked Act II and ran it once. I have been sure to check myself during these early rehearsals not to begin acting but rather to slowly mesh into the process of the play. At this point, it is quite difficult to maintain a sense of calm. We are all experiencing the pressure of the brief rehearsal period. I am concentrating on actor/actor relationships, i.e., developing a creative working relationship with the other actors. I am beginning to understand the problem of working with other actors who use different techniques than myself. I tend to demand direct eye contact at all times. That's the most effective method of transferring creative energy. There are times when I would become upset because the other actors would focus all their energy on Gordon rather than each other. All I can say is that they worked differently than myself. However, I maintained this eye contact in my own little sphere of influence.

The next day I went to visit Professor Ortisi in the Foreign Language Department. Ostensibly, my purpose was to ask him for some Italian curses to use in the show. He gave me three curses:

1. Questi ricchi sono pui miserabili dei poveri.  
(The rich are never as miserable as the poor.)

2. Va' all inferno! ( Go to hell.)
3. Va' al devailo miserabili avore!  
( May the miserable devil take you!)

None of these curses were quite as raunchy as I would have liked. But Professor Ortisi is a rather proper man and I am sure he thought these curses were terrible enough. In fact, when he gave them to me in his office, his voice never exceeded a low whisper.

My first priority in this meeting was to watch his gesturing. From watching him, I perceived a sense of extreme contrast, powerful, dramatic gesture on the one hand and soft fluid gesture on the other ( no pun intended). There was never a casual gesture made. The gesturing was extremely precise. Never did I sense the gesturing to be superfluous or wasteful even though they were flamboyant.

#### Rehearsal 6

Tonight we finished blocking the play and then ran it once. For the first time I began selecting my moments and began to develop an awareness of the through line of the character.

My meeting with Professor Ortisi has stimulated an exploration of vocal patterns. Again, I am still at the point of experimentation and not final selection. I have also some insights into Phil:

1. The key to Phil's external character lies in gesturing. Or at least I should say, that is the direction in which I plan to work. Aside from Phil's Italian background, there is constant reference in they play of Phil's physicality, i.e., touching everything, hugging everyone, etc.

2. Phil is very moody. I can see that in the script. The

problem I will have to deal with is the unwritten transitions between moods.

I am having a problem working with Randy, at this stage. I have strong tendencies toward direct honesty and I am feeling that he is artificial and very forced. I wonder if I might be perceived in that light.

### Rehearsal 7

Tonight was a very exciting rehearsal. Although we are still on book, there was an extreme intensity in the run through.

One problem I can envision. The crying at the end of the play. I am not a good one for tears; they just don't come easily. Strangely though, I was able to draw "soft tears" except there was no apparent motivation nor was it timed correctly. I think that my motivation should be the recording of the last minutes of the game. I also found that intense concentration and listening acutely to the coaches' final monologue were able to create the proper images and the record would be like the proverbial Dutch boy pulling his finger out of the dyke.

At this point, the most complicated scene for me is the intimate one between Phil and Tom. The problems are:

1. Phil is not really listening to Tom.
2. Phil is lying, i.e., he is not really a modern man, but in fact yearns for a sense of traditional values.
3. I am not sure whether Phil wants Tom to believe him or not.

### Rehearsal 8

Today, we filmed the last seconds of the game at the gymnasium.

(Note: this film in fact was never used in performance.) It was rather tedious and not very exciting.

We also ran Act II but we were all very tired. I did have one discovery. Phil's speech on desperation refers to himself rather than James. Phil becomes more desperate as the speech progresses.

### Rehearsal 9

The rehearsal went badly for me so I came home and began a project which I never completed. I attempted to fill in those transitional gaps which I mentioned earlier, by taking a step by step look at Phil's psychological development. I completed Act I and these are my perceptions:

1. On his entrance, Phil is trying to establish a relationship with the other men. He is jovial. He tries to stand aloof through his loose, carefree behavior and attempts to impress the others in a more or less high-schoolish manner. At the beginning, he is not intimate with Tom.

