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DIRECTING BRIAN FRIEL'S LOVERS

By

Jeanette Chastonay

B.A., Mercy College, 1967

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

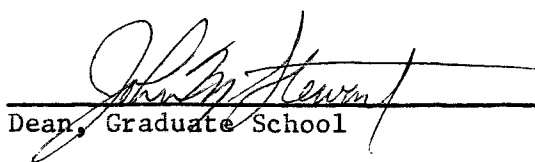
UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

1972

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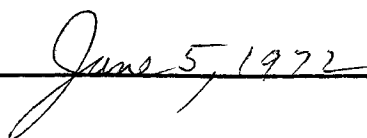


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PART I

PRE-PRODUCTION

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Each year at the University of Montana, a Masquer Scholarship Benefit show is presented. The Montana Masquers is a drama honorary within the Drama Department at the University of Montana. In 1972, the Masquers chose Brian Friel's Lovers for their production. Jeanette Chastonay, the author of the thesis, was chosen to direct the project. John Shaffner was the scene designer and technical director; Tom Valach was the lighting designer; and the costumes were designed by Patricia Bidwell. The production was entirely a student effort under the guidance of the assigned faculty.

Tryouts for Lovers were held on the nights of January 18 and 19. The production was presented on March 1st through 5th, 1972, in the Masquer Theatre, a semi-arena theatre on the University of Montana campus.

The purpose of this thesis is to present a detailed description of the creative evolution of the production from the viewpoint of the director. The thesis is divided into two parts: pre-production and production.

The pre-production section deals with the preliminary work done by the director including the following: (1) a brief biography of Brian Friel, (2) a history of the play as performed at the Vivian Beaumont Theatre in New York, (3) a sampling of reviews received by the New York production, (4) an explanation of the various themes of the play through a detailed character analysis, (5) the author's message as conceived by the director, (6) and the director's concept and purpose of the technical aspects of the production.

The production section of the thesis presents the actual evolution of the production from tryouts through rehearsals to performance. The following is discussed: (1) the role of the director, (2) tryouts and casting, (3) the actors, (4) problems faced by the actors and director, (5) methods used in rehearsal, (6) technical decisions made by the director and designers and their result. The section will conclude with an analysis of the production by the director.

An appendix follows the text of the thesis which includes the following: (1) a program of the production, (2) the floor plans of the play, (3) a copy of the review that appeared in the Montana Kaimin on March 3, 1972.

The thesis does not deal with the following: (1) the complete process of the design and technical areas, (2) the business or publicity areas, (3) the problems created by the minimal budget necessary to create profit for scholarships.

As a means of introduction to the play, what follows is a biographical account of Brian Friel, the author of Lovers, and excerpts from various reviews of the New York production.

Brian Friel is a slim dark man with a rich Northern accent; he has made a name as a writer of short stories, many of which appeared in the United States in the New Yorker. He was born in the north, in Omagh, Ireland, on either January 9 or 10 - he has two contradictory birth certificates - in 1929. His father was a schoolteacher, and Friel went to school in Omagh until 1939, when his family moved to Derry, where he still lives. He went to St. Columb's College from about 1940 to 1945, and then he went on the famous seminary at Maynooth for two years and a half. Deciding against the priesthood, he entered a teachers' training college, qualified, and began working in a secondary school in 1950. He taught until 1960, when he was able to give it up and devote his full time to writing. He is married and has two children.

His first collection of stories was called The Saucer of Larks, and his second The Gold in the Sea. He has had five plays produced.

His first, The Francophile, was put on by the Group Theatre in Belfast. His play about St. Columba, The Enemy Within, was done at the Abbey, and his Blind Mice appeared in Dublin at the Eblana with Sam Thompson in the cast. His only published play, (as of 1967) Philadelphia, Here I Come!, was one of the successes of the 1964 Theatre Festival and of the 1965-66 season in New York. The Loves of Cass McGuire played briefly in New York in the 1966-67 season.¹

Mr. Friel is also the author of The Doubtful Paradise, written in 1961;² Crystal and Fox, first performed in Dublin at the Gaiety Theatre in 1968;³ The Mundy Scheme performed at the Olympia Theatre, Dublin in 1969.⁴ Lovers was first performed at the Gate Theatre in Ireland in 1967.⁵

Lovers was presented in New York in 1968 at the Vivian Beaumont Theatre as part of the Lincoln Center Festival. It was held over for an extended run at the Music Box Theatre before going on tour. The production starred Art Carney with Anna Manahan, Eamon Morrissey, Fionnuala Flanagan, Beulah Garrick, Grania O'Malley. It was directed by Hilton Edwards; scenery by William Ritman; costumes by Noel Taylor; and lighting by Tharon Musser.⁶ With the exception of Art Carney, all of the actors were members of the original production performed at the Gate Theatre in Ireland.

The New York production opened to reasonably good reviews. What follows is a sampling of the critics' reactions to the Vivian Beaumont production.

¹ Robert Hogan, After the Irish Renaissance (Minneapolis, Minn.: The University of Minnesota Press, 1967), pp. 195-6

² John Gassner and Edward Quinn, ed., The Reader's encyclopedia of World Drama (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., Inc., 1969), p. 314.

³ Brian Friel, Crystal and Fox and The Mundy Scheme (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969), p. 150.

⁴ Ibid., p. 317.

⁵ ""Theatre", America, August 31, 1968, p. 140.

⁶ Brian Friel, Lovers (Chicago: The Dramatic Publishing Co., 1968), p.3.

The following is from America:

"Winners" is a fragile story in which a boy and a girl luxuriate in their love on the eve of their marriage, a few hours before their accidental death.

"Losers" is a comedy of autumnal love that begins in deferred passion and declines into conjugal indifference. Together, the plays suggest a rather morbid view of life. They seem to say that when your people are in love and happy it is just as well to die while they are ahead.

Brian Friel has a sensitive mind for grasping the gossamer elements of life - and a flair for weaving them in poignant drama.⁷

John Simon of Commonweal states:

Of the tension between action and narration, between external present and evenescent future, a powerful stage image rises before us through the din, for all its genuineness and warmth, tends to remain trivial.⁸

Frank Kappler sees Friel as concerned with communication between individuals and the hypocrisies of morality and society that frustrate it.⁹

Friel treats these hypocrisies with a gentle irony, more rueful than caustic. He deliberately blurs the distinction between the comic and the pathetic by writing an idyll about a pair of doomed young lovers that is quite funny and a farce about frustrated middle-aged lovers, a familiar phenomenon in Ireland, that in some ways is quite sad.¹⁰

Mr. Kappler finds the use of the commentators reminiscent of Thornton Wilder's Our Town.¹¹

Although Friel's dialogue is not in verse, he writes so beautifully and his ear for Irish speech is so faultless that "Winners" is a kind of poem, touching and often hilarious as the kids ape parents, townspeople, nuns and priests. Watching with rueful laughter young

⁷ "Theatre," America, p. 140.

⁸ John Simon, "Breath Shortage: The Stage," Commonweal, September 6, 1968, vol. 88, p. 597.

⁹ Frank Kappler, "'Winners' and 'Losers' at the Love Game," Life Magazine, August 30, 1968, p. 10.

¹⁰ Frank Kappler, Life Magazine, p. 10.

¹¹ Ibid.

lovers freed by death and old lovers trapped by life, we do feel that we have been led to the brink of some truth. Even without revelation, however, Lovers is an unaccustomed surprise, a most enjoyable summer night in the theater.¹²

Brendan Gill of the New Yorker equally enjoyed Lovers.

Friel seems to find it the easiest trick in the world to make an audience laugh; he can even make an audience chuckle - deminished physical response that, because it implies acquiescence, is not apt to be provoked by the calculated repulsiveness of our fashionable black comedies. If Mr. Friel sometimes has occasion to be sad, he manages to sound cheerfully sad at the world, or at himself, or at the rest of us. His plays, like his short stories, are modest, gentle, and winning; they take us by the hand instead of by the throat, and they lead us a little way along a path that is plainly in an orderly encompassing garden.¹³

Mr. Gill's main complaint with the play, is that Mr. Friel tends to be a trifle too modest, gentle and winning.¹⁴

Jack Kroll of Newsweek sees Friel as a minor master of the old fashioned play of sagacious, ironic, compassionate, lyric realism. He compares Friel to an extremely skillful water colorist.¹⁵

Bert Andrews of Time Magazine found the actors to be better than the plays.¹⁶

...his lace-curtained Irish dramas could easily have been written three decades ago. Unfortunately, what was valid in the '30's seems pallid in the '60's.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Brendan Gill, "The Theatre," New Yorker, August 3, 1968, p. 65.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Jack Kroll, "Theater; Love in Ballymore," Newsweek, August 5, 1968, p. 65.

¹⁶ Bert Andrews, "The Theater: New Plays," Time Magazine, August 2, 1968, p. 19.

CHAPTER II

DIRECTOR'S CONCEPT OF PLAY

"Winners" and "Losers" are not directly related with respect to characters or continuing story line, but both plays do deal with a pair of lovers in a small Irish town in the year 1966. The people in both plays are products of the strong influences of Catholicism and its social ramifications. The specific setting for each play is different; the people are different but the theme is the same: lovers seeking fulfillment through and with each other beset by the problems of communication or lack of communication between individuals in spite of their love.

Lovers is a memory play. The action of "Winners" and "Losers" takes place in the past tense as seen through the eyes of the narrators; it has already happened; it is past and gone. What is seen is the memory of the past.

"Winners" is an incredibly wordy play with very little actual action. There is no real plot line per se, or any great climactic moment within the play. The play could almost be considered a dialogue between the two characters, Maggie and Joe, while the two narrators supply all the necessary data and moving line of the script. The action of the script is provided by the cold impersonal commentary of the narrators who tell us what has already happened. It is they who tell us Maggie and Joe are drowned.

The action of "Losers" is farcical in nature. What is dramatized is the memory of Andy Tracey. The narration is given by Andy himself as he fondly recalls his courtship with Hanna. The narration of "Winners" is detached and impersonal, while the narration of "Losers" is warm and nostalgic.

This director agrees with Dan Sullivan in that: "'Winners' is a lyric, 'Losers' is a farce."¹⁷

The two plays are tied together by their differences as well as their similarities. "Winners" deals with a pair of winners of life and love. "Losers" deals with a pair of losers. In both plays Brian Friel is reinforcing his traditional theme of the impossibility and inability of communication with oneself or another individual.¹⁸

The theme is presented gently in a poignant manner lightened by many instances of humor. The humor is necessary in order to avoid complete sentimentality.

What was attempted by the director was to present both situations as real and pertinent and believable in order to make the viewing audience care about the characters on stage as people. The audience should identify and empathize with them as real people rather than actors merely performing their roles. The overall objective was to both charm and bruise the audience into recognition.

Because of the structure of the play and the lack of a traditional plot line, the director has chosen to illustrate the themes and driving forces of the plays by presenting a detailed description of each character. What follows is the director's personal interpretation and elaboration of character. The director, who was taught by Irish Catholic nuns, used much of her own experience in filling out the characters' reactions to Catholicism.

¹⁷ Dan Sullivan, "The Theatre: Art Carney and Lovers," New York Times, July 26, 1968, p. 21.

¹⁸ Hogan, Irish Renaissance, P. 196.

In "Winners" all the pertinent information of the past is given by the two narrators intermittently throughout the dialogue between Maggie and Joe. Their purpose and function is simply to give information to the audience. They sit on opposite ends of the stage reading from a bound manuscript. Their reading is impersonal and without emotion. At no time do they actually get involved with the play itself. They are both young, in their early twenties, and should give the impression of being somewhat cultured and educated. When not reading, they should remain unobtrusive and not detract from Maggie and Joe. Their cold impersonal reading should contrast with the vitality and the exuberance of the two young lovers.

Joseph Brennan is a young boy of seventeen and a half, a pupil of St. Kevin's College, a grammar school for boys run by the clergy of the diocese. He is an excellent student, not brilliant, but very keen and very industrious. His main ambition in life is to become a math teacher. With great passion, he loves to lose himself in his books studying. He states that one of the happiest moments of his life is:

sitting in the exam hall after the papers have just been given out and your eye runs down the questions...Well, these are the happiest moments in my life...There's always that tiny uncertainty that maybe this time they'll come up with something that's going to throw you; but that only adds to the thrill because you know in your heart you're...invincible.¹⁹

Joe learned to love his books at a very early age. Books, he found, are a source of comfort, dependability and communication - qualities he never found at home. The narrator states:

Joseph Brennan was the only child of Mick and Nora Brennan. Because of his asthma, Mick Brennan has not had a job for over twenty years. He receives unemployment benefit and this is supplemented by the

¹⁹ Friel, Lovers, p. 41.

earnings of his wife who works as a charwoman from 8:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m., six days a week, for 2/6d an hour...She is a quiet woman, and all her dreams and love and hope and delight were centered unashamedly in Joe. Mick Brennan - or Mick the Moocher, as he is known in Ballymore - is keenly interested in horses, greyhounds, ferrets, and pigeons. He spends most of his day at the greyhound track.²⁰

His mother, being the breadwinner of the family, leaves the house in the morning before Joe is up and does not return at night until after the dinner hour, exhausted and much too tired to attempt any sort of communication with her son. Joe was left to fend for himself throughout his growing years. He does not understand or fathom his father who allows his mother to do such drudgery work while he contentedly sits on his backside all day or plays the horses with his wife's hard earned money. Nor could he understand his mother putting up with her husband. He dismisses their relationship as a case of loyalty, for he says: "When you're that age, you hardly love your husband or wife anymore."²¹

Joe and his father never talk except to say such trivialities as 'Is the tea ready?' Yet, there is a peculiar bond of love between the two in their silence. Joe explains how his father kept all his old school reports and papers upstairs in a tin trunk. And on days when there is no racing the father secretly goes up to sit in the freezing attic and look over all the boy's old papers.²² This fascinates and mystifies Joe. He does not understand this man with whom he never speaks. Yet, he muses, when he gets older, he will take his father to football matches. Joe doesn't particularly like football matches, but his father does, and there they

²⁰ Ibid., p. 22.

