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Eastern Illinois University

Department of Speech

ADAPTING PERIOD PLAYS TO MODERN STAGING,
USING PLATFORMS AND STEP UNITS

A term paper in

Speech 563

by


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of the requirements
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ADAPTING PERIOD PLAYS TO MODERN STAGING,
USING PLATFORMS AND STEP UNITS.

The purpose of this paper is to attempt to show how period dramatic productions can be adapted to modern staging, using platforms, step units, and set pieces or accessories. The historical aspect of periods of drama in terms of playwrights, theatres, types of drama, staging, and costuming will be briefly discussed. How the plays can be adapted will be described and the paper will include pictures of scale model sets that have been constructed, explaining how to build the sets, and tell why the plays have been adapted in the various manners.

Six periods in dramatic history have been chosen: Greek, early Medieval, late Medieval, Shakespearean, Neoclassical, and Expressionistic. After doing research as to typical plays of these various periods, the following have been chosen as representative of the six periods: Medea (Greek), Towneley Cycle (early Medieval), Everyman (late Medieval), Romeo and Juliet (Shakespearean), The Doctor in Spite of Himself (Neoclassic), and The Adding Machine (Expressionistic).

In each case materials as well as platforms and step units will be used. In some cases, flats will be used; in other cases columns will be needed; draperies will be incorporated. Each model set will be of a different type of design, sometimes striving for rather close authenticity, sometimes adapting for aesthetic reasons. In all cases the sets will attempt to depict the mood, the theme, and the message of the drama, will be playable, and practical.

Basic materials used in the stage models are styrofoam and balsa wood. Other materials used include cloth, plastics, and pins. It is assumed that the standard stage platform is four feet by eight feet and may be one, two or three feet in height. All building is done to the scale of one-half inch equals one foot. When practical for an aesthetic effect, a sky-piece or cyclorama will be used. In some instances backdrops have been added.

Brief synopses of the plays will be included and an explanation will be found as to how the dramas are to be played. It is hoped that explanations, with the aid of pictures, will be concise enough to show how the sets were designed and constructed.

Chapter I

Greek

The word drama derives from the Greek dromenon, " a thing done." In ancient Greece, the most impressive thing done, ritually speaking, was the spring ceremony of Dionysus, the god of vegetation, fruitfulness, death and rebirth.

As Greek civilization advanced, the ceremony became a kind of rustic rite, which most people watched from the sidelines. About the year 527 B.C. the Athenian ruler Pisistratus decreed that the festival should be amplified by enactments of heroic tales of Homer. These dramatizations, beginning as story-telling accompanied by choral chants, were performed on the ground sacred to Dionysus outside of Athens.¹

Tiers of seats in a vast semicircle were constructed on the hillside and the actors were confined to a small acting area. The dancing place or doing place, virtually disappeared and was superceded by the spectator place. This change of architecture on the Athenian hillside indicated a change of architecture in the human mind. From being an active participant in the theatre, man was becoming an observer, a contemplator. He was preparing himself for more thoughtfulness, reflection, introspection and vicarious emotion, for the genius of Sophocles and Shakespeare, for the ills and glories of the future.²

¹Tom Prideaux, associate editor, World Theatre in Pictures from Ancient Times to Modern Broadway, (New York: Greenberg, 1953), p. 15.

²Ibid.

The Greek theatre is, in more ways than one, the ancestor of all the theatres of modern Europe. Not only was Greece the first European country to raise dramatic performances to the level of an art, not only were the Greek dramatists among the finest masters whom the world-theatre has ever known, but the forms and conventions of the classic playhouses set an indelible seal upon the theatres of Renaissance Italy, and thence were carried over through the Elizabethan and Restoration periods in England, to modern times.³

The tragic dramas of Aeschylus and his successors came from the ancient dithyramb, a choral song chanted in honor of Dionysus. Certainties are lacking and we can but guess at the probable line of development. Probably at first the dithyramb was an improvised affair, words and music alike issuing from the excitement of the festival occasion. The dithyramb must have been largely or wholly narrative in form, telling legends relating to the god.

Then came the truly decisive step, traditionally attributed to Thespis (sixth century B.C.), when an actor (as distinct from a choral leader) was introduced. With the use of masks--whereby the single actor might impersonate several characters during the course of the action--the way was opened for the exploitation in dramatic form of many and complex themes.