2. Carefree attitudes; very relaxed. Phil is probably closer in a superficial way to the coach than any of the other men. Phil attempts to submerge George and James in embarrassment as a vehicle to his separation.

3. Phil attempts to put himself on the same plane as the coach.

4. Phil subtly seeks out Tom's attention.

5. Phil's need for separation is motivated by his pre-determined unwillingness to contribute to George's campaign.

6. Phil makes every effort to alienate George, yet he has ex-



treme difficulty in coming right out and saying no to George.

7. Phil resents the coaches' constant references to the past. Phil's love/hate relationship with the coach revolves around the coaches' conservatism and strength. There is a possibility that the same sort of feelings existed with Phil's father. He appears to maintain a sort of rebellious attitude.

8. This love/hate emotion emerges as the coach gets sick. There is an impulsive gesture, which is concern.

9. Phil resents George's relationship to Marion and thus, resents George. This idea is one of Phil's underlying motivations throughout the play. Phil is a slave to his money.

10. Phil can't say no to George but rather attempts to convince James that his non-support is the best alternative.

11. Phil's anger towards James is motivated by his dislike of George and his relationship with Marion.

### Rehearsal 10

Tonight, just for the hell of it, I attempted a whole new interpretation of Phil. I played the entire first two acts very carefree and jovial. I said most of the lines as if they were all punch lines. I also said a lot of lines to George, all of the rather carefree digs at him. I also began to develop my antagonism towards George.

Tonight I also experimented with so-called Italian rhythm patterns. I can't say exactly what they are but the speech patterns began to feel correct except that inevitably I overplayed them all. I felt that I was headed in the right direction but most of the time I thought

I sounded like some sort of over-stuffed caricature of a New York gangster. I must discover what the patterns are and then begin to tone them down. I also began to utilize my lower register. Tonight, I began experimenting with touch and its relationship to Phil's character.

This afternoon I listened to a recording of Arthur Miller's "View from the Bridge". My intention was to listen to anglicized Italian. I made the following discoveries:

1. Words, although understandable, were slurred.
2. Occurrence of softening of T's to D's. For example, "that" to "dat".
3. Utilization of lower register.
4. The rhythm pattern I heard was varied but certain elements were outstanding, such as the sentences and phrases were run-on and the language was very quick and expressive.

### Rehearsal 11

Tonight we are beginning to work on individual scenes. There is a general tendency throughout the play which must be carefully checked. This tendency is vocally playing the scenes too loud. In such a small theatre, this tendency could make the play aurally unpleasant. In other words, "That Championship Season" could turn into a shouting match. The cast and myself, in particular, must find ways of playing anger intensely, but not loudly.

This particular tendency is a manifestation of a greater problem. We are not giving the play's humor a chance and as characters we become one-dimensional because we are not playing the contrast. One of

the strong points of "That Championship Season" is that it contrasts humor and intense drama. If we, as a cast, neglect the humor then the play will plod along as an uninteresting play. Structurally, the play moves from crisis to crisis and we must try our damndest to give the audience moments of relief between and during the moments of crisis.

### Rehearsal 12

Our first real run-through. Tonight I had a great deal of trouble with the through line of the character. I am very aware that Phil has a moody personality but right now I am creating a sort of schizophrenic interpretation. I am playing each scene in isolation. One of my problems is that I am not feeling enough byplay with the other actors. There are large sections of the play where I am on stage but silent. I am sure that these moments are important transition points and I need the play to help me define my emotional states during these non-actor moments.

I am also trying to underplay the highly vocal scenes. This is giving me all sorts of problems because I am playing against my instincts. Oh! What the hell!

Tonight Frank mentioned that he didn't like my Italian interpretation of Phil. It really upset me because it sort of pulled the rug out from under me at a late date. I guess it is a question of interpretation. I think that I will work toward toning ethnocentric aspects down.