²¹ Ibid., p. 53.

²² Ibid., p. 53.

wouldn't have to speak to each other except when going and coming back.²³

At school, Joe is considered an odd one for he does not like sports like other boys, nor does he make friends easily for he has never really had the opportunity to learn how to talk to people. He is known as "stew-bag," for as Maggie says, all he could do is stew, stew, stew.²⁴ The taunt hurts Joe very much, yet he is powerless to retaliate; therefore, he again reverts to his books for safety and security.

He is an only child, brought up without even the companionship and overt manifestations of parental love. He is an extremely lonely boy who is forced, for self protection, to immerse himself in the secure and definite world of his books until he meets Maggie Enright.

Maggie is the complete opposite of Joe: a warm, gregarious, chatter-box of a girl. She is seventeen, and a pupil at St. Mary's Grammar School, run by the Sisters of Mercy. Margaret is by no means a scholar. For Maggie studying is a very difficult, almost impossible chore, for it is so much more fun to dream and chatter about the various fantasies of the moment. She is an intelligent girl but extremely scatterbrained with a concentration span of perhaps a minute and a half.

Unlike Joe, Maggie bubbles over with joy and an overt, vivid love of life. Joe is passionate over his books and his ambitions and she is passionate over her dreams. Nothing gives her greater pleasure than to sit in the warm sunshine and create wonderfully absurd stories which Joe considers juvenile and ridiculous, yet he does enjoy them to a point, for this is Maggie, the girl he loves. Many times Maggie gets so lost in her stories

²³ Ibid., p. 54.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 39.

that she has a difficult time differentiating between fact and fantasy. She cannot help exaggerating the truth a bit to make a story more interesting. When she knows she has Joe's attention, she madly elaborates on the story of Big Birdie Brogan and her health as the result of her ten children. As the story becomes more and more absurdly outlandish, Joe begins to laugh at her and mock her.²⁵ Constantly she tries to impress Joe, for it truly hurts her when he offhandedly dismisses her as being stupid. To stop his mocking laughter, she makes up a disease: Pernicious micropia. His laughter only increases which frustrates her further. Cornered, she strikes back with:

You're too ignorant to have heard of it. My father came across frequent cases of it. I don't suppose your parents ever heard of it.²⁶

Her impulsive outburst is immediately regretted. She knows how sensitive Joe is about his parents. Loving Joe with all her heart and soul, she would never intentionally hurt him unless forced to. Unable to retract her searing words, she says simply as an explanation: "You were mocking me."²⁷

Being completely innocent and naive, Maggie cannot see ugliness or unpleasantness. She closes her eyes to all that she does not care to see. The apartment she and Joe are to share after their marriage is situated right above a slaughter house yard, yet she feels that if she puts a lace curtain over the window, they won't be able to see down into the yard. The room will be darker but it will be lovely and cozy, shielded from any source of ugliness.²⁸ Practical Joe thinks her a bit crazy for so easily

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 55-57.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 57.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 58.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 15.

fooling herself in this manner, yet in spite of himself, he is charmed.

Maggie adores Joe and is quite proud of his ability to study and concentrate even though she cannot understand how he does it and wishes he would talk to her a bit more. At the same time Joe cannot understand how Maggie can so blithely chatter on while she has so much work to do. He also wishes she would shut up a bit so that he could study in peace.

The narrator states:

Margaret Enright was the daughter of Walter and Beth Enright. Walter is a dentist. When he married he was the only dentist in Ballymore. Now there are three; and his practice is the smallest...after his work, he sits at home, and drinks, and reads thrillers. Beth, his wife, has been under Dr. Watson's care for 17 years, ever since the death of her infant son. She gave birth to twins - Margaret and Peter - and five days after the birth, Peter was discovered in cot, smothered by a pillow. She never really recovered from this. In her good days, she is carefree - almost reckless. In her bad days, she wears dark glasses and lies in bed. Walter looks after her.²⁹

Ever since he was a boy, Joe has always admired Maggie's parents. In Joe's eyes, they are so dignified looking and so unlike his own parents. If he could, he would like to be exactly like Maggie's father: "Such a fine man. And so friendly to everyone."³⁰ He considers Maggie to be extremely lucky to have such fine parents. And to Maggie, Joe's parents are absolutely grand. She sees Joe's father as "a highly intellectual man, really, a born naturalist. And your mother - she's so practical and so unassuming. That's what I want to be."³¹ Joe would like to be like Maggie's father and Maggie would like to be like Joe's mother.

Maggie fantasies everything including her pregnancy. Expecting an

²⁹ Ibid., p. 22.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 53.

³¹ Ibid., p. 36.

almost mystical transformation in herself because of her pregnancy, she dreams how different she will be after the birth of the baby. She muses: "One of these days, I'm going to stop talking altogether - for good - and people will say: Didn't Mrs. Joseph Brennan become dignified all of a sudden?"³² Still, she rambles on chattering away about the birth of her babe. Maggie is afraid of silence. She creates wild stories of the baby being 19 days overdue and in the next breath she is having it caesarian - pre-maturely. Yet never does the child fully realize the magnitude of birth or the reality of the pain of labor which she faces. To Maggie, it is all a wondrous romantic adventure.

She considers herself and Joe to be very special people who share a very unique love. In her mind, no one has ever been so fortunate to experience love the way she and Joe have. Happiness, real happiness, has never been discovered until she and Joe discovered it. And she wants to share this very special gift with everyone - everywhere.³³

Yet the little girl is frightened and terrified of the tremendous change in her life she is about to face with her oncoming marriage. She needs and seeks reassurance from Joe, asking or begging: "Joe, we'll be happy, Joe, won't we?"³⁴ But Joe is not capable of responding or even so much as giving her a gentle look for he, too, in his own way is frightened, not frightened so much of the many adult responsibilities that will be placed upon him, forcing him into premature manhood. He is frightened of the hard fact that he will not be able to fulfill his great ambition of

³² Ibid., p. 36.

³³ Ibid., p. 25.

³⁴ Ibid.

becoming a math teacher. He dreams that he would be a good teacher but faced with the responsibility of a family he realizes that his dream can never come true. Accepting his fate, he says:

I think I should forget about studying and London University and all that...It's maybe not what I want. But that's the way things have turned out. A married man with a family has more important things to occupy his mind besides bloody books.³⁵

Joe is willing to give up his great dream and ambition to marry Maggie. Already he is compensating himself. By giving up his ambition, he has destined himself to become a loser. He loves Maggie dearly but at times he feels trapped into marrying her, trapped into giving up the most important drive of his life.

...Bawl your head off. But if you think I'm going to waste my life in Skinny Skeehan's smelly office, that's where you're mistaken. You trapped me into marrying you - that's all right - I'll marry you. But I'll lead my own life. And somehow - somehow I'll get a degree and be a maths teacher. And nobody, neither you nor your precious baby nor anyone else is going to stop me!³⁶

They both need each other so much. They need tremendous support from each other during this difficult time but both are unable to give it. They are still so young, such children.

Maggie, herself, is just a child and soon she will have a child of her own to care for. She was a sheltered child both at home and at school and is terrified of the prospect of moving out of her father's house into the unsheltered world. Her father has offered the pair an apartment in his house which Maggie would love to accept in order to remain in the safe embryo of the family but Joe will not hear of it. She deludes herself

³⁵ Ibid., p. 69.

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 39-40.

into thinking it is for her father's sake that she would like to stay at home for he will be terribly lonely without her. She, then, reassures herself with the idea that she can wheel the pram over every afternoon to visit.³⁷ How dearly she loves her father and how he adores his little girl.

Ever since the prospect of marriage has been introduced into the relationship of Maggie and Joe, a strange sort of tension has developed between the two. Both are the products of Catholic homes and the strict doctrine of Catholic schools. Both have been heavily indoctrinated in the evil of sin and the guild that follows. They have indulged in illicit sex, a mortal sin punished by the eternity of hell. Catholic schools segregate boys and girls. Too much mingling of the sexes only breeds evilness and sin. Impure thoughts are sins which must be confessed and penance must be performed. Guilt and shame and fear of damnation are facts of life with which Catholics must live. People of loose morals are evil beings and ostracized from the Catholic society. In spite of the philosophy of Christianity, there is little forgiveness exercised in the strict Catholic society.

The religious theme is strong in both plays. In "Winners" it is obviously skirted by both Maggie and Joe, as is demonstrated by their numerous playful, yet vindictively serious, jabs at the religious authority figures in their lives. Both are afraid of religious authority and find it much easier to poke fun at religious superficialities than deal with the true density of the religion itself and its principles. With great glee, Maggie imagines 1,200,000 nuns all gathered together on an island with the Chinese navy let loose on them. "Cripes, you'd hear the squeals in Tobermore!"³⁸ Immediately she realizes what she has said: "I have a wicked

³⁷ Ibid., p. 20.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 11.

mind, too."³⁹ Saying such wicked things is sinful, dangerous and thrilling, but so self gratifying, for in this small way she can attain a sense of revenge and retribution against the symbols of religion, the nuns, by whom she was so deeply hurt.

They hysterically laugh at Sister Pascal's statement "that for every five minutes you laugh, you cry for ten."⁴⁰ Throughout their lives the nuns and priests have been their guide to truth. How could they now so easily dismiss their teachings? Throughout the play, the dialogue is studded with constant references to the hierarchy of their immediate Catholic society. Several times Maggie giggles and says: "Nuns are screams if you don't take them seriously."⁴¹ By mocking and joking, they rebel against the nuns and priests who have barred them from their society but find it impossible to dismiss them from their minds, for religion is too much an integral part of them.

Within the embryonic confines of the Catholic school and the strict controlling discipline of the nuns and priests, they were so safe. Life was regulated. Longingly, they watch the boarders on their way to chapel. How safe and peaceful it was in chapel. All their mocking and joking in trying to break that strong tie has been to no avail. Quietly Maggie says:

And at home last week, every time I heard the convent bell, I cried; I felt so lost. I would have given anything to be a part of them - to be in the middle of them...We were so safe...we had so much fun...⁴²

Quietly they cling to each other. Both realize that the integral embryonic cord of the Catholic convent school has been severed and they

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid., p. 46.

41 Ibid., p. 23, 34, 47.

42 Ibid., p. 67.

realize all they now have is each other. For the first time in the play, they are truly together on honest terms, quietly and sincerely. It is here that they could come together and honestly communicate their hopes and dreams and fears but they are afraid of the honesty of communication. The mood is immediately changed with Maggie too strongly asserting:

But I wouldn't go bak for the world. I'm a woman now at seventeen, and I wouldn't be a schoolgirl again, not for all the world.⁴³

Maggie and Joe spend much of their time together. They've known each other since childhood. The hilltop of Ardnageeha is their special place to meet and be together. After spending so much time up there, alone, they know every nook and cranny of their spot intimately. Here they are comfortable. And it is here they let their passion get the best of them. Here they come and wrestle and play, and each time their playing would go a bit further and become more intense until finally one day, their passion overtook them.

Joe, deprived of any display of overt love or affection or communication, is possessed by an overwhelming need for human contact. This need finally became too much for either of them to handle and they became powerless against it. It is so much easier to assert oneself in physical sexuality than in words. Joe is a proud and stubborn boy who would not even allow himself to say the simple phrase: I love you. The only time he exposes himself and his true feelings of tenderness and love, which Maggie so desperately needs and wants to hear, is when she is asleep.⁴⁴ He needs and loves her desperately but again he cuts off communication.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 67.

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 51-53.

Mag, I'm not half good enough for you. I'm jealous and mean and spiteful and cruel. But I'll try to be tender to you and good to you; and that won't be hard because even when I'm not with you - just when I think of you - I go all sort of silly and I say to myself over and over again: I'm crazy about Maggie Enright; and so I am - crazy about you. You're a thousand times too good for me. But I'll try to be good to you; honest to God, I'll try.⁴⁵

They need and love each other desperately, yet they are afraid to establish an open contact with each other. Maggie vocalizes her fears to Joe when she knows that he is deeply immersed in his books and not listening to her. Perhaps, she is afraid he will laugh at her and this she could not bear. Softly she murmurs: "Joe, I'm nervous; I'm frightened, Joe; I'm terrified..."⁴⁶ They both long to reach out and communicate with each other on an honest level but cannot allow themselves to do so.

The lovemaking of Maggie and Joe was not premeditated but just happened one day, probably much to the surprise and horror of them both. This is a practice a good Catholic girl or boy does not indulge in, for it is a grievous mortal sin. To even think of sex is sinful. According to the Catholic Church, the only purpose of sexual intercourse is for the procreation of children. It is evil, dirty and strictly taboo for any purpose other than procreation.

Their union was probably a crude and brutal one, disgusting and frightening and humiliating to them both. Sex is a subject not taught in a Catholic school or in an old-fashioned Catholic home. Whatever sexual knowledge one learns is usually picked up in whispered conferences in the schoolyard amidst many giggles and shushes. It is dirty. It is forbidden.

A girl in trouble is someone to be scorned and scoffed at and not

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 52.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 35.

to be pitied. Someone who would do such a terrible thing deserves the consequences. At this time, when a girl most needs the help and understanding of the good Christian nuns, they turn their backs and expel her from school.

What excruciating tortures of fear, loneliness, shame and guilt Maggie must have lived through. She could not turn to Joe, for ever since their sexual encounter both are extremely awkward and shy with each other. She had never been able to talk to her mother and she wanted to die every time she thought of her father and how deeply he would be hurt when he found out about her condition.

To be unmarried and pregnant in the Irish Catholic society is the worst of fates. In Sean O'Casey's Juno and the Paycock, Jack Boyle wonders what is wrong with his daughter, asking his wife: "It's not consumption is it?" Juno answers: "No...it's not consumption...it is worse."⁴⁷ It is a great shame and humiliation not only to the girl but to the parents as well. Boyle laments: "...whenever I'm seen they'll whisper, 'That's th' father of Mary Boyle that had th' kid be th' swank she used to go with; d'ye know, d'ye know?' To be sure they'll know."⁴⁸

Both Maggie and Joe are expelled from school and ostracized by their society.⁴⁹ They are to be married for that was the only decent thing to be done in such a situation. All they have now is each other. They love each other and cling together but now there is that uncomfortable sexual tension between them. When they meet on top of the hill, they do not kiss as two lovers about to be married but wrestle and roll around like two

⁴⁷ Sean O'Casey, Juno and the Paycock (London: Samuel French Ltd., 1932), p. 47.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 48.