As yet there is hardly any theatre as such: only rude provision is made for the audience, and the actors all move within the level circle of the orchestra, with no background save what is

³Allardyce Nicoll, The Development of the Theatre, (New York: Harcourt, Brace Co., 1957), p. 17.

provided by the open sky and the long landscape stretching far below. The drama is close to the form of its origin, the dithyramb; action is kept to a minimum, and the chorus becomes, as it were, a collective protagonist; of individual portraiture there is virtually nothing. This is drama, certainly, and not ritual, but it is drama of the most rudimentary kind.

The main conventions of the Greek stage have been set. Very soon a stage-building, designed at once to give the actors opportunity for the changing of masks and dress and to provide for them an architectural background, is to come into being, but even in its absence the conditions of performance are characteristic of the entire course of the Greek theatre. This theatre was never at any time more than a collection of parts--the auditorium remained separate from the orchestra and the orchestra from the stage--and always the central part was the great circular level assigned to the chorus. Out of the chorus the drama had originally sprung, and with the chorus (albeit at the end a trifle unwillingly) it remained until the tragic spirit vanished completely.

In the plays of Aeschylus the actors were costumed as they were to be costumed for the entire space of the production of Greek tragedy, and their dress was virtually the creation of Aeschylus himself. Basing his model upon antique traditional forms, he was responsible for the theatrical adoption of the long-sleeved robe, generally embroidered more richly than was the attire of the contemporary Athenian and, when occasion offered, assuredly taking advantage of barbaric ornament. To

Aeschylus, too, the stage owed the utilization of the cothurnus or high-soled boot worn in tragedy. This gave stature to the actors, provided means of giving a hero-king an appearance more impressive than that of his companions, and must have introduced a fine contrast between the majestic-seeming chief figures of the tragedy, solemn and statuesque in their proportions and movements, and the fleet-footed characters in the chorus. That solemn and statuesque appearance, too, was increased by the use of the onkos, the relic of an ancient method of dressing the hair, by which long tresses were bound up over the top of the head. In the tragic mask this crown of hair was exaggerated and added to the height of the actor. In general it seems that Aeschylus' object was, by the use of the majestic theatre dress, the cothurnus, and the large masks with onkos for which he was responsible, to create an impression of idealized nobility, of magnificence and of grandeur.⁴

Aeschylus was responsible for splitting the fifty performers of the chorus into four groups of twelve each and twelve remained the stable size of the chorus until some years later Sophocles increased the number to fifteen. If the reduction of the chorus to twelve persons was due to practical considerations it has been presumed that the subsequent increase to fifteen was due to aesthetic reasons.

The Theatre of Dionysus grew up functionally out of the needs of the people and the contours of the land. Beside the temple

⁴Allardyce Nicoll, World Drama, (New York: Harcourt, Brace Co., 1950), pp. 32, 33.

on the southern slope of the Acropolis, a large, circular area was leveled off to make a place for the performance of ritualistic dances. The orchestron, or dancing place, consequently, is the oldest element of the theatre. Worshippers at first stood around the circle to watch the performers, then moved up the slope to get a better view; there they stood or sat. By the beginning of the fifth century B.C., rows of wooden benches had not only been built up the mountainside but had fanned out in semicircular shape around the northern side of the orchestron. The auditorium, or hearing place, was thus the second element of the theatre to appear. The skene, or scene-building, which developed into the raised stage, came last. The ritual dances became more pantomimic and dramatic; then actors separated themselves from the chorus and began to speak or chant lines impersonating various characters; soon a need was felt for a scene-building and dressing-rooms, which led to the erection of the skene, wooden structure put up on the southern side of the orchestron facing the auditorium. The three component parts of the theatre never achieved complete architectural unity during the fifth century, but improvements were made in each part from year to year: the dancing place was paved and drained; the wooden benches gave way to tiers of stone seats; and the skene was replaced each year by a more elaborate one especially designed to improve the stage picture.⁵

The skene, or stage-building, in front of which the plays were performed generally represented the facade of a palace, a

⁵Randolph Goodman, Drama On Stage, (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1961), p. 7.

temple or a house, since these were the locales most frequently called for in the tragedies. As the skene was re-erected each year, various improvements and additions were made in its structure. Side wings, called paraskenia, as well as platforms and levels, appeared from time to time to intimate the nature of the building which the skene was supposed to represent. There were passageways, called paradoi, to the right and left of the skene, used not only by the spectators for entering and leaving the theatre, but also for the entrances and exits of the actors and the chorus. There were additional entrances and exits for the actors in the skene itself, for the building had three front doors--a very large center one, and a smaller one on each side.⁶

Pollux indicates the conventional nature of the three main doors in the background. The middle door, usually larger than the others, was the "royal" entrance. It was regarded as the doorway of a palace or was presumed to belong to the protagonist in the drama. That on the right was the door by which the second actor entered, or was supposed to lead to guest-chambers, while that on the left belonged to a minor person, or formed a fictitious ruined temple, desert, or prison. These were the doors which led directly into supposedly actual buildings, and for persons who were presumed to come from a place outside the two doors in the side-wings, or paraskenia, had to suffice, one leading toward the forum, the other to the outskirts of the city.⁷

⁶Ibid., pp. 9, 10.