### Rehearsal 13

Tonight we had a drunk rehearsal. It was more an improvisation. When we started, John, Randy, and I rather hesitantly assumed our characters and went to the store to get some beer. On the return trip, Randy even pantomimed getting a speeding ticket. Coincidentally, we returned to Gordon's house at precisely the right time. The improvisation sort of got out of hand but there was a lot of exciting subtextual development. I made the following discoveries:

1. Phil hates the coaches' attempts to reconcile the men.
2. Phil is actually in a real position of power.
3. Although Phil presents an outwardly loose manner, he is in fact a crafty and shrewd businessman.
4. Phil detests George and James both because he knows them too well.
5. Phil is primarily egocentric except where the championship season is concerned.

### Rehearsal 14

Tonight, we worked Act I. I began to slack off on my gesturing and allowed by vocal rhythms to become more subtle. Tonight, I became very concerned with the appearance of what I am doing. Working in the Masquer particularly in this kind of realistic show demands almost cinematic technique. I guess I am finally getting to the point of having to adjust my work for this intimate theatre and am finding the adjustment slightly painful.

I am still experiencing problems with the interpretation. Be-

cause of the drastic new manner of playing Phil, I am still having problems with the through line. Phil's emotional transformation is as follows:

1. He is boisterous until the discussion turns to politics.
2. His outward confidence is mixed with internal anxiety.
3. He is very confident until the "fucking Marion" speech.
4. He is detached from everyone but Tom.
5. Tom's rejection forces Phil to seek solutions to the problem and makes him desperate.
6. Their common experience is real yet contrived.

#### Rehearsal 15

This rehearsal was a most outstanding experience. One of my most problematic scenes was my long scene with Tom and James; essentially a long monologue and exceptionally complex. For almost obvious reasons, I had been playing it with a very heavy hand and laden with meaning. Tonight after dealing with the first third of the scene in the normal fashion, I got the giggles. Eventually, I became hysterical with laughter but I continued the scene. My laughter finally transmitted to John and Kent. The laughter was uncontrollable, ebbing and flowing with the scene. This was honest, hearty, and senseless laughter. On paper, it is difficult to transmit the feeling of the scene. It was a raw, uninhibited feeling of joy. This, in fact, was the way the scene should be played. The almost insane laughter juxtaposed to the weightiness of the subject matter made the scene even more piercing. The problem as I see it is how the hell do you recreate this kind of spontaneous happen-

ing?

### Rehearsal 16

Our first fullblown run through. It was a good working rehearsal for me for the following reasons:

1. The pacing of the entire show was very much improved. All the actors began really picking up their cues and I felt that there was a sensibility of the play as a whole. The peaks and valleys of the play were more subtle and interacted. The performance developed an inertia and objective above and beyond each actors individual objective. In other words, I began to sense that I was involved in a play rather than an evening of one-acts.

2. The most difficult scene for me is the hysterical laughter scene. I knew it. I knew it. The difficulty (I knew it) is how to play the hysterical scene and make it believable and maintain a control over the scene so that it has the proper crescendo's and decrescendo's.

3. I am beginning to sort out my relationship with the coach, i.e., those specific moments of love, hate, indifference, surprise, and pity.

4. I am playing Phil's ethnocentricity much more low-keyed and I sense that it is successful. It is not that I have stopped utilizing gesture and rhythm but it has become more specific and purposeful.

I am having trouble dealing with Randy. Not personally nor as a co-worker. It is just that I don't believe him. He took a dive at his character tonight. I began to perceive a strong external character

but I was not conscious of interior support.

Rehearsal 17

Generally, I am not too concerned with costume because I can usually work with what I am given. Stephanie has taken over the responsibility of costuming me. The costume which she is building for me is wrong! wrong! wrong! Why? The concept behind Phil is that he is rich, flashy, and likes women. All this is true but superficial. He is also insecure, clever, flamboyant, with taste. The costume is ultra-chic New York. Phil is not ultra-chic. He is very much chauvinistic rather than a super-sensual modern man. Yet, more important than his idea or concept, is the fact that even if Phil would wear this suit, he would not wear it to a drunken basketball reunion. Beyond that, he is not trying to impress the other men with his wealth but rather the opposite is more likely the case. The costume seems to have no relationship to my character or the play.