⁴⁹ Friel, Lovers, p. 62.

little children at play for they are now afraid of their passion for each other. Every minute they are together, they are intensely aware of each other's presence. Even when Joe is lost in his books, he is still very much aware of Maggie's presence. They argue, they laugh, they play, they joke. They argue bitterly, wounding each other to the core of their being. They laugh until it hurts, falling on the ground with tears streaming down their faces. They playfully, yet, seriously, mock the people they know - joyously ridding themselves of their hostilities towards all the people who have so deeply hurt them. How Maggie loves to play Mother Dolores being shot and how Joe loves to shoot her. Nothing is done in moderation. Being young and vigorous, they are filled with all the vitality of life and youth and love. Both are extremely passionate people tied together by their passion.

It is not until the end of the play when both are able to sit quietly together, tenderly touching, and together talk and dream about their future. But in a very short time this becomes too much for Maggie. Exploding with impatience for the future, she decides that she cannot wait for it to happen and must make it happen with Joe. She exclaims:

The past's over! And I hate this waiting time! I want the future to happen - I want to be in it - I want to be in it with you!⁵⁰

She demands that they begin the future right now! Her mad infectious mood is caught by Joe and they run off to do something wonderful and crazy which brings them to their death.

"Winners" is hopeful, showing two young lovers very much in love, filled with dreams and joyful in the expectation of their future life to-

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 60.

gether. Naturally, they are afraid of their new life but their fear does not diminish their love. If anything, it brings them closer together. They consider their love unique and that real happiness was never discovered until they discovered it.⁵¹ Maggie looks around at older couples feeling pity for them, for "none of them knows what being in love really is."⁵² She and Joe are different and never would become like everyone else, for they are young and the world is theirs to conquer. But most important, is that they will conquer the world together.

I look at Papa and Mother, and Mr. and Mrs. O'Hara, and all the other parents and I think - I think - none of them knows what being in love really is. And that's why I think we're different...At this moment - here - now - I'm crazy about you - and mad and reckless, so that I want to shout it to the whole town...I love Joe Brennan!...And when I look around me - at Papa and Mother and the O'Haras - I think: My God we'll never become like that because - don't laugh at me, Joe - because I think we're unique!⁵³

The death of these two young lovers is really not disturbing for they die winners. They die as happy lovers with death saving the pair from being the losers that life surely would have made of them. Maggie and Joe will never become the losers that Hanna and Andy became.

"Winners" begins by dealing with the hopes and dreams of the young who are in love. "Losers" begins at the end of love. All dreams and hopes have been relinquished and crushed and now only the memory remains. It is a static situation.

"Losers" opens with Andy Tracey:

staring fixedly through a pair of binoculars at a grey stone wall which is only a few yards from where he is sitting. It becomes

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 25.

⁵² Ibid., p. 38.

⁵³ Ibid.

obvious that he is watching nothing; there is nothing to watch.⁵⁴

With Andy staring at the stone wall, the author immediately presents the audience with a picture of emptiness, nothingness, and futility - no dreams, no hopes, only the memory of what once was.

Andy Tracey is a large, pleasant looking man of fifty in good health, except for a bit of rheumatism in his back. He is a joiner by trade and in his own simple way Andy enjoys his work. He never has had much education for he stopped school early to go to work. Never has he had a great deal of money, only enough to get by on easily, which is all he's ever wanted, for Andy has never been particularly ambitious. He is a simple man of simple tastes.

Andy is a man of no particular vices; he doesn't smoke or drink or gamble or chase women. Around women, he has always been rather shy; but, all in all, he is a quite personable and agreeable sort of chap who loves to tell a good story.

Until he met Hanna, Andy kept mainly to himself, happily puttering around his house and garden at Riverview, about which he is quite pleased and proud.

A while after he met Hanna, he finally mustered up enough courage to start calling on her at home, "for they couldn't go out to the pictures nor nothing like any other couple."⁵⁵ Andy fondly remembers the days of their courting. Very methodically, every evening, he would go home to Riverview to spruce himself up in his good suit and every evening, without fail, he would stop for a quarter of clove rock for that's the kind of candy Hanna

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 77.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 79.

liked. Each night the same ritual of courtship would be repeated. Each night Andy would react to Hanna in the same manner: "and when she's open the door to me, honest to God the aul legs would damn near buckle under me."⁵⁶ He would enter, and as every other night, they would stand at opposite ends of the room, madly grinning at each other, feeling terribly awkward and intensely aware of each other while desperately trying to think of something to say. Probably the same trivial conversation about the weather ensues each night. Finally, they would manage to settle down on the couch and start to relax when invalid Mamma would clang her bell from upstairs and Hanna would have to rush upstairs to see to the old lady.

Hanna Wilson is a woman in her late forties living with her invalid mother. Before Andy, her whole life consisted of taking care of her mother and going to her factor job. She led a very dull life as she quietly accepted her fate of spinsterhood and her duty to her mother. Being a very simply woman of minimal education, she had no hobbies nor outside interests. Her life was one long series of functions, duties and horribly dull, repetitious habit. Before Andy, there had not been a man in her life for over twenty years. Even then, there was no barrage of suitors at her door, for Hanna had never been considered a pretty woman.

Then Andy came into her life suddenly changing her whole resigned outlook on life. With Andy's entrance the spark of life was rekindled for Hanna. "This sudden injection of romance into a life that seemed rigidly and permanently patterned had transformed a very plain spinster into an almost attractive woman."⁵⁷ With Andy, Hanna is a passionately warm and

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 117.

alive woman; with her mother she is curt and cold and waspish.

Neither Hanna nor Andy are young or experienced in the ways of love and courtship. Their relationship is a strange one. They sit together and exchange the necessary formalities while inwardly squirming with impatience for the actual courting to begin. It is always Hanna who takes the initiative, almost violently throwing herself upon Andy without any real warning. Even though the same procedure happens every night, it never ceases to surprise and sometimes shock gentle Andy. In order to keep Mama from clanging her bell, Hanna and Andy have devised a scheme to keep her quiet. As long as there is the sound of talking downstairs, she would keep quiet upstairs. So while Hanna is madly kissing Andy, he must maintain his composure in order to recite the only poem he has ever learned, Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard." Their courting is performed under forced conditions. Even though Mama is upstairs, her presence and dominance is constantly with them. Never are they really alone with each other. The will of the mother is always obeyed. Andy tries to assert himself and his dominance before their marriage by refusing to move into the mother's house:

Well, damnit all, you don't expect me to come in here, do you? I mean to say, I have a place and all of my own, ready and furnished and everything! and leaping sky-high every time you hear a bloody bell isn't my idea of married bliss! My God, you don't expect that of me, do you? Well, do you?⁵⁸

This is his last challenge before submitting to the two women. In this house he is subordinate to them. Riverview is his and there he would be boss. Cajoling Hanna, he reassures her of how much she will like it over at Riverview. But powerless against the tears of Hanna, he makes

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 94.

the fatal mistake of submitting to her will.

Come on, come on, there's no need for that. You know I can't stand seeing you crying. And you know i'd do anything to make you happy.⁵⁹ We'll solve it one way or another...we'll get a solution to it all.

Andy has given in to the will of Hanna who in her own way is just as strong as the mother. Using all the tricks of her femininity, tears, helplessness, appealing to the male ego for support and assistance, she leaves him no other choice but to give into her will and move into her mother's house. He is a sweet, kind, generous soul and before their marriage actually admired Hanna's devotion to her mother. He even feels a bit of guilt for taking Hanna away from her mother. "She'll miss you when you're gone, Hanna."⁶⁰ He is even willing to take the old woman into Riverview with them into his house after they are married but htis is not what Hanna wants. After their marriage, he realizes his mistake.

The big mistake I made was to come back here after the honeymoon - even for the couple of weeks that it was supposed to be at the beginning. I should have put my foot down then. But, like everything happened so sudden.⁶¹

At the time, Andy is caught in the whirlwind of love and does not realize the tremendous compromise with himself. Being such a simple man, he places everyone on a par with himself, and being so uncomplicated and generous, he would never consider that he is being duped, especailly by the woman he loves.

The union between Hanna and Andy is strictly sexual. There is not one mention of love in the script. Even in Andy's private dialogues he

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 95.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 82.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 103.

never mentions any love for Hanna. The closest he comes is: "By God, she had spunk in those days, eh?"⁶² In his own simple way he probably does love Hanna. But perhaps he loves the idea of happily sharing his home in Riverview with a wife more than the actuality of Hanna.

They never communicate with each other except on a sexual level. They are not interested in talking for they really have nothing to say to each other. Their talk is forced and its only purpose is to fill the silence to prevent the interruption of Mama Wilson.

You see, every sound down here carries straight up to her room; and we discovered that it was the long silences made her suspicious. That's the way with a lot of pious aul women - they have wild dirty imaginations. And as soon as there was a silence down here, she thought we were up to something and reached for the bloody bell. But if there was the sound of plenty chatting down here, she seldom bothered you.⁶³

The mother at all times keeps the pair apart. By imposing the necessity of constant talk during their courting days, the mother thwarts the pair's only means of communication - physical contact. After the marriage, Hanna sleeps upstairs in case the mother should have a heart attack. "Not that that's likely. The doctor says she'll go on forever."⁶⁵ The mother has successfully managed to kill any physical contact the pair might share. But as Andy says, the truly perverse thing is the matter of the bell after their marriage.

And a funny thing about that bloody bell, too. You know, before, if there was no noise coming from downstairs, that ringing would be enough to waken the dead. But after we got married, it only went when

62 Ibid., p. 89.

63 Ibid., p. 83.

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid., p. 114.

Hanna and me started talking. Wasn't that perverse now, eh? O, a deep one; deep as a well. We could sit, by God, for a whole night and not say a word to each other, and there wouldn't be a cheep from upstairs. But let us start chatting and the clanging would damn near shake the house.⁶⁶

The mother is now in full control and at no time does she allow the two to come together. She establishes and maintains their separateness as both submit to her will. She maintains her control by using her supposed sickness and her pious religious devotion to St. Philomena and the rosary.

Hanna never stands up to the old woman. Before their marriage Hanna puts on a great show for Andy's benefit of being "sick - sick - sick - sick of the whole thing...The day I get married I'm getting shot of her for good!"⁶⁷ After the marriage Andy notices the change in Hanna.

Like, you know, before we got married, she was full of fight. Let the aul woman step out of line or say something sharp to me and by God she jumped at her like a cock at a gooseberry. But somehow the spirit seemed to drain out of her from the very beginning. Of course, when the bloody bell would go she would still say "The aul bitch!" But, you know, even the way she said it now, like kind of weary, and almost as if it wasn't anger at the aul woman at all but more to please me.⁶⁸

Andy never totally gives into the will of the old woman. Each night along with Cissy, a pious religious fanatical friend of Mrs. Wilson, the little family gathers upstairs in the mother's bedroom to say the nightly rosary, facing the big statue of St. Philomena. Here Andy takes a stand and refuses to be a part of the nightly vigil. "Well, I mean to say, a man has to draw the line somewhere."⁶⁹ The mother retaliates by offering

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 104.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 93.

⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 103-4.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 104.

him up to St. Philomena to further aggravate and frustrate Andy. Andy somehow is determined to win the silent battle waged between him and his mother-in-law. His chance for victory arrives when the Vatican releases the news that St. Philomena never existed.

Like I never knew I was a spiteful man until that minute; and then, by God, my only thought was to stick that paperdown the aul woman's throat.⁷⁰

By taking Philomena away from the old woman, Andy would win his revenge but poor Andy "bolliexed" his only chance by coming home drunk, singing and shouting like a madman.⁷¹ He sits on his porch reviewing the scene over and over in his mind, thinking of what he should have done and regretfully of what he did. Philomena is gone, yet the mother remains the victor as she holds court every night with everyone in attendance keeling about her bed to say the rosary. Andy has even lost his small foothold of resistance by again joining in the nightly ritual of the rosary. "Anything for a quiet life."⁷² Andy has lost the battle and is now in the full power and control of the old woman.

In "Losers", Friel makes mock of the superficialities of religion and its 'worshippers.' Cissy Prissy is installed into the play as a comic statement typifying the frenzied religious fanatic. The mother hypocritically and cunningly negates the Christian principles and doctrines of Catholicism by her selfish manipulation of people.

In Dan Sullivan's review of the play, he states that when the mother prays to God and Philomena she clearly means Philomena and God.⁷³ Much

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 105.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 106.

⁷² Ibid., p. 114.

⁷³ Sullivan, Times, p. 21.

importance is placed on the statue itself. The mother regards the statue as an animate being; she talks to it and exchanges knowing intimate glances with the inanimate object.

An maybe you'd be good enough to move St. Philomena around a wee bit so that she's facing me...just a little to the left...so that we're looking at each other...That's it. Lovely.⁷⁴

The statue emanates a definite presence in the room situated on its altar with its fresh flowers. The statue itself is prayed to rather than the being it represents.

The people in "Losers" are religious because of habit. They would never dare be so presumptuous as to question their faith or their religion. They accept the precepts of the faith blindly for to doubt one's faith would be sinful leading one into temptation. This director recalls an experience in a senior religion class when the nun was talking about doubts. Someone in the class questioned her, asking: "Exactly what is a doubt, Sister?" The nun bowed her head, blessed herself piously and softly answered: "It is a very grave thing and I pray to God you never have one."

Saying the rosary every night in the Wilson household has become a tradition or a habit used by Mrs. Wilson to further exert her will over the people she controls. She revels in her power as Hanna, Andy and Cissy kneel about her bed. She glows in the attention and adoration Cissy heaps upon her because she is an invalid. Cissy regards all invalids as saints. Mrs. Wilson probably does consider herself a saint and relishes Cissy's acceptance of this absurd notion.