⁷Nicoll, The Development of the Theatre, p. 31.

Another mechanical apparatus was the periaktus, a three-sided prism on each side of which were painted pictures or symbols showing the time or place of the action. There were two periaktoi, one on each side of the skene; a change of scene could be indicated simply by revolving them.⁸

The one permanent element in the scenery was the altar situated in the very center of the dancing place. This was not a stage property but a real religious altar, connected with the temples which still stood behind the skene, and was part of the sacred ground on which the theatre had been erected. Many playwrights took advantage of the presence of the altar, and in their temple scenes required the actors to make use of it.

Euripides has been accredited with being the first to use the deus ex machina. The "machine" in question was a theatrical device introduced towards the close of the fifth century by which a deity could be lowered from the roof of the scene-building. Since Euripides frequently used the device to huddle his drama to an illogical end--the god announcing his divine commands to the characters below--the phrase about the deus ex machina came to bear the transferred significance which it has today. Even when the gods are gone Euripides' practice remains.

* * * * *

In writing Medea Euripides was dealing with one of his favorite myths. When Jason claimed the throne of Iolcus, his uncle, Pelias, agreed to give it up on condition that Jason

⁸Goodman, Drama On Stage, p. 10.

fetch the Golden Fleece from Colchis. Jason set about building the Argo, the first Greek ship, and sailed for Colchis, where he met a wild, passionate girl, Medea. Medea was the daughter of the king and had inherited great powers, both natural and supernatural. By deceiving her father she made it possible for Jason to seize the Golden Fleece. When leaving the country she slew her brother.

After realizing that Pelias had tricked Jason, Medea caused his death. Jason took Medea and their two sons to Corinth, where Creon, the king, was looking for a husband for his daughter. Creon convinced Jason that his marriage to Medea, an alien, would not be recognized, and Jason left Medea to marry Glauce.

In order to get revenge, Medea sent gifts to the new queen, a crown and a lovely gown, which would cause the death of Glauce because of their magical powers. In a fit of rage she killed her two sons to punish Jason even further, and then departed, via a dragon-drawn chariot, sent to her by her grandfather, Helios.

In adapting Medea to modern staging, platforms and step units painted in drab colors have been chosen. Three feet of the stage floor behind the curtain line has been allowed, which could be used as acting area before beginning a step unit five steps high. Each step is one foot wide, and each is graduated six inches in length, thus making the longest one twenty-four feet, the shortest, twenty-two feet long.

This leads to a platform which is three feet high, twenty-two feet long, and seven feet wide. Six platform units, each four feet by eight feet and three feet tall would comprise this

platform. Leading from this area to a second acting area are two step units, each five feet high (ten steps per unit) and three feet wide. One leads to the right-stage end of the second platform, the other leads to the left-stage end. The upper platform is twenty-four feet long and five feet wide and is eight feet tall. The following materials would be needed to build this platform: two rows of three three-foot platforms (each four feet by eight feet) placed in two tiers, thus making a total of twelve platforms, with one tier of two-foot platforms on top of them.

Rising from the back of the second platform is a backdrop twenty-four feet wide and twelve feet high. This would be made by using twelve-foot flats. Cut into the backdrop are the three traditional doors of Greek drama, the center one being five feet wide and eight feet tall, the two side doors each two feet wide and six feet tall. Therefore, the backdrop would need two six-foot flats, three one-foot flats, and two door plugs, each two feet wide and six feet in height and one door plug five feet wide and four feet in height.

Jutting from the backdrop are columns, one on either side of the central door, which is one and one-half feet in diameter, and a column on either end of the backdrop which is one foot in diameter. All columns are ten feet tall. These could be constructed stage columns. Across the top of the backdrop is a frieze of classic Greek design. This could either be painted on the backdrop or sewn on a curtain hanging in front of the backdrop.