## Chapter 4

### MAKE-UP

The make-up, which I used for the character of Phil Romano, was primarily corrective. I used Mehron pancakes #21,26, and 30, black eye-brow pencil, and lip rouge. Using the pancake, I needed to age myself approximately ten years. I selected a #26 base in order to have a darker tone, which suggested my ethnic background. The lip rouge was applied to both lips and cheeks as a color tone. I decided to dye my hair black because I thought my natural red color would not be conducive to define his nationality. I also decided to use my own mustache and to grow my sideburns to earlobe level. My hair was combed in a natural.



## Chapter 5

### WARM-UP

For the warm-up I utilized a standard procedure. It consisted of make-up at 6:00 P.M. At 7:00 P.M., I would warm-up physically. This consisted of stretching exercises and various breathing and relaxation exercises. At 7:30 P.M., I would quickly review the script. At 7:40 P.M. I would dress, being careful to look in the mirror after each new article of clothing was adorned. At 7:50 P.M., I would vocalize, using diction and throat relaxation exercises. All during these warm-ups, I would be running the character and actions of Phil over in my head. At 7:55 P.M., I would concentrate on my entrance and first line. I normally did not enter until 8:15 P.M.

## Chapter 6

### ACTOR/DIRECTOR RELATIONSHIP

The function of the director in a play may vary depending upon the style of the play, period, and the experience and size of the cast. "That Championship Season" is a realistic play with a cast of five men. All five actors had had a significant amount of acting experience. Thus, the role of the director in this particular production becomes one of a guide, a reference point, an objective third eye and a source of conceptual unity, which any production must have.

The blocking process, which Gordon initially utilized, consisted of a rough and non-specific blocking pattern. His reason was to expediate the early stages of the rehearsal. This procedure also suggested to the members of the cast his concept of the movement flow of the play and his understanding of the spacial relationships of the characters.

By rough blocking I mean that the moments or intentions in the script were designated an approximate area on the stage. The stage crosses were also designated and clarified i.e. by the time a particular line is spoken, the actor must arrive at a specified point on the stage. The specific nature, time, and motivations for the crosses and staging were not initially defined. As the rehearsal process continued, the blocking would transform to meet the needs of individual scenes.

Once these foundations were established, Gordon would suggest that scenes be played with varied intentions. Often his suggestions would not make sense individually until other dichotomous or compliment-

ary intentions were performed together. At these moments, when the combined elements operated successfully, the actors were able to glimpse the director's overall concept or goal for a scene.

During this initial period, Gordon allowed me to work essentially on my own. He would comment on the success or failure of my exploration. I discovered that I functioned well in this atmosphere. What I found most stimulating was Gordon's ability to maneuver my work through his use of questions. Seldom would he ever provide a direct solution to my problems but rather he would pose a series of questions which would guide me toward an answer. I enjoyed this process because I delighted in this search for answers. I also felt that when a solution was reached I had gained personal insight into my character and had experienced self-discovery. This process is a very difficult one but for someone with my idiosyncratic insecurities, it is most beneficial. During the final rehearsal periods, Gordon only changed or readjusted minor blocking and interpretive points in order to unify the comment of the play. He also supplied me with the right amount of positive re-inforcement, which I needed.

## Chapter 7

### CURRENT PROBLEMS AS AN ACTOR

As I evaluate my growth thus far, particularly in terms of my role in "That Championship Season", I find that I have both strong and weak characteristics as an actor. My strong points are size, versatility, dynamism, energy, control, sense of humor, kinesthetic awareness, and honesty. My weak areas are in vocal production, variety, and interpretive skills. I am at times slightly lazy and have some inability to establish fluid working relationships with directors and actors. I also find that I have a much easier time dealing with presentational as opposed to representational characters.

In terms of my performance as Phil Romano, I feel that I was very successful within our production. My choices were honest and intelligent. I also felt that by the time of our performance, I had created, for myself and the audience, a character who was human, believable, honest, moving and unified. If I had the opportunity to repeat this experience, I would not do anything differently. However, I would have liked to have been able to perform the character for an extended period of time so that I could explore the character to a greater depth and also polish my performance techniques.