During the recitation of the rosary, Cissy and Mrs. Wilson go into ecstasies of piety while Hanna and Andy perform the duty as perfunctorily as

⁷⁴ Friel, Lovers, pp. 98-99.

one would go to daily mass during Lent to simply gain indulgences.

No character in "Losers" would ever dare mock the nuns and priests as Maggie and Joe do in "Winners." Even Andy does not mock Father Peyton, who is the mother's idol. Maggie and Joe rebel while the losers accept. The winners are active and the losers are passive.

In spite of the delightful lyricism of "Winners" and the comic farcical nature of "Losers," Mr. Friel's message is quite serious and depressing. Friel shows man's inability to communicate either with himself or with other individuals while attacking the hypocrisies of morality and society that frustrate it.

In Friel's Philadelphia, Here I Come, Madge, the maid, remarks that when Gar is his father's age:

...he'll turn out just the same. And although I won't be here to see it, you'll find that he's learned nothin' in between times. That's people for you.⁷⁵

Mr. Friel seems to deny change, implying that man is doomed to be a victim of circumstance; unable to escape or change. At the opening of "Losers" Andy is seen sitting on the porch staring through binoculars just as his predecessor, Hanna's father, Mr. Wilson used to do. He is even using Mr. Wilson's binoculars.

Anyway, most of the time I set with my eyes closed. And Hanna - she probably knows I do 'cause she's no doser; but once I come out here - I'll say that for her - she leaves me alone. A gesture I make, and she - you know - she respects it. Maybe because her aul fella used to do the same thing; for that's where I learned the dodge. As a matter of fact these are his glasses. And this is where he was found dead, the poor bugger, just three years ago, slumped in a chair out here, and him all wrapped up in his cap and his top coat and his muffler and his woolen gloves...Civil wee man he was, too. Fifty years a

⁷⁵ Brian Friel, Philadelphia, Here I Come (New York: The Noonday Press, 1965), p. 108.

stoker out in the general hospital. And a funny thing - one of the male nurses out there was telling me - all his life he stuck to the night shift; worked all night and slept all day, up there in that room above the kitchen. Peculair, eh? All his life. Never saw the wife except maybe for a couple of hours in the evening. Never saw Hanna, the daughter, except at the weekends. Funny, eh? And yet by all accounts the civilest and decentest wee man you could meet.⁷⁶

Just as Mrs. Wilson had isolated herself from her husband, she isolates Hanna from Andy. The Wilson marriage repeats itself in the Tracey marriage. Andy accepts the role of Mr. Wilson as an outsider imposed upon him by Mrs. Wilson. Mr. Friel implies that Andy too will be found slumped in a chair wrapped up in his cap, his top coat, his muffler and his woolen gloves.

It is implied that if Maggie and Joe had lived they too would have been victims of their curcumstance, doomed to lose.

Joe is a good student whose great ambition is to go to London University to become a maths teacher, but because Maggie is going to have his child he is forced to marry her. Although he loves her dearly, it doesn't take much to provoke him into blaming her for trapping him into marriage. If there is already bitterness and regret this early during this idyllic period of their lives, it is evident that this bitterness will grow and fester throughout their marriage. Similarly the couple joke about having rented a flat above a slaughterhouse. What is funny in prospect will certainly prove depressing as the novelty wears off in the routine of day-to-day experience.

Joe's parents have placed great hopes in their son. His father pours over all Joe's old school reports and papers while feeling great pride in his son's future. Whatever unrealized ambitions he had for himself, he

⁷⁶ Friel, Lovers, pp. 78-79.

now holds for Joe. There seems to be a strong indication that Joe's forced marriage might lead him to a similar vicarious hope for his children.

The losers are trapped by life and must endure, while the winners are freed by death from the inevitable fate of becoming losers. Death is almost treated as a kindness or saving grace. Maggie and Joe are saved for if they had lived they too would have been trapped into passivity.

CHAPTER III

PURPOSE OF TECHNICAL ELEMENTS

Lovers is a memory play taking place in the past tense. The purpose of all the technical elements coordinated together was to create an illusion of memory providing the audience with a nostalgic feeling of the nonpresent contrasting the vital reality of the present tense of the here-and-now in which the characters were presented by the actors.

The time of the play is anytime in the present. The director chose the time the play was written, 1966. Since 1966, the Catholic Church has experienced a tremendous rebirth and renovation changing many of its traditional beliefs and doctrines. The characters in both plays are strongly influenced by the traditional teachings of Catholicism. It is for this reason that the time should be given as 1966. It was at this time the Church began to decanonize many of its favorite saints, including St. Philomena. Aside from the religious implications, the play could have taken place anywhere or anytime within the present. It was decided to keep the play in Ireland because of the lyricism of the speech pattern, and the simplicity, sentimentality and naivete of the Irish people.

In order to create a feeling of the nonpresent, stark reality was avoided in the presentation of the sets. The reality of the setting was only implied, with the intention of suggesting a room or a hilltop with a minimal amount of scenic materials. Only the essence of setting was presented as it would be remembered. A person is dominant in memory while he is near at hand, but when one moves away from him, memory becomes vague and less clear. One doesn't remember a wall, yet one might remember a picture hanging on a wall.

The purpose of the "Losers" set was to convey a somber feeling of stagnation and defeat. The colors were dark and oppressive and the furniture and set pieces old and worn. The scenery was fragmentary, presenting only the essence of the room as it would be remembered by Andy. The set was divided into rooms by means of platforms; there were no dividing walls or doors.

The bedroom of Mrs. Wilson is a dominant force in the memory of Andy just as she is in his life. The dominating feature in the room is the bed signifying Mrs. Wilson. A great deal of detail clutter is in the room, such as numerous religious articles that create the cramped stifling effect she had on Andy and his life. Facing the bed is the dominant statue of St. Philomena.

The dominant feature in the main downstairs sitting room is the couch where Andy spend his happiest moments. Nothing in this room would be as vivid in the memory of Andy as the couch. Since happy memories stem from this room, it should remain comfortable, pleasant and uncluttered.

The outside area of the porch is small and cramped with a suggestion of a stone wall surrounding it to signify the imprisonment of Andy within the immutability of his life. This area is the area of the present. The small area is elevated higher than the rest of the set. From here, Andy looks down and recalls his past.

Looking at the "Losers" set, one should immediately know the people who live there. One should know the inhabitants are poor, lower class, plain, simple, middle-aged, uneducated Catholics. One should also gain a sense of immutability, the impression that the house looked exactly the same twenty years ago and will probably look the same twenty years from now.

For "Winners" the director had no definite idea of set, only a feeling and concept of production. Initially, the director wanted the set to convey the light airy feeling of a warm sunny day in June and to contrast with the dark tragic fate of the characters. The set was to remain as unobtrusive as possible in order not to 'take-away-from' the youthful vitality of the characters. The hilltop of Arnageeha was to be suggested only by stage levels composed of nonrecognizable pieces to reinforce the feelings of memory. The setting is not particularly important to the memory, only the people. All that matters is that they are together.

The purpose of the lighting is the same as that of the set: to strongly create the feeling of a memory.

Light has the great capability of giving an edge to the final statement of mood of a scene...Stage lighting is not mere illumination but specific illustration of a very subtle sort - the sort that can reach an audience's imagination more quickly and more subliminally than an actor often can.⁷⁷

The purpose of the costumes and makeup was to present a realistic picture of the characters within the concept of the play. The costumes should indicate who these people are: Irish, middle-class working people. By way of costumes and makeup a nineteen year old actor is helped to become fifty year old Andy Tracey.

Although costume may be defined in several ways, one of the best is to see costume as live scenery worn by an actor in a particular role in a particular play. Acting is impersonation, not reality; so is costume, for it is the exterior reflection of the actor's impersonation, which assumes that the person portrayed is someone other than the actor himself.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Hodge, Play Directing, p. 242.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 251.

PART II

PRODUCTION

CHAPTER IV

TRYOUTS AND CASTING

Tryouts for Lovers were held on January 18 and 19 in the Masquer Theatre with about 65 people in attendance. The majority of those people present were very young and inexperienced actors. At this time the Montana Repertory Theater was in rehearsal utilizing the bulk of the department's more talented and seasoned actors.

One of the prime objectives during the tryouts was to create a relaxed, free and enjoyable atmosphere disguising, as much as possible, the unpleasant ordeal of auditioning. Actors are nervous while auditioning. Very often this state of nervousness, if controlled and used, can be extremely advantageous to the actor by adding the essential element of excitement and energy to the reading. But, unless the actor is an experienced auditioner, this nervous energy can become a detrimental factor stifling his creative impulses. The director, too, was frightened of the task before her. In an attempt to relax both herself and the auditioners and break the tension, she openly admitted that she was scared and nervous and extremely surprised and awed by the large turnout of people. The result was laughter and a bit of the wall was broken down between actor and casting director.

The first play to be read was "Winners." A description of the play and characters was given by the director. Initially, everyone read the same scene. (The scene used is on pages 13-20. Joe is telling Maggie that he has signed the lease to the flat where they are to live after their marriage.) The same scene was used repeatedly to provide the actors with an opportunity to become well acquainted with the words and objectives

of the particular scene in order that they might gain a sense of confidence and freedom that would allow them to relax into the movement of the scene.

This particular scene was chosen because of its great diversity. The opening involves the two young people sitting quietly studying and talking. Here, the director was looking to see if the actor had the capability to honestly talk and listen and react to another actor within the confines and artifice of a script. The second part of the scene is a mad series of aping imitations and jabs as the two characters, together, playfully act out a fantasy of shooting many of the people in their lives that they dislike. Here, the director was trying to find out how imaginatively and freely the actors could improvise together and utilize the stage. The actors were encouraged to have fun with the scene and work together.

The director, who had absolutely no preconceived ideas regarding the actors to be used in casting, was seeking enthusiastic young actors with a strong sense of honesty, imagination, naturalness, freedom and theatricality and who would be hard workers who would respond well to direction. Also, it was imperative to the play that they be likable for the audience must empathize and care about these people and what happens to them. (The exception to this rule is the part of the Mother in "Losers".) Throughout the intensive readings, the director carefully considered all of the above.

As far as the characters of Maggie and Joe were concerned, the director was totally open to any qualities of characterization the auditioners might present. A most important qualification in the casting of these two roles was that the two actors work well together. They must feel comfortable with each other, like each other personally and compliment each other on stage both physically and emotionally. Both parts require an enormous

amount of energy and concentration on the parts of the actors.

The original conception of the director was to cast Maggie and Joe with very pretty, almost angelic young people and, thereby, aim to illicit a rather ethereal impact of lyricism with the dreamlike presence of Maggie and JOE interrupted by the hardcore reality of the narrators. The frank reality of Tom Morris' reading completely upset this conception. Every time he was called upon to read he attacked the role with great energy, abandon and originality. Physically, he is not the classic juvenile romantic lead. He is a big sloppy looking boy with a big fat baby face, the complete opposite of the director's physical picture of Joe as the lyrical young man. The director auditioned several other young men, yet kept coming back to Tom. He presented all the necessary qualities of Joe. The major problem the director was to face was to make the audience believe that this vibrant young man was a serious student.

With the choice of Tom as JOEF the preconceived idea of a pretty little fluffy Maggie had to be discarded. Peggy O'Connell was chosen as a foil to Tom's Joe. It was perfectly conceivable that these two would be drawn together so fiercely and completely. Neither presents an image of particular social ease or popularity in the chiche tradition. They discover each other and cling together. Both are extremely likable young people with great imagination and energy. The director was well acquainted with both as acting students and aware of their growth potential and readiness for and need of a role of importance. And most importantly, the director knew that they could work well together and understand each other in the intimate director-actor relationship.

The narrators were cast with Karen Hummel and Todd Yeager: two attractive young people with good speaking voices and a good command of the

spoken language of the play.

The casting process for "Losers" was extremely difficult for here was required young actors who could handle age, character and comedy. The casting of Andy Tracey was especially difficult. It is a mammoth role and requires one who is totally comfortable on stage and can intimately and interestingly deliver pages of dialogue directly to the audience. He should have a good comic sense and be able to believably impersonate a man of fifty. Needless to say, there was not an overabundance of actors to choose from. Out of three possible actors, the choice was narrowed down to two. Scott Shaw was physically ideal for the role. The other actor read very well with a good slick comic sense of timing. He came across as a bit too charming for Andy and it was feared that his characterization would be too gimmicky and slick. Scott Shaw, who had never been in anything other than a high school production, was chosen to play Andy.

Dale Haines Raoul was chosen unhesitatingly to play the strongly aggressive Hanna Wilson Tracey. Dale was the only experienced actress in the cast. A strong actress, who possesses an excellent sense of comic timing, she was perfect for the role, being a big woman with a face that adapts easily to age.

The mother is a strong dominant force in the play. She should be handled by a strong actress who is capable of radiating force through hypocritical, saccharine, angelic sweetness. The director chose to cast a very small woman in the role as a comic contrast to the very large Hanna and Andy whom she so definitely controls and manipulates. The frailty of her appearance was intended as a further reiteration of the absurdity of her controlling position. Debra Cragg was cast in this role.

The marvelous character role of the fanatical Cissy was played by

Arlynn Fishbaugh. Many people could have played this role for it could survive any number of different interpretations. In her reading, Arnie exhibited a delightful element of fidgetiness and fluster.

With the exception of Dale playing Hanna and Scott as Andy and the two narrators, all the actors cast were former or present acting students of the director and a bond of communication was already established. Since the production was a scholarship benefit for the good of the students, it was attempted to cast the play in the same manner. The director sincerely tried to consider not only the good of the show, but also the good of the student auditioning: actors who needed a role the most in order to complete their growth process as actors. With the exception of Dale, it was the first opportunity for those cast to play a major role in a University production.