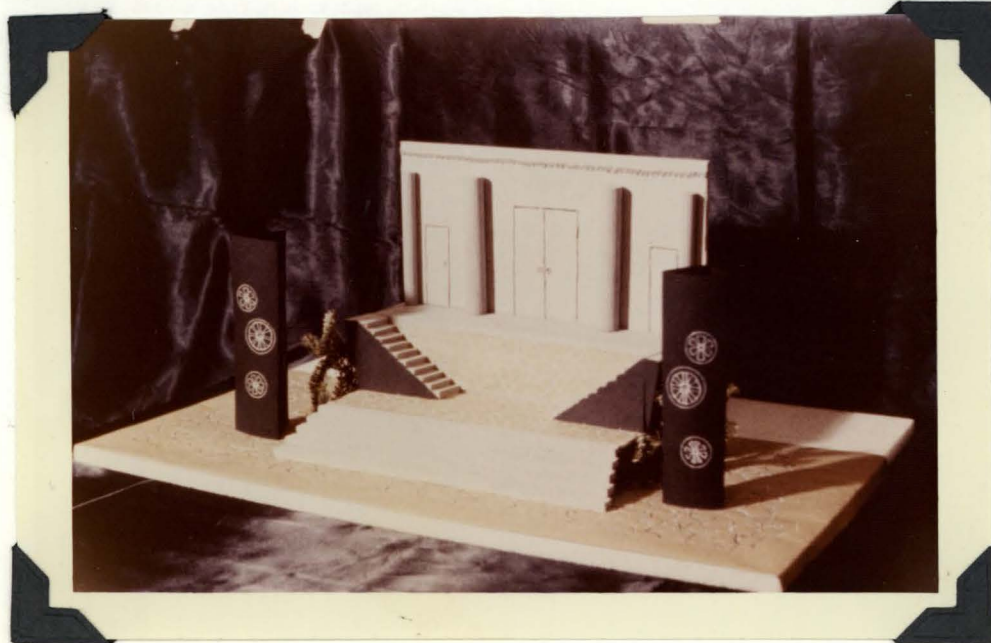
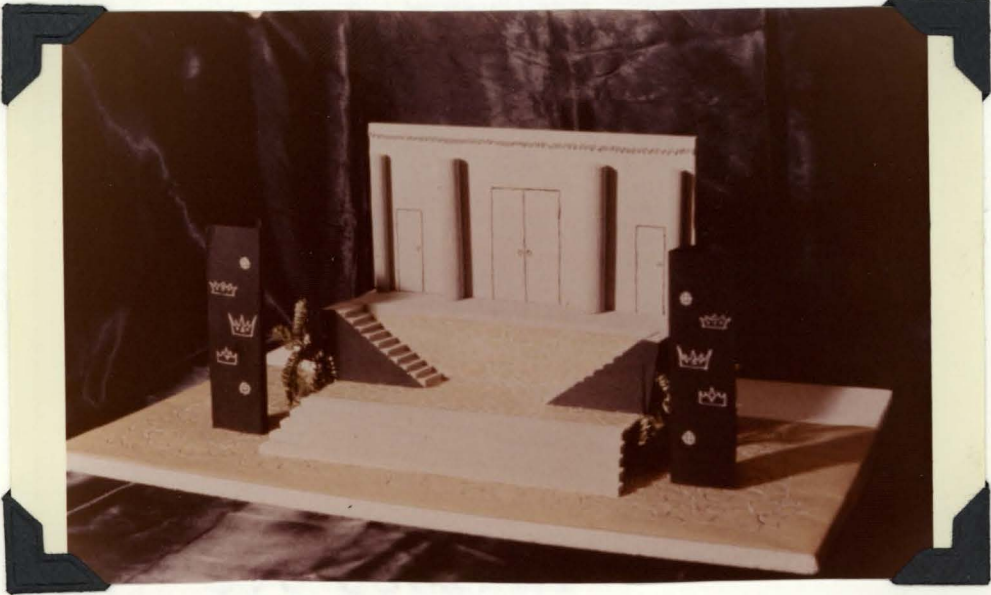
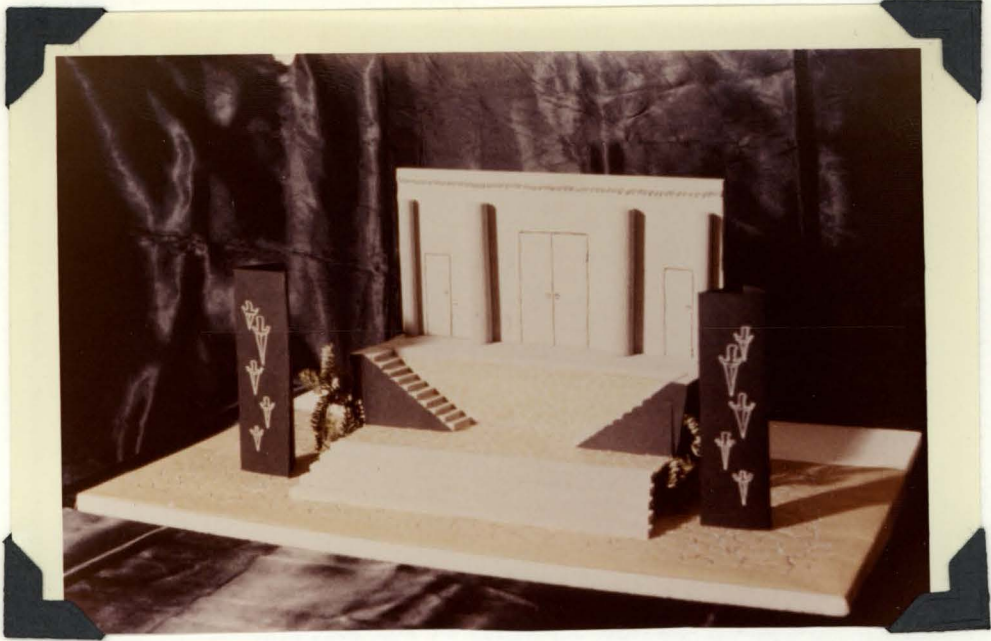
On either side of the lower platform is a periaktus, each fourteen feet in height and each side two feet wide. Each would