CHAPTER V

DIRECTOR'S APPROACH TO REHEARSAL

The initial task of the director in rehearsal is to establish an environment in which the actors may feel free to function on a creative level. The rehearsal period should be considered as a special time for serious and concentrated work for both the actor and the director. A relaxed sense of freedom should prevail with an easy flow of rapport and permissiveness to encourage actors to experiment without the fear of failure. Actors must be coaxed into creativity and not pressured. Viola Spolin states in her book, Improvisation for the Theatre:

If the rehearsal period is one of tensions, anxieties, competitiveness, and bad temper, this will be absorbed by the actors along with their parts and will be a shadow over the finished work. If, on the other hand, the atmosphere is relaxed and social and joyous with the excitement of the work at hand and the anticipation of the show to come, this too will be evident in the final production. A nuance, perhaps, but an important one; for when actors are free and enjoying their roles, then the audience is relaxed, and an extra note of pleasure is added to their viewing.¹

A standard of discipline was immediately established in the first rehearsal with the director stressing the importance of attendance and promptness. It was stated that lateness would not be tolerated or lazy actors. Actors should be prepared to come to rehearsals ready to work - physically, mentally and emotionally, and during the rehearsal and performance periods, actors should physically take care of themselves by getting the proper rest and maintaining proper eating habits so that they may be in full command of their instrument, and, thereby, be able to function on the creative level without hindrance.

¹ Viola Spolin, Improvisation for the Theatre (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1969), p. 330.

In Directing for the Theatre W. David Sievers states that one of the initial roles of the director is that of unifier:

When the cast assembles for the first reading, it will be a diversified collection of individuals whom the director must weld into a unified whole by opening night. The inanimate objects with which the director affects the audience - the scenery, lights, costumes - can be made to do what he wants; yet the greatest impact upon the audience is made by an element that is far more complex, difficult to understand and elusive in control - the human beings who make up the cast.²

The purpose of the first two rehearsals, the reading of the play, was to acquaint the actors with the script, and the aims of the director, and to familiarize them with each other as characters. The director's interpretation of the play along with its themes, style and dramatic drive was discussed. A basic introductory concept of the characters, their drives and their interrelationships was therefore presented to the actors for their consideration. The geographic and social effects of living in a small Irish town was also discussed.

In order to gain a broader knowledge of the Irish people, some outside reading was suggested to the young cast. The plays of Sean O'Casey and W. M. Synge were recommended as excellent presentations of lower middle class and poor Irish society. In addition to learning the feelings and attitudes of these people, the actor should also acquaint himself with the lyric rhythms of the Irish English. Because of its specific language structure, in reading an O'Casey play aloud, one cannot help but pick up the distinct musical rhythm of Irish speech patterns. With the exception of an occasional line here and there, this is not the case with Friel's Lovers. At times, one almost gets the feeling Friel is writing against the Irish rhythm pattern. In production, the director did not hope to

² W. David Sievers, Directing for the Theatre (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Co. Publishers, 1970), p. 267.

duplicate the Irish English precisely, but rather to suggest it by means of the rhythm patterns of the actors. Before rehearsals, periodically, the actors would listen to a recording of Playboy of the Western World as performed by the Dublin Players in order to familiarize themselves with the delivery of Irish speech.

James Joyce's The Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man was most emphatically recommended for reading. In this book, Joyce presents a vivid picture of a young man's battle with his conscience and the torturous pangs of guilt and shame inflicted upon him by the indoctrination of Irish Catholicism. Since all the characters in both plays are strongly ruled and driven by Irish Catholic influences, it was imperative that each actor acquaint himself as fully as possible with the ramifications of a strict Irish Catholic upbringing and education, in order to motivate and justify many of the actions, attitudes and feelings of the characters they play. This strong element of Catholicism could not be ignored by any cast member, for it is an integral part of each individual character and the dramatic force of the play.

Having experienced seventeen years of Catholic education and upbringing, the director was extremely aware of the strong driving force of the fear ethics engendered by Catholicism.

Throughout the rehearsal periods much discussion was given to the traditions and ramifications of Catholicism for with the exception of one cast member, all were ignorant of its principles and teachings. At one rehearsal the rosary was said so that the cast members could experience the joys of kneeling on the floor without support for the duration of the rosary. This was especially done for the cast of "Losers" who begin to say the rosary at the end of the first episode of the play. The purpose

was to acquaint the cast with the mechanical, sing-song manner of recitation, which is so much a part of the characters' lives, as it would be said by a family who performs the ritual nightly. Special attention was given to the actors' handling of the holy beads as well as their vocal inflection.

From her own personal experience, the director presented the cast with a picture of life in a girls' convent school including many of the superstitions of the nuns, their foibles, attitudes and teachings. To complete the picture, John Henry, a student, who had an equal amount of Catholic education including the seminary, came to a rehearsal to give the male viewpoint. A typical example of the teachings or rather indoctrinations taught in a convent school was his sex education class. The class consisted of a priest showing the boys pictures of extreme syphilitic sores while bellowing about the wrath of God and proclaiming syphilis as the result of becoming too closely associated with a girl. In the director's convent school, the topic of sex was strictly forbidden and was never mentioned. All association with the opposite sex was discretely yet strictly discouraged.

This polarity of the sexes was an important factor stressed throughout the rehearsals of both "Winners" and "Losers." There is a strong tension between the lovers that keep them from establishing complete communication. In "Losers" Hanna and Andy exhibit a fierce sexual contact with each other but that is all they are capable of. Emotionally they are poles apart and are unable to truly confront each other on a level higher than sex. After their marriage they even lose the sexual contact, growing further apart than ever. In "Winners" it is the fear of sexual contact which keeps these lovers apart, yet, emotionally they are more together than Hanna and Andy could ever hope to be.

The director chose to approach both plays through intensive work on characterization and the interrelationship of character. The humor and comedy was to be the result of the characters reacting to each other and the situation.

CHAPTER VI

REHEARSAL OF "WINNERS" AND "LOSERS"

Because of the loose style and structure of the "Winners" script, it was not blocked as was "Losers." The director felt it would only stifle the free improvisational effect that was desired. Through careful and intensive work on character and motivation, the actors were left to find their own blocking. The creative approach was followed as laid out by David Sievers in Directing for the Theatre:

To rough in a framework or pattern for each scene and let the actors find the detailed moment-by-moment blocking. This method worked best for serious and emotional drama.

- (1) Draw out through questions and discussion the actor's own interpretation of the scene. If it differs greatly from the director's, plant some questions in the actor's mind which may bring him to the desired interpretation. "How do you account for your behavior in the third act?" "What does your character want in life and in each act of the play?"
- (2) Discuss the director's interpretation with the actor - the emotions and reactions of the character. Make sure the actor understands the inner aspects of the scene. Many faults of expression derive from a faulty understanding of what is to be expressed. Help the actor to live within the make-believe circumstances and to become aware of the full implications of the scene for his character. Sometimes outside readings can be suggested which will illuminate the play.
- (3) Suggest avenues of observation for the actor - where he can go to find the character or emotion for which he is searching.
- (4) Make sure the actor understands the breakdown of the scene into actions and beats - where each new beat begins and ends, and what his character is doing, both physically and psychologically, at each moment.
- (5) Relate the emotions of the character to the actor's own experience. Find analogous situations which would be more familiar to the actor.
- (6) Use improvisation, with the help of other actors, to recreate a prior situation in the life of the character which will help the actor understand the implications of the scene at hand. The³

³ Sievers, Directing for the Theater, pp. 277-278.

scene itself may be improvised if the actors have not yet learned their lines.

- (7) By asking specific questions, draw out from the actor his moment-by-moment insight into the emotions of the character. "Are you glad about what you have just said?" "Why did you do that?"
- (8) In classic or poetic plays where language may be a barrier to understanding, ask the actor temporarily to rephrase a speech in his own words.
- (9) Make sure the actor knows the meaning of each line and word, to whom each line is addressed, and the motivation for the line.⁴

The director eased the "Winners" cast into rehearsal very slowly.

The first four rehearsals consisted of merely reading the script to explore character and situation. With the exception of the first read-through, the narrators were not called to these early rehearsals. The main basis of direction for the actors was, very simply, to talk to each other and listen to each other. The actors were held back and cautioned against performing because both actors had a strong tendency to be very theatrical and the director was afraid of their theatricality taking over and producing a flashy, superficial performance. The actors were stringently held back until both had fully explored the script and had some definite idea of character, situation and relationship. To help in their verbalization and realization of character, the actors were required to write their own character analysis. At the outset, the actors heard the one specific direction that would be repeated constantly throughout the rehearsals and performances: Love each other.

In order to establish this relationship, each rehearsal began with a

⁴ Ibid.

series of contact exercises. The two actors would quietly sit on the floor facing each other. While looking into each other's eyes and stroking each other, they would repeat the words, very quietly without pushing, "I love you, Joe," "I love you, Maggie." The progression of this exercise was fascinating to watch. In the beginning, the actors were extremely awkward and fought the exercise, refusing to allow themselves to relax and flow into the exercise. There would be a great deal of playing and giggling between the two to cover their embarrassment. (Maggie and Joe would have reacted in the same manner, and this was later pointed out to the actors.) By the second week much of their resistance was gone and the actors were able to establish a strong bond of communicative contact which would sometimes lead them into other real and valid emotions. Sometimes one would cry, sometimes both; sometimes the force of their communication and emotion would embarrass them and lead them into a shared genuine stage of laughter; and sometimes the actors had no other recourse but to go with their feelings and end the exercise with a passionate kiss. The effect of this exercise was carried over into the mood of the play. Its importance cannot be minimized. The exercise firmly established the love bond the two shared within the play, while providing the actors with the opportunity to believably experience and share this love with each other. As the actors became freer and more involved with their characters, they were able to lose themselves in the improvisation, thus providing the observing director with valuable and pertinent insights into the characters of Maggie and Joe.

Gradually, the actors were weaned from their scripts. They were urged not to memorize their lines in the prosaic sense of the word, for such memorization can often lead to sterile line readings. Instead, they were

encouraged to learn their lines by constantly reading over the script while searching for meaning, motivation, objectives and character.

The play was divided into scenes by the director. Each block of dialogue between the commentator's narration was considered a scene. When the actors first came off their scripts, the directions were kept relatively simple and basic. At all times the actors were reminded of the fundamental fact that Jaggie and Joe love each other. The passion with which they fought, played, joked, talked or ignored each other was a result or an effect of the love they shared. This element of love was never to be forgotten.

It was quite a while before the actors were able to fully comprehend and incorporate this driving force of love by which they were so closely bound together. Joe was directed to become passionately involved with his books because he loved to study and not to purposely ignore or shut Maggie out. Maggie's objective was to impress Joe and make him listen to her stories.

One watching an early rehearsal would think the two hated each other. Nor would anyone ever believe that Joe loved to study. The actor studied with great boredom and lack of energy. This problem was solved by the actor bringing his own algebra book to rehearsal and actually trying to solve real algebraic problems during the workings of the scene.

The actress playing Maggie waged a great battle against indication and overacting, trapping herself into a deadend situation of nothingness. She constantly held herself back not trusting herself or her instincts. To bring her out, the director tried several contact exercises. In order to bring her energy level up so that she could function on a creative level, she was instructed to laugh after every line. Having a very in-

fectious laugh, she managed to make the actor laugh, as well, bringing him away from his books and the script. A marvelously fun improvisation was the result.

As the rehearsals progressed, both became extremely adept at improvising within the script. Another exercise was given to force her to talk to Joe rather than at him. On every line, she was to physically touch Joe in some way. By touching and stroking, she naturally opened up and focused in on Joe taking her concentration off herself; thereby, she stopped commenting on her actions and simply did them. It was explained that her objective activity was the same without the physical touch. Her objective was to touch him. It was a good concentration problem for Joe, as well as Maggie, for he had to maintain his concentration on his books while being touched by the woman he loved.

As was said earlier, the actors were never pushed into performing and the actors were left to find their own blocking. One major problem the director had to contend with was the lack of movement in the show. Maggie and Joe are on a hilltop studying. The set consists only of stage levels providing no exterior force to motivate their getting up and moving around. The actors began the rehearsals sitting on the floor without movement except for the few scenes where they go "crazy" together and mimic their superiors. The actors had become much too dependant and comfortable on the floor. When they did manage to get up, they appeared to be uncomfortable and awkward and stood rooted to one spot until they found an excuse to quickly return to the safe solid ground of the floor.

For one whole rehearsal, the actors were forbidden to sit on the floor. Their direction for the night was to utilize the stage area at all times, to play with the stage levels and find movement that was motivated.

The actors reacted as if they had suddenly been freed from bondage. The play became alive and they found for themselves a great deal of qualified movement that enriched their characterizations and interpretations, as they relaxed and had fun. Both the actors and the director were very excited by the rehearsal. The next rehearsal this gain was a-l lost. Only through the constant prodding from the director would the actors move. The director would stop a scene and ask: "Do you want to move on that line?" Invariably, the actor would answer yes. The director went on: "Trust your instincts. If you have an instinct to do something, do it. It is probably right." Gradually they did start to move but the prodding never let up.

The Masquer Theater is an incredibly difficult theatre in which to block. Invariably, someone is upstaged. Into the third week of rehearsal the repeated cry, "Share the stage," would be heard from the director. It was time for the actors to become aware of their stage presence. This also helped to provide additional movement to the play for if an actor remains on one side of the stage for too long a time, he is lost to one complete section of the audience. Somehow the actors had to justify and motivate periodic changes in position. Finally the actors handled this problem extremely well.

To round out and complete the characters in the actors' minds and to force them to deal specifically with the reality of the here and now, several improvisations were performed. Francis Hodge defines the role of improvisation in rehearsal in his informative book, Play Directing: The goal of improvisation is discovery in the most personal way possible."⁵

⁵ Francis Hodge, Play Directing: Analysis Communication and Style Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1971), p. 73.

An actor must be vividly aware and understand the background of the character he is playing in order to understand and play his present situation. A person is a product of his past as well as the present. The past is what determines the present and in order to know the present, one must know and understand the past. (It is for this reason the actors were asked to write an autobiography of their characters.)

The present of Jaggie and Joe would have been totally different if they had not consummated their union. The actors were urged to create a vivid picture of their recent past events including their lovemaking, the ordeal of telling their parents of the situation and of facing the wrath of their superiors at school, the shame of being expelled from school and the new attitudes of their friends with which they had to deal - in addition to their own shame and the guilt enforced upon them by society.

An improvisation was performed to bring into focus the feelings experienced by the pair as a result of their situation. The setting was their hilltop - their place to be together. Joe's activity and objective was to study while waiting the arrival of Maggie. Maggie's objective was to tell Joe that she is pregnant. The actors were urged not to perform in the theatrical sense but rather to play the reality of the situation and believe. The improvisation was a miserable failure. At this time the actors were not completely familiar with their characters. An in-depth detailed discussion followed the improvisation. The actors were asked to identify with the characters by putting themselves into the situation as if it were happening to them in life.

'What would I do if...?' It is fantastic how much this 'if' helps, especially because it helps you to find what is personal to you.⁶

The actress playing Maggie was also a product of Catholic society.

⁶ Moore, Training an Actor, p. 104.

She was asked to put herself into Maggie's situation. How would she have reacted if, while still in high school, she became pregnant? How would she feel? How would she feel about telling her parents? How would she feel about telling the boy? As the actress began to think of the situation in terms of herself, she would then understand the situation in terms of Maggie, for in many ways she discovered that she and Maggie were actually very much alike. Sonia Moore advises the actor to "build your own theme."

Find your own events which are analogous to those of the character you are creating, remember your behavior, and use it for the character. Then you will merge with the character, and it will be difficult to know what is yours and what is the character's, because you will also be revealing yourself. This involves the audience, and they either sympathize with you or are antagonistic toward you. You will be sharing your own suffering, your own joy.⁷ Seek your own theme from the beginning to the end of your role.⁷

By forcing the actress to think in terms of her own experience, she was finally able to grasp the gravity of the situation on her own reality level and break through the veneer of superficiality and indication. Suddenly the girl was able to empathize with Maggie on an emotional basis.

The same technique was used on the actor playing Joe. Both actors were asked to consider in what ways they were similar to the characters they played and in what ways they were opposite. In many ways the actors found themselves to be very similar to the characters they were portraying. By incorporating the character into the framework of their own personality or vice versa, the actors found it much easier to think in terms of the character. To understand another character the actor must first understand himself. The actor must be able to reach the core of his own personality.

⁷ Ibid., p. 177.

"Only when you reach yourself will you be able to build other people."⁸

Throughout the rehearsal period, the actors were constantly quizzed: "Why did you do that? What would you do if that was said to you?" As the relationship of character and actor merged together, the actors more readily began to relax and react more truthfully to the spontaneous moments of the here and now within the scene. Gradually, they learned to stop thinking of their performance within the scene and a true feeling of spontaneity was developing. The actors were truly beginning to play with each other and listen to each other on an honest basis. They were becoming aware of each other and their relationship within the play. Mrs. Moore states:

You must watch each other, sense each other, hear and see each other. every role depends on all roles. You must know what the other is doing because your own behavior depends on it.⁹

Later on in the rehearsals, the same improvisation of Maggie telling Joe that she is pregnant was repeated. This time it worked. The actors did not perform but simply played the situation. The sincerity and simplicity with which the actors worked was quite exciting to see. At all times, in spite of their initial separateness, they were together. As they struggled with the situation, the actors felt no compunction to speak, They sat and inwardly struggled with their feelings as the characters would do. This improvisation was a tremendous learning experience for the actors. For the first time they managed to completely lose themselves in their characters and truly experience their feelings. The improvisation lasted a little over half an hour. At the conclusion

⁸ Ibid., p. 63.

⁹ Ibid., p. 108.

as they were sitting desperately clinging to each other with tears running down both faces, they truly experienced the force of their relationship, and its validity and strength. For them, the play was justified.

To sustain the play "Winners" a tremendous amount of energy must be exerted by the actor. The play is written in the form of a long dialogue between two people and the only action in the play is character exposition and relationship. The actors had to be made aware of the tremendous need for concentration and energy. If ever the actors drop out of the play by loss of concentration, the play dies. Nor can they relax and allow themselves to play on the superficial level. They must be real people in order for the audience to care about them. At all times they must function on the reality level while playing off each other and communicating. Each line must be motivated. At all times the actor must be aware of what he is doing in terms of motivation. Mrs. Moore states that "words are physical verbal action."

Like all physical actions, verbal action is a means of expressing inner life. Work on words is work on the inner world of the character and on his relationship with the world that surrounds him. The effect on the audience depends on what you put into the word. The images in your words must stir images and associations in the spectators. When we speak in life, we are usually trying to influence someone's imagination. Sometimes you are trying to influence the emotions of the other person - when, for example, you speak of something tragic. As in life, you must evaluate the other person and watch him in order to see whether you are achieving the expected results. Let us say you want to change the other person's mood. For instance, you are talking to a girl who is sad, and you want to cheer her up. While you are talking to her, you may watch to see whether she smiles. This will create a communion on stage...You must know your motivation. It must be important to you. Know who you are to each other.¹⁰

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 105.

At the end of the play when Joe imitated Berrigan, his motivation is completely different from his earlier imitation. When he first imitates Berrigan, he is performing for his best audience, Maggie, and his objective is to make her laugh. At this point they are already laughing and fooling around. They are happy and together. The motivation for the second imitation is again to make Maggie laugh but the circumstance is different. Maggie is sitting alone and crying after a particularly ugly argument. By imitating the old man, Joe is saying in essence, "Maggie, I'm sorry I made you cry. I love you." The line is the same but the circumstances and the inner monologue of the actor completely change the meaning of the line as well as Maggie's interpretation.

The actors were instructed to block out their scripts according to beats marking in objectives and motivation along with inner monologue. When proper intensive homework is performed, the actor gains a sense of confidence and surety both in himself and his character, thereby freeing himself for the true state of creativity - spontaneity. Only with solid concentration and a high level of excitement and energy can this element of improvisational spontaneity be maintained. This was the task of the actor.

The initial rehearsals of "Winners" and "Losers" were similar. The same procedure of familiarization and analysis, as explained in the "Winners" section, was followed for the first few rehearsals of "Losers." W. David Sievers states that the best method in staging a comedy is to give the actors detailed blocking of positions, movement, crosses and seatings while letting the actors (with the help of the director) find their own motivation for themselves as the rehearsals progress.¹¹

¹¹ Sievers, Directing for the Theatre, p. 278.

The "Losers" rehearsals were approached in the combined creative and technical manner as defined in Directing for the Theatre:

To suggest to the actors specific positions and movements along with the motivation, helping the actors to justify and make their own the technical requirements of the scene.¹²

The action of "Losers" takes place in the memory of Andy Tracey. It is his recollections that we see re-enacted on stage. The 'action' of the play was specifically blocked both for the visual comedic effect and to help the actors with their search for motivation as the characters within the scene. (The long dialogues of Andy were handled in a different manner which will be discussed later in the chapter.)

After the analysis and familiarization period of reading the script, and a discussion of character, relationship, background, theme, driving force, the blocking rehearsals began. After a scene had been blocked, during the following rehearsal the actors were not permitted to carry their scripts on stage and the work began.

As the actors began to incorporate the given blocking into their characterizations, they were asked by the director to verbally justify their movements. The director would not allow the actors to move unless they, themselves as the character, had a valid justification for moving. At all times, the actors were forced to be aware of what they were doing and why. The director would ask: "Why did you say that line? Why did you move that way? Why did you touch her?" With the actor's verbal clarification of an objective, he would, thereby, gain his own motivation for either the line and/or the move. Through the prodding questioning of the director the actor was left to find his own motivation. An idea is more

¹² Ibid., p. 280.

easily learned and incorporated into the characterization if the actor feels he has made the discovery for himself rather than performing the commands of the director. F. Cowles Strickland expresses this thought in his article, "Directing Amateurs": "Never tell an actor anything if you can make him think of it himself."¹³ An actor, also, gains a sense of confidence in himself and his instincts from this method.

In the opening scene Hanna and Andy were placed at opposite ends of the stage to establish the distance between the two and their inability to come together. Throughout the play there is a definite sexual tension between the two. To illicit the proper feeling for the opening scene, the actors were asked to remember the feelings of awkwardness and shyness they experienced on their first date. Being an easy emotion to recall, this particular scene began to work from the start. For the next scene the same feeling of tension from being separate while not wanting to be separate was established as they shyly sat on the couch together, too embarrassed of their sexuality to look into each other's eyes. They were told not to be afraid of silence or pauses for if a pause is properly filled with a strong inner monologue and interplay, it carries just as well and sometimes better than a line. The silence is a result of the two having nothing to say to each other, yet both feeling the pressure to talk in order to maintain their composure while they squirm and impatiently await the start of the actual courtship. The actors were cautioned against playing results or playing for laughs. As with Maggie and Joe, at all times they have to be intensely aware of each other. These two scenes the actors managed to grasp with a minimal amount of problems, thereby creating a

¹³ F. Cowles Strickland, "Directing Amateurs," Theatre Arts Monthly, July, 1937, p. 567.

tittilating, giggly sexual tension while they remained physically apart.

The problems began with their physical coming together. It was strange, for when the actors had the distance separating them they truly managed to create the sexual tension necessary to make the scene move, but when they physically came together it was lost. All interplay between the two was lost. The actress playing Hanna would madly kiss and caress Andy as he calmly said his poem as if nothing at all were happening. All tension and interplay were gone as the actors mechanically performed their actions. To alleviate the problem the actress was instructed to sexually excite the actor in order to illicit some response. This did not even produce so much as a giggle on the part of the actor. The actor was asked to put himself in Andy's position. He was asked: "How would you react in this situation with your girl friend?" Intellectually he understood and found it terribly funny but was unable to incorporate his own feelings into Andy.

Throughout the first two weeks of rehearsals there was a massive communication problem between the actor playing Andy and the director. The boy had never been in anything other than a high school play and had no idea of how to work on the creative level as an actor. His total conception of acting was memorizing lines and learning where to move and when like a robot. All directions were received with great hostility and animosity, creating an impossible breach not only between him and the director but with the rest of the cast as well. He had managed to totally alienate himself from everyone involved with the production. The atmosphere was stifling. The director was faced with a tremendous ego problem and tried many different approaches in an attempt to get through to him: threats, compliments, insults, encouragements, humiliation. All failed.

The other actors could not function or grow for every scene revolved around Andy and he gave them nothing to play off. He was on stage alone, playing his superficialities by himself. The major problem was in convincing him that he was not the greatest actor that ever hit the boards and that he demanded a great deal of work and help both from the director and the other members of the cast.

Finally a miracle happened. The director called him to rehearsal an hour early and privately talked with him. Together the director and actor went through the script and mapped out the various beats of the play, explaining what to look for in terms of motivation, character and color. The two finally managed to communicate. Slowly he began to develop a sense of what it means to be an actor and the work that the craft entails. He worked and he tried, and slowly the problem worked itself out as the other cast members began to warm up to him. By performance time he was a joy to work with.

The director was still having tremendous problems with the physical love scenes. The actors played the scenes on the couch. The scenes were not funny, as intended; the actors were not playing with each other nor with the absurdity of the situation. The necessity and urgency of constant talk while trying to make love is the comic element of the scene. This urgency was missing as well as the interplay of the actors. It was decided to break the wrestling match up and play the comic bits of the situation. Hanna was instructed to jump off the couch and deliver all her lines to her mother's bedroom door. It was stressed that at no time would the characters allow a silent pause for the silence would bring an end to their love making by the clanging of the bell. They must continue the noise of talk while making love. An urgency began to develop as Hanna would frant-

ically rush back to the bedroom door to deliver her line and madly rush back to Andy to continue their heavy courting. Once the actress began to use the frantic movement the urgency became stronger and more definite. In the meantime, while trying to maintain some measure of composure, Andy would sit up and madly primp himself, straighten his tie, smooth his hair and generally try to control himself in order to continue the imperative recitation of his poem. The pace of the speech was increased to add to the actors' sense of urgency. By means of the constant movement and increased speech pattern the scene began to move. As the rehearsals progressed, definite movements were choreographed into the scene. For example: In Hanna's urgency to return to Andy, she would climb over the back of the couch and fall on the floor. To add to the comedy both actors were told to play the clumsiness of their size while rolling around on the tiny couch.

One of the main problems in dealing with the love scenes was that the actors were basically afraid of them. The effect of the love scenes is comic. Instead of allowing themselves to play the situation as the characters would have, the actors were mainly playing for comic effect. The actors were playing the results of the situation and the director was unable to help the actors out of this trap. Sensitivity exercises, improvisations and discussions of the situation did not help. From the reaction of the audience, it was obvious they found the scenes funny, which of course is important, but the director was not pleased for the work was superficial. Sonia Moore cautions against playing results:

Keep away from playing the result. Fight in yourself the temptation to do superficial work, which will result in cliches only.¹⁴

¹⁴ Moore, Training an Actor, p. 113.

(This scene will be critiqued further in the final chapter.)

Prior to the second love scene is the confrontation scene between Andy and Hanna. In this scene Hanna used all her feminine wiles on Andy. Her objective is to convince him to think that the answer to their problem of the mother is to marry and live in Mamma's house rather than Riverview. Here we see Hanna manipulating Andy. The actress was asked to put herself into Hanna's situation: "What would she do in the same situation?" First she is angry, then she cries, playing the helpless female looking for support from the big strong male. This is all done for effect, for in actuality Hanna does not want to leave her mother's house. In the beginning the actress played the results of the situation, not really comprehending what Hanna was doing. She was asked about her own personal behavior with her husband when she wants something she knows he is against. By becoming aware of her own behavior in a similar circumstance, she was able to incorporate her own personal experience into the objectives of Hanna and thereby further identify with the character's nuances.