be made by hinging three two-foot flats (each fourteen feet long) and mounting the unit on casters in order to revolve the unit. The designs painted on the periaktoi are as follows: side one has been painted with daggers, symbolizing Medea's despondency; the second side has crowns, suggesting Medea's gifts to Glauce; the third depicts chariot-wheels, showing the last of Medea's plan, her escape. The pariaktoi are placed to the side of the first platforms, in order to keep the sight line of the audience. Around the sides of the lower platform are greenery and shrubs. Stage trees could be constructed or, if practical, real trees could be substituted. All designing has been done using the scale of one-half inch equals one foot.

The flooring has been covered with brown painted as rocks to suggest dirt and stones. Canvas could be used for this purpose. All steps are gray, as are the backdrop and columns, in keeping with the somber mood of the play. All backing is done in black. The usual sky-blue cyclorama would be used.

In staging Medea the chorus of Corinthian women could be seated at the ends of the large front steps, thus leaving the rest of the entire acting area free for action. The slain children would be seen through the central door in the backdrop. Entrances could be made from behind the pariaktoi if desired. In modern staging Medea could make her flight in her chariot from either the upper platform or from the top of the backdrop, depending on the discretion of the director. This could be easily accomplished with the help of a slide projector.

A set has been designed which attempts to show the starkness of Greek drama, stressing authenticity. The pariaktoi, the step units, platforms, the skene, columns, the three doors, the frieze all aid in this. The gray and black create the somber mood of the plot and action and the arrangement of the scenery lends itself to this, too, with the sharp rise of the second platform, the rather steep step units leading to that platform. And yet, in spite of the sharpness of the units, they lend themselves to a great deal of fluidity in movement. One could so easily and gracefully move up those front steps and on up to the top platform. There is a definite sinister feeling in the play, and the use of the pariaktoi sharpens that feeling, for they could so easily be interpreted as tormentor flats. The set offers much variety in elevations for acting areas and there would be no need for the actor to feel tied to any one area for long periods of time. It could be constructed with very little time or expense involved.



Chapter II
Medieval
Towneley Cycle Play

The story of the development of drama out of the liturgy has been told many times; although portions of it remain dark, and although, after all the attention shown to it, some puzzles remain, the main lines of progress can clearly be traced. It is now accepted that, after all the wealth of Greek endeavor and of imitation of the Greek in Rome, the theatre of the tenth century made a fresh start in the form of a tiny, four-line playlet inserted into the Easter service. The cue is taken from the Bible. In the Gospel according to Mark we read:

And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here; behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, and he said unto you.⁹

This is the entirety of the drama, but, short as it is, there can be no doubt of its being a play. A locality is clearly indicated--the sepulchre; the short dialogue, moreover, in its additions to the Gospel texts adds just those words that are so necessary in drama, demonstrating to the spectators the roles that are being interpreted by the actors and suggesting appropriate action.¹⁰

⁹Nicoll, World Drama, p. 143.

¹⁰Ibid.

Such scenes pleased the audience and additions soon crept in. Mary Magdalen lingers behind and meets Christ clad as a gardener; Peter and John run frantically toward the sepulchre, one outrunning the other; the Marys buy perfumes from a stall set outside the imaginary tomb. At Christmas there is the same development. The shepherds see the star which heralds the birth of Christ, and come to lay their gifts on His cradle. Later three kings come with their most precious presents; and, still later, Herod rants and raves when he hears that a King of Kings has been born into the world.