Andy's objective in the scene is simply to pacify Hanna's wrath - to calm her down for he does not like to see Hanna upset. With every line and every gesture, his objective is to quiet her. He was asked to recall his own experience and behavior when faced with an hysterical woman. His efforts were to be very gentle. It is in this scene that Andy asserts himself against Hanna. His efforts in calming her were to be gentle in order to contrast with his angry assertion when he realizes what Hanna wants him to do.

Well, damnit all, you don't expect me to come in here, do you? I mean to say, I have a place and all of my own, ready and furnished and everything! An leaping sky-high every time you hear a bloody bell isn't my idea of married bliss! My God, you don't expect that

of me, do you?¹⁵

Immediately, he reverts to gentle Andy as he is confronted with the re-tort of Hanna. A great deal of time was spent on this transition for this is the only place in the play where Andy stands up against the cunning of Hanna.

Initially, the director felt all the strength of cunning and manipulation stemming from the character of the mother. It was felt that Hanna, too, was manipulated rather than a manipulator. Unfortunately, the girl playing the mother was unable to convey this powerhouse of strength and control. The director finally conceded to this fact very late in the rehearsal period, and the confrontation scene was reworked to more firmly establish Hanna as that of a manipulator using and controlling Andy for her own purposes.

The role of the mother is an exceedingly difficult one. (At the time of casting, the director did not realize how difficult the role was and what it demanded.) The role demands an actress who by presence alone can impose the necessary strength and control to make the character work, for nowhere in the play does the playwright directly expose the old woman as the tyrannical despot that she is. What the audience sees is a supposedly sweet old invalid lady whose only comfort and joy in life is saying the rosary surrounded by the people she loves; yet, the actress must establish that she is capable of controlling and dominating. As was said earlier, a small fragile actress was cast as a comic effect to reiterate the absurdity of her controlling position over these very large people. She was also frail in manner, voice and presence. Unable to illicit the necessary

¹⁵ Friel, Lovers, p. 94.

strength, the director gave the actress the objective of playing for sympathy: "Look how brave I am in spite of my suffering. Feel sorry for me." The actress playing the mother was quite timid throughout the rehearsal period. Directions did not loosen her up but only stifled her instincts. She was afraid to attack the role for fear of failure and constantly censored her performance. She became quite frustrated with herself because she wanted instant results and did not understand the gradual building of a character by solving one problem at a time. She did not respond well to direction, regarding each direction as a personal reprimand regardless of how gently it was delivered. The director chose to leave her alone and complimented her profusely whenever possible.

Because of the construction and sight lines of the Masquer Theater, the bedroom scenes were extremely difficult to block. The actors had to be acutely aware of stage presence at all times to avoid blocking each other from view. The rosary scene was especially difficult for there is no movement what so ever once the characters kneel down to say the rosary. It was a constant source of frustration for the director. The director would think the problem had been solved until the scene was viewed from the opposite side of the house and find someone else blocked from view. The situation was never totally controlled. It was left up to the audience to lean over a bit in their seats.

The rosary scene was quite frustrating for this scene should be dominated by the mother. Since the actress was unable to take over, the focus was shared by the other characters. Hanna's objective was to say the rosary and get it over with as quickly as possible so she could return to her courting with Andy. Andy's objective was to maintain his composure as best he could while kneeling so close to the woman he loves after just being

sexually aroused. Here they are thrown back into their previous relationship of separateness, being acutely aware of each other's presence and at the same time embarrassed. Hanna cannot look into Andy's eyes. Throughout the scene both try to steal glances at each other without being caught. Meanwhile Mamma and Cissy are in rapturous ecstasy while saying the rosary.

Cissy Prissy is a religious fanatic who adores invalids for "invalids is all saints."¹⁶ She is a marvelous foil for Andy's clumsy humor as he blatantly pokes fun at her unbeknownst to Cissy. To get the dottering physical effect of the character the actress wore shoes several sizes too small for her. A marvelous character walk resulted. Vocally, the actress was having trouble. In rehearsal one day, as an exercise, the actress was instructed to play Cissy as if she were hard of hearing. This forced the actress to truly focus in and listen to every word that was spoken and gave a nose quality to the character. And since most people with a hearing defect speak a bit louder than usual, a very funny shri-l voice resulted. By using these physical factors along with the constant use of her beloved rosary beads, the actress developed quite a fine and believable character. What was especially fine was that all her humor was the result of the character reacting to the situation.

In the final scene when Andy comes in drunk to confront the mother with the news that her beloved St. Philomena is a fake, he was initially very stiff and artificial. The three women have never seen Andy in such a state and for the first time he is in total control and they are at his mercy. Having no idea of what he will do, they fear him. Again the actors played results. The actor playing Andy was told to relax and have fun

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 98.

playing out his objective. The more it was rehearsed the scene became more and more stilted and Andy became more and more vicious. As an exercise to wake the actors into reacting, Andy was given a whiskey bottle filled with water and was instructed to go crazy with it and splash his fellow actors with water to emphasize his lines. The actors were extremely surprised and shocked by the sudden bath and reacted just as the characters would have reacted in the same situation. The actor playing Andy had such a good time dousing his fellow actors that he completely loosened up and had fun while trying to keep from laughing at the reactions of the very wet actors. This stage business helped so much it was decided to leave it in. Andy finally realized what it meant to have fun with a scene and from there there was no stopping him. Things started to come alive for him as he played with the other people on stage. New meanings and interactions were discovered and played. Even his long dialogues began to come alive.

Andy's long dialogues were never blocked. First the actor was instructed to simply sit on his bench and talk to the audience as if he had a very important entertaining secret to share. His objective was to make individual people in the audience listen and smile. After a while, the actor was no longer permitted to sit, but was encouraged to move and cover as much of the audience as possible, including the entire audience at all times in on his story. During this time he was also searching for images and objectives. In the beginning the actor was not stopped during his recitation. When the speech was over, a discussion followed of what worked and what didn't and why. As the actor gained confidence and concentration, intensive work began on the speeches. He was stopped after every line to verify motivation. In order to create the conversational effect and

bridge the transitions for the actor, the director would ask questions, as in a conversation, leading him on to his next thought process. As an exercise to bring his energy level up, one night he was instructed to laugh after every line. All this time he was moving. He was told to use his movements to help in making points and transitions. Initially, his movements were extremely awkward and hindered rather than helped. The actor was only nineteen and Andy is fifty. A nineteen year old boy moves quite differently from a fifty year old man. He was told to play Andy as if he had a light case of rheumatism in his back, thereby taking away some of the muscularity of the nineteen year old. To alleviate the problem of hanging arms, he was told to put his hands in his pockets, creating a relaxed effect.

The night of the first technical rehearsal, the actor was told to remain seated on his bench and not to move around. Focused on him was a very strong spot light which blinded him from seeing the audience and he was safe from looking into the faces of the audience which he so feared. The effect of the security of the bench and the distance imposed on him by the spot light created a marvelous sense of freedom in the actor.

One of the biggest problems faced by the director was in convincing the cast that the show was "there" and it was up to them to let it happen, and do it. For some reason, they held themselves back and never really attacked the show as a whole. Everyone was terribly serious and worried. One of the most important elements for comedy is to have fun and let it happen. The problem was eventually solved as small audiences began to dribble in to watch a rehearsal and the cast discovered that they were indeed playing comedy as indicated by the laughter of the audience.

Together, they decided, to quote the cast, "to let it rip." Once they began to do so, the comedy began to happen.

CHAPTER VII

TECHNICAL ASPECTS IN PRODUCTION

The final production meeting was held between the director and designers. It was agreed by all that many limitations would affect the production. These were primarily the limitations of physical plant¹⁷ and lack of storage space, time, money, and the labor force available.

The physical size of the Masquer Theater and its small storage area coupled with the fact that Lovers was a benefit production,¹⁸ led John Shaffner, the set designer, to create a basic setting of stock items which could be used for both shows. There was little time available and the labor force was not energetic.¹⁹

The "Winners" set was devoid of any outstanding elements, consisting of flats, platforms and ramped levels. The set was painted with a wet-blend from dark blue through the brown earth colors to create a soft effect. The center of the flats and levels were lighter in color, fading into darker at the edges. The focus was, therefore, on the center. All this was done to project the feeling of a memory.

The hill was composed of three platforms and six ramps. (Refer to the floor play.) The ramps branched off a four foot square platform to create the slope of a hill. The platforms were 18 inches, 12 inches, and

¹⁷ The Masquer Theater Stage is a 23' 2" square with an audience capacity of about 45 on each of 2 sides of the square.

¹⁸ The Department of Drama underwrites the production costs so that box office receipts can go into the scholarship fund.

¹⁹ The Montana Repertory Theater preceded the production and its extended run cut into building time. Labor came from Stagecraft classes and the Masquers organization. At this time, the latter was in a state of almost total atrophy.

6 inches respectively in height, providing the actors different levels to play on. The plainness and simplicity of the design added vagueness to the locale; at no time did it 'get in the way' of the actors. The color and design allowed the actors to stand out sharply against the background of the set. The effect was very much that of a mental image brought to life.

The lights were an integral force in creating the mood of the play. The lighting surrounded the actors except when the narrators spoke and broke into the memory. Each narrator, sitting at opposite corners of the stage, had his own special which came up very gradually to bring him into focus before he spoke his lines. At the conclusion of each narration, the lights would quickly fade bringing the focus back to the characters in the memory. The narrators were on stage at all times, yet their presence was not strongly felt except during their narration.

The scene designer achieved a more successful feeling of a memory with his setting for "Losers." Certainly the many elements found inside a room which people retain as vivid memories that have become distorted in proportion to their importance was the main reason for the success. The designer achieved the trapped, closeted, even claustrophobic, feeling of the mother's room: the tiny center of the house which controlled every move throughout the entire household. This was the control center where no one could move, no one could breathe, no one could do anything but kneel and pray to the omnipresent St. Philomena. One was stifled by the clutter of the religious articles in what was a shrine room, a chapel for a dying woman who refused to die and who lived off the others in the house. This room was well contrasted by the 'rest-of-the-house.' It was open, no walls, no vivid memories except the large, lumpy couch where Andy's

memories were the strongest and the happiest. This was the couch where he wooed and won the woman he loved, a couch where he relaxed, slept, read the paper. He roamed the rest of the house, somewhere, everywhere, anywhere. There were pieces of furniture to sit on, put things on, hang things on, but not to make memories on. And there was the porch, the only escape from the inside, but it held no memories for Andy. It was only the place where memories were seen being made through binoculars.

The scene designer created the dark somber effect desired by the director for "Losers." With the exception of the ramps, the same set pieces were used for "Losers." (Refer to floor plans.) Two new flats were added which were used for the bedroom of the mother. The color was a faudy pink with a gray wallpaper design, creating a tawdry effect. At the edge of the bedroom flats was a suggestion of a window. As explained earlier, the bedroom was done in selective realism. The side of the window within the bedroom was realistic, while the side near the edge of the flat was only suggested and faded into the background. The walls of the bedroom were covered with numerous religious pictures, sprayed to look as if they had been hanging for years collecting dirt. The dominant feature in the room was the large brass bed - much too large for the size of the room. Facing the bed was a chest of drawers with a large statue of St. Philomena upon it. The statue sat upon a clean white linen cloth with two votive candles sitting on each side of it and flowers in front. The whole effect was one of clutter and stagnation. The tiny platform and excessive furniture conveyed a feeling of claustrophobia. When scenes were not played in the bedroom area, it was hidden from view by two curtains which surrounded it and were sprayed with the same color as that of the wallpaper inside.

The playing areas were divided by playforms. The bedroom area was 12 inches higher than the living room and the porch area 18 inches higher. The director wanted a simulation of a brick wall surrounding the small porch area to create the imprisoned, closed-in effect of Andy staring at a wall, staring at nothing. Due to lack of time the wall was never built.

The living room area consisted of the couch, a small table and chair and a braided rug on the floor. In actual life the room would have been cluttered with many more objects, but as stated above only the essence of the room was presented as it would be remembered by Andy. The couch was covered with many fussy doilies and a few throw pillows. Across from the couch was the table and chair. On the table was the inevitable religious picture.

In this play, as well, the lights added and helped a great deal in establishing the memory mood of the play. At the opening, only Andy is seen sitting on his porch, illuminated by his special. The lights would unobtrusively fill the living room area just before Hanna's entrance. When the action took place in the living room, the same lighting as used in "Winners" was repeated without alteration. Andy's monologues were played with him sitting on his porch, illuminated by his special that isolated him from the rest of the house.

The sets were unrealistic as a memory must be and the lighting effects were chosen to reinforce the selectiveness of a memory. Both plays used many of the same basic set units and the lights also did double duty. The choice of low-saturated, clean, get colors was made to help illuminate objects most clearly. It was felt that a low reading of these gels gave a more realistic fade-our-of-the-memory than a strong color would have. Memories are, after all, real yet at the same time not-real.

The music for the show was carefully selected. It was all taken from recordings made by popular Irish entertainers. To maintain the mood of the show, the music was played throughout the intermission.²⁰

The costumes in both plays were rather simply and understated. The narrators in "Winners" were costumed to look conservatively well dressed and well groomed. They were to look relatively attractive without drawing attention to themselves. Maggie was dressed in modest Bermuda shorts, blazer, knee socks and brown and white shoes. She was to look like a young high school girl who obviously cared about her appearance. She wore shorts to allow for greater mobility while climbing the hill. Joe was costumed in baggy trousers, sweater, a shirt that was not quite ironed and shoes not quite polished. His appearance should tell the audience that he obviously had more important things to concern himself with than his appearance.

In "Losers" Andy Tracey was clothed in white shirt, baggy trousers with suspenders. When first seen, he is sitting on the porch with a thick cardigan sweater and a bow tie; when he enters his past, before coming into the living room, he changes the sweater for his courting jacket. At the conclusion of the play, he again dons the sweater. His costume should suggest an ordinary working man. His hair was grayed at the temples and the basic lines of his face were emphasized to add age to his appearance.