Thus was born the liturgical drama, that form of medieval play wherein the dialogue and the movement formed part of the regular liturgy or service of the day. Only the clergy took part in the dramas, and it was at a later period that the laymen found themselves involved in the playlets for special church festivals.

All of this, of course, is in Latin, but soon vernacular comes to take its place, and portions of the liturgical drama, as in the English Shrewsbury fragments, are spoken in medieval French or German or English, for, it must be remembered, this was no national development, but a movement which is to be traced in almost every European country. The next stage is the separation of the primitive play from the regular Church services.¹¹

The earliest medieval theatre is evolved with three main characteristics: (a) the mingling of audience and actors;

¹¹Nicoll, The Development of the Theatre, p. 63.

(b) the establishment of a series of platforms or small structures indicating special localities (sepulchre, garden, spice-seller's booth); and (c) the utilization of the space between these platforms or structures as an acting area. On these principles was the entire medieval stage to develop during the course of the centuries from the tenth to the fifteenth.¹²

By processes of growth and elaboration, the simple dialogue and action of the tropes ultimately resulted in full-length and highly developed dramas. In their first stage, these were called mystery plays and were based mainly on the events set forth in the Old and New Testaments. By the twelfth century practically all of the Bible, from the creation of the world to the Day of Judgment, had been dramatized in well-developed one-act episodes, and the dialogue was no longer written in Latin but in English. The mysteries became enormously popular and attracted great and unruly crowds to the churches.¹³

Obviously, the original intention of the clergy in thus introducing the liturgical drama was to make the chief episode in the Christian story more real and more vivid for the assembled congregation. The effect must, we imagine, have exceeded their expectations: for the people of the early medieval period, starved of entertainment of all kinds, the little shows were assuredly things not only of devotion but also of delight; and no doubt the clergy themselves found a secret joy in participation in the exercise of amateur theatricals.

¹²Nicoll, World Drama, p. 145.

¹³Goodman, Drama On Stage, pp. 61, 62.

Partly because these dramas were growing so rapidly in extent, partly because the largest churches were not sufficiently great to accommodate all the vast concourse of people who flocked to see the plays, the drama was moved outside on to the steps of the great west door, the spectators standing in the churchyard without. Then came doubt in the minds of the ecclesiastical authorities. This thing which they had called into being was becoming too great a force in the lives of the people; and accordingly came edict after edict, criticism after criticism, until the clergy were prohibited from taking part in performances--at least in such performances as were conducted outside the walls of the church itself. The drama, however, had been born and had grown into a lusty and lovable child; it could not die now, and the role of guardian was assumed by the town guilds, which at that time were the greatest of all social forces. While the subject matter of the plays remained still Biblical, they were worked up into regular mystery or miracle cycles, dealing with the entire story of the Old and New Testaments, together with some Apocryphal matter gratuitously thrown in.¹⁴

Naturally, enough, the actual plays making up the larger cycles varied from district to district, from country to country. England had four series of mystery dramas consisting of thirty to forty independent items each; the main subjects (the Creation, Noah, the Annunciation, for example) are dealt with in all; but every cycle has its own peculiar features. Thus, the Towneley

¹⁴Nicoll, The Development of the Theatre, pp. 63, 64.

cycle has an interesting study of Caesar Augustus, and the *Ludus Conventriae* devotes a whole play to the Conception of Mary.¹⁵

Beside the mystery cycles are the miracle plays, which dealt with the "miracles" of the saints and consequently departed from Scriptural authority. Sometimes they were related to the cult of the Virgin, sometimes they treated of the adventures of local saints.

The actors now were, for the most part, the ordinary burghers and artisans of the towns and countryside. In England the trades guilds undertook the performances of the plays, especially after the establishment of the Corpus Christi festival in 1311, a feast set apart specifically for the performance of these pieces. The guilds defrayed the expenses for the costumes and scenery, and from their members came the acting personnel.

For the liturgical dramas inside the churches a tomb was set up; where the perfume-selling episode was given, a stall was placed elsewhere in an aisle; Herod's Court was at one place, the manger at another. Hence arose the convention of placing all the scenes of action at one time before the congregation as they watched the church service. Boxes or platforms called mansions or houses were placed alongside of each other, their positions being determined by the geographical arrangement of the church. The Resurrection has thus Heaven to the left (north) of the spectator, Hell to the right (south).¹⁶ The mansions may

¹⁵Addardyce Nicoll, Mask Mimes and Miracles, (New York: Harcourt, Brace Co., 1931), p. 178.

¹⁶Nicoll, The Development of the Theatre, p. 65.

be set up before the audience in a straight line, in a semi-circle, or in a circle. Each mansion represented a distinct and separate locality, while the open area in front or in the middle, the platea, could be used much in the manner in which it had formerly served when the drama was in the hands of the clergy. It was an unlocalized stage; in other words, it was "anywhere." It might remain as neutral territory, or, through the words and actions of the characters, it might be thought of by the audience as representing a definite locality. In any case, it stood distinct from the clearly localized mansions which remained constant throughout the course of the play.

The system of "multiple staging" or "simultaneous setting" was the characteristic medieval contribution to the art of the theatre, especially secular theatre, although in some places, notably in England and Flanders, another device was adopted whereby individual mansions were set upon wheels (and named pageants) and drawn from group to group of spectators.¹⁷

It was not for an "audience" that the earliest medieval drama was written but for a church congregation inside the church itself. Very little mention is made of the first spectators since they probably preserved an attitude of silent and serious devotion as the tropes were being enacted. There are a few facts concerning them, however, of which we are quite certain: They were all members of the same religious faith; they represented, socially, a cross section of the population from prince to

¹⁷Nicoll, World Drama, p. 152.

peasant; they probably attended services in increasing numbers as a result of the pleasure they took in the literary and dramatic embellishments of the liturgy; and, finally, with the introduction of a great deal of secular material into the plays, their boisterousness and loss of reverence made their presence in the church undesirable.¹⁸

The miracle plays, which were performed on pageant-wagons that were trundled through the public streets, attracted much more heterogeneous and unruly audiences. The people got up at about four in the morning on Corpus Christi Day and took their places at the city gates, on the village green, and at the various other stations in the town where the wagons were scheduled to stop.

The medieval actor was primarily an amateur; it was not until the last days of the fifteenth century that semiprofessional and professional acting troupes came into existence. The first "actors," of course, were the priests and minor canons in the churches who chanted the tropes in Latin. By the end of the tenth century they had received specific directions for the enactment of their parts from Bishop Ethelwold of Winchester. Ethelwold became, in effect, one of our first play directors.¹⁹

When, in the fourteenth century, control over the liturgical drama passed from the Church to the craft guilds, the priests began to withdraw as actors and the members of the guild took

¹⁸Goodman, Drama On Stage, p. 66.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 67.

over as performers. The great care which the towns took in selecting players for their pageants and in providing beautiful, eye-filling productions was based less on their religious devotion than on their business acumen.

The medieval stage did not lack scenery, but it was usually simple and inclined to be symbolic. The altar of the church originally stood as a symbol for the tomb of Christ; later a simple tomb of wood or iron was built. The various mansions or houses, that were set up inside the church for the dozen or so scenes of action required in the early liturgical plays must have been small and plainly furnished or the aisles could not have accommodated them.

If the medieval actor received rather scant help from scenery, he relied very heavily upon costumes, make-up, and properties to strengthen his characterization. But since the medieval man knew little and cared less about historical accuracy, theatrical costumes might be realistic, symbolic, or fantastic, with all three styles frequently used in a single play.

While the liturgical plays were put on under its sponsorship, the Church provided all costumes and properties; but after the plays were taken over by the trade guilds, the costumes and properties were generally made by guild members. Ecclesiastical gowns and utensils needed for certain scenes might be borrowed, rented, or bought from the Church. Since the aim of each pageantmaster was to be ostentatious rather than correct, the productions, on the whole, were rich, gaudy, splendid and anachronistic.

The medieval drama grew out of, and was always closely associated with, music. The chanted liturgy gave birth to the trope, and the trope itself was chanted. As the mystery and miracle plays developed, the singing of the church choir supplied background accompaniment to the dramatic action.

In the composition of the dramas clearly a variety of different impulses was at work. First was the basic object of presenting dramatically the Biblical story, with accretions from apocryphal gospels as well as from the writings of commentators. In this sense the mystery cycle was an historical drama. But truth to the original narrative frequently was permitted to give way to a desire for symbolic and allegorical treatment of persons and events. Mary Magdalen, for example, thus becomes, not so much a real woman as an abstract figure representing sin repentant. This trend towards symbolism is, of course, a general characteristic of medieval art, but it is intensified here because these plays, besides being drama of an historical and symbolic kind, are also propaganda theatre, designed to instruct men to avoid vice and cling to virtue. Even when the mysteries strayed farthest from the Church, their devotional, or at least, instructional, quality remained dominant.