Hanna Wilson was dressed in a gray jumper with a pleated skirt that emphasized her size and a soft blue blouse, presenting an image of a poor

²⁰ The songs played were: "Courtin' in the Kitchen," "Whiskey, you're the Devil," "Bold O'Donahue," "I'll Tell My Ma," "Will Ye Go, Lassie, Go?" "Reilly's Daughter," "Holly Ground," "The Jolly Tinker."

Lead-in music for "Winners" was "Marie's Wedding"; concluding music was "King of the Faires." Lead-in music for "Losers" was "Old Main in the Garrett"; concluding music was "Reilly's Daughter."

working woman trying to look attractive for her man.

Mrs. Wilson was clothed in a pink nightgown and fussy bed-jacket. Rather than try to gray her dark hair, she wore a frilly nightcap. She should present an image of a sweet old angelic invalid lady. She used an old age make-up that never really worked. Several different techniques were tried but each one looked obviously like stage make-up.

Cissy Prissy was clothed in an arnel flowered dress and shawl typical of an old lady. Her stockings were thick and slightly baggy. On her feet she wore black heeled oxfords. Her hair was worn tied back in a bun and dulled with gray. Arlynn's face adapted particularly well to old age make-up and the total effect was quite believable.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

Directing Lovers was a wonderfully rewarding experience. At times it was quite frustrating working with such young inexperienced actors, but it was so gratifying to watch their steady progression and share in their enthusiasm.

It would be very difficult to totally divorce oneself from the production, after being so intimately involved in it and objectively critique it. In retrospect, there are things that would have been attempted in a different manner.

In one can judge from the loud raucous reaction of the audience, the love scenes in "Losers" were a great success. But the director was never quite satisfied with them. The director had always interpreted the scenes quite literally, think that two middle-aged unsophisticated people bouncing around on a couch trying to make love while reciting a poem was quite humorous in itself. The true humor was to come from the characters reacting to each other and the situation. This never really happened, which was probably the fault of the director who did not know how to handle the scenes. To create the comic effect, the director installed comic bits for the actors to play, and practically choreographed the scenes.

What would be done now is to try the scene, at least in rehearsal as an exercise, without the heavy physical contact. The two actors would sit on the couch and stare at each other totally lost in rapture and desire without actually touching. Each would play the objective: touch me, kiss me. Perhaps, this would have helped to build the tension that was missing

in the scene. As the scene progressed to the climax of the interruption, they would finally touch, but it would only be a stroke on the cheek which would produce a fit of sensual pleasure.

In coping with the many problems of developing inexperienced actors in "Losers," the director did not give sufficient direction to Dale Raoul. She was so much more advanced than any other cast member. It was hard to focus on Dale when Scott demanded such intensive attention. When dealing with Scott, the director's function was that of a basic elementary acting teacher. Even the most basic and obvious functions had to be explained in minute detail.

Debra Cragg is a young actress of great potential but was miserably miscast in the role of the mother. The director should have cast an actress who was domineering both in size and presence.

Roughly, about a day before opening, the accents of Maggie and Joe got totally out of control. Tom Morris had an extremely difficult time in achieving the accent. For performance, he was unable to sustain it. Peggy O'Connell developed a thick sibilant accent which at times was difficult to understand.

All of the actors involved with the production grew tremendously and steadily in their roles. Admittedly, by the final performance, they had not reached perfection, yet never had they stopped growing. Each night the show became progressively better.

The experience was a great learning experience for the director in so many ways: learning how to deal with people in the director/actor relationship; learning to deal with the difficult problems of blocking in the Masquer Theater; and the challenge of working with a basically bad script.

There was a wonderful feeling of togetherness involved with both the actors, designers and technicians. All cared about each other and the show. All in all, ultimately it was a grand experience.

1* WORKING DRAWINGS
FOR TRIANGULAR
RAISED PLATFORMS.

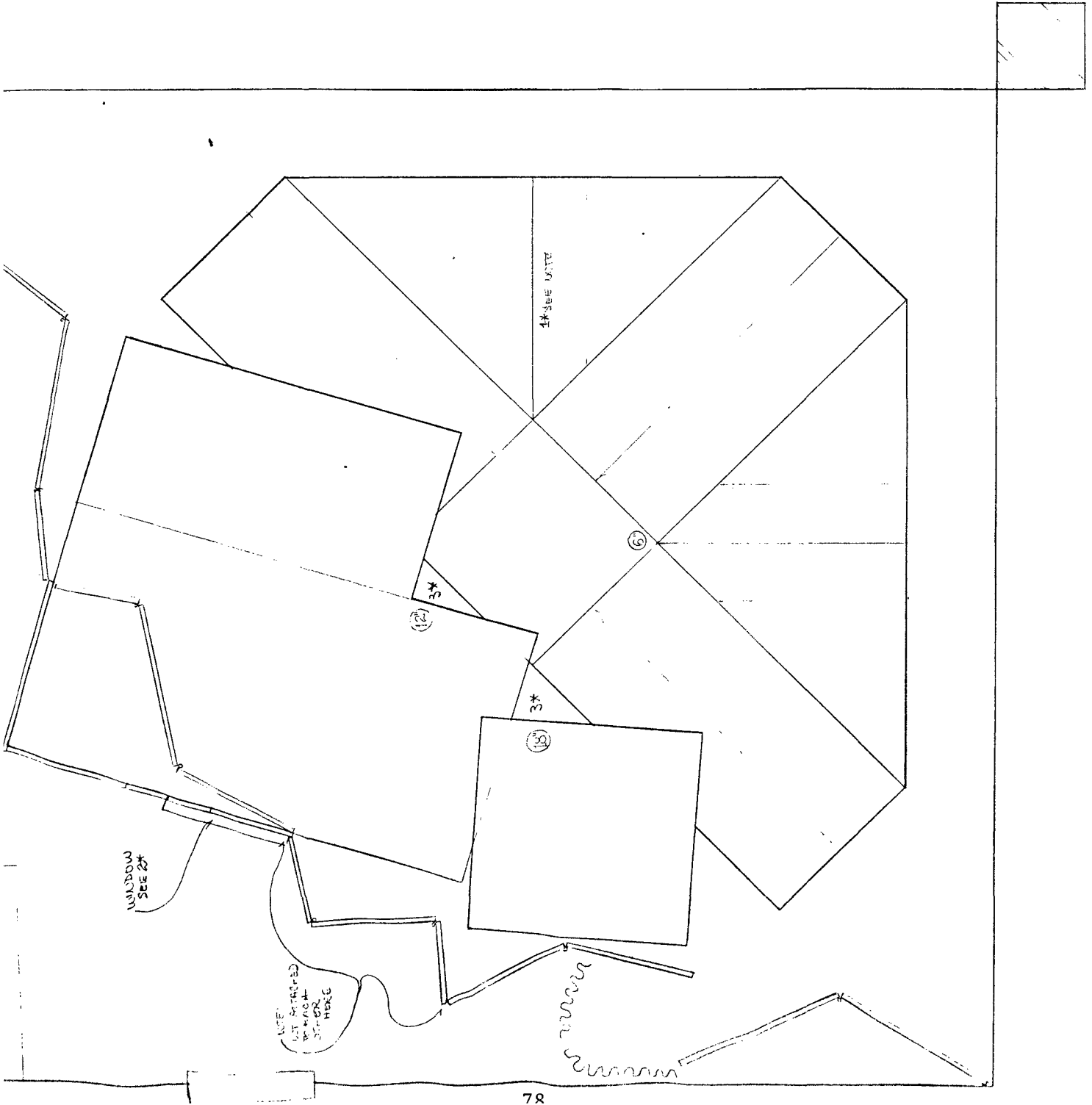
2* WORKING DRAWINGS
FOR 4'x9' FLAT
WITH WINDOW
OUTAWAY.

3* WORKING DRAWINGS
FOR TRIANGULAR
PLUGS

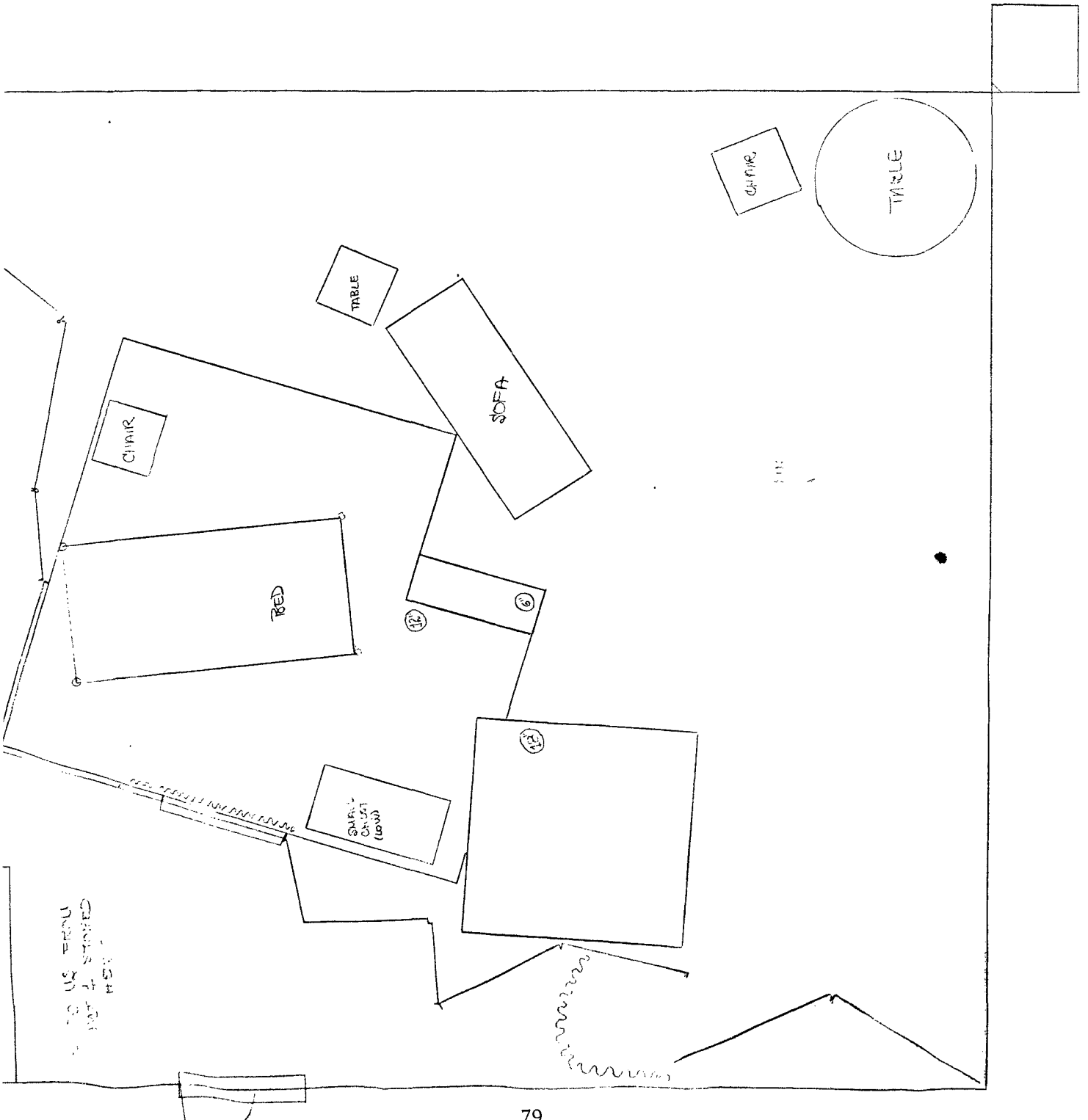
"WINNERS"

"LOWERS"

DATE #	1
MAPSHEET	
SCALE	1/2" = 1'-0"
FILE #	21072



NOTE FURNITURE SIZES ARE NOT EXACT — PENDING SELECTION OF APPROPRIATE PIECES.



"LOWERS"

PLATE #	2
MASTER EVENT	
SCALE	1/8" = 1' 0"
DATE	JANUARY 10, 1972
BY	J. J. J.

"LOWERS"

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF DRAMA
THE MONTANA MASQUERS

present

LOVERS

by Brian Friel

Directed by Jeanette Chastonay*
Scene Design and Technical Direction
by John Shaffner
Lighting by Tom Valach
Costumes by Pat Bidwell

March 1-5, 1972

WINNERS

Maggie Peggy O'Connell
Joe Tom Morris
Narrators Karen Hummel
Todd Yeager

Setting: A hilltop overlooking Ballymore, Ireland. Spring, 1966.

LOSERS

Hanna Dale Raoul**
Andy Scott Shaw
Mrs. Wilson Debra Cragg
Cissy Arlynn Fishbaugh

Setting: A small town in Ireland, Spring, 1966.

*There will be a ten-minute intermission between WINNERS and LOSERS.
Please refrain from smoking in the theater*

*Denotes member of Montana Masquers.
**Denotes member of Royal Masquers.

"Lovers" is being presented as a scholarship benefit. All proceeds go for the annual Masquer Scholarship. Additional donations may be made at the box office or at the Department of Drama office.

PRODUCTION STAFF

Assistant to the Director	Katherine Ozanick
Stage Manager	John Duckworth
Lighting	Jean Badenoch, John Hilton, Scott Shaw, John Duckworth
Props	Linus Carleton* (head), Buzz Reichert, Don Lovett, Barb Rieger, Debbie Sherman
Scenery	John Bradford* (head), Mike Lyngholm, Bill Wells, Jason Shaw, Kent Epler, Scott Shaw, Gene Munson, Greg Wright, Tom Valach, Bill Colvin, John Raymond
Make up	Debbie Losleben
Costumes	Peggy Dodson*, Gere Hafer, Jeanine Streber, Gordon Lee, Karen Hummel, Patrick R. Neils, Robert Harkins
Publicity	Arlynn Fishbaugh, Dale Raoul**, Sally Dugan
Photographer	Gordon Lemon
Graphic Artist	Ted Bailey
Box Office	Michael Leib (head), Patrick R. Neils, Robert Harkins
House Manager	Vaughn Latour
Secretaries	Donette Wylder* (Head), Cindy Holshue*, Randi Hood, Susan Hockett

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