Beyond all of this, however, there was something else. All the marvels involved in the production of the plays were designed obviously to delight the audience, and we recognize that those concerned with their presentation were fully aware of what we should now call their "entertainment value."²⁰

²⁰Nicoll, World Drama, pp. 153, 154.

* * * * *

The Nativity play of the Towneley Cycle has been chosen as representative of the mystery cycle plays. The play includes Gabriel's visit to the Virgin, Joseph's realization of Mary's conception, the visit of Mary to Elizabeth, and Joseph and Mary making the journey for the taxation. Gabriel visits the Shepherds, the Kings learn of the birth of the King of Kings, and Herod makes his decree. The final scene is in the manger, depicting the Christ Child, Mary, Joseph, Gabriel, the Shepherds, and the Wise Men.

The interpretation of the play is as follows: in keeping with the true cycle dramatization using mansions for each scene, six different mansions are needed. First is Mary's mansion. Here she is visited by Gabriel and then by Joseph. Later Gabriel also appears to Joseph at this mansion. The second mansion belongs to Elizabeth, where she is visited by Mary and Joseph. Since the first two mansions are side by side, Mary and Joseph make use of the platea, or acting area in front of the mansions, walking around the stage several times to suggest a long journey. Shepherds occupy the third mansion, where they learn of the birth of the Christ Child from Gabriel, and the Three Kings claim the fourth mansion. Herod has mansion number five, where he learns of the birth of the Child from his messenger. He is later visited by the Three Kings at the mansion. The last mansion is the manger, the sight of the Nativity.

This cycle is easily adapted to modern staging when using platforms and step units. Mary's mansion has been designed from

one platform which is three and one-half feet wide and six feet long, and one foot high. Approaching this is one step, which is six feet long. Rising behind the platform is a wall, which could be made from plywood. It is six feet wide and eight feet high, covered by a roof two and one-half feet wide. The roof is supported by either one by two or two by two. Pink has been chosen for the color of the house, because modern costumers often dress Mary in blue and white, and pink is a pleasing bright color to use with this color scheme. Both the back and ceiling of the house are of this color. Centered on the back is the religious symbol for the Virgin, done in blue and white.²¹

Elizabeth's mansion is four feet wide, five feet long, and two one-foot platforms are used to make it two feet from the stage floor. Approaching this is a three-step unit. The back is seven and one-half feet tall and five feet wide. The roof is one and one-half feet wide. Supporting the roof are two angled braces. Green is the color chosen for this one because, according to history, Elizabeth was older and it is presumed she would be costumed in gray or an equally drab color. Green offers an interesting contrast to her characterization and gives good contrast to Mary's mansion. Centered on the back is a gold Star of David, to signify Levi's occupation as a priest.²²

The mansion of the shepherds is one platform (one foot high) and seven feet long and four feet wide. It is approached by one

²¹Ernest Lehner, Symbols, Signs, & Signets, (New York: World Publishing Co., 1950), p. 108.

²²Ibid.

step, four feet in length. Backing the platform is a wall six feet high and four feet wide. A deliberate attempt has been made to make this platform appear crowded, as if it were a tent or lean-to. Covering the top is a piece of canvas four feet wide at the back, extending over the platform four feet, and tapered to five feet wide at the front. Supporting it are two poles, either one by one or one by two. Colors chosen are brown for the back wall and fuchsia for the tenting. A shepherd's crook in light brown is seen on the back wall.

Sitting next in line is the mansion of the Kings. This one is not on a platform for the simple reason of offering variety, and no steps are used. It consists of a wall eleven feet high and five feet wide, striving to give it the appearance of height and regalness. Across the top is a semicircular roof five feet in diameter. The wall is covered in burgundy, topped by purple cathedral drapes with gold cord, suggesting wealth and grandeur. The ceiling is covered with blue stripes to offer contrast, and the roof itself is decorated with an edging of gold. To add another touch of showiness is a medallion or decoration on the back wall.

Herod's mansion is deliberately gaudy to suggest his vile, self-centered temperament. The platform is two feet high and has six sides, five of them each two feet in length. This is approached by two flights of steps of three steps each, thus giving steps to two of the equal sides. The platform is five feet wide and three feet deep. The floor has been covered in green and white. The back wall, which is eight feet high and three and

one-half feet wide, is topped with a roof identical in proportion to the floor. The back wall is covered in cerise, to show the "off-beat" color of blood red, and is adorned with a large medallion or symbol. The ceiling is covered in orange and white. The roof section is decorated with metallic discs of gold, blue, red, green, and silver, thus picking up every color used in decorating the entire mansion. The roof section is supported by two poles, either one by one or one by two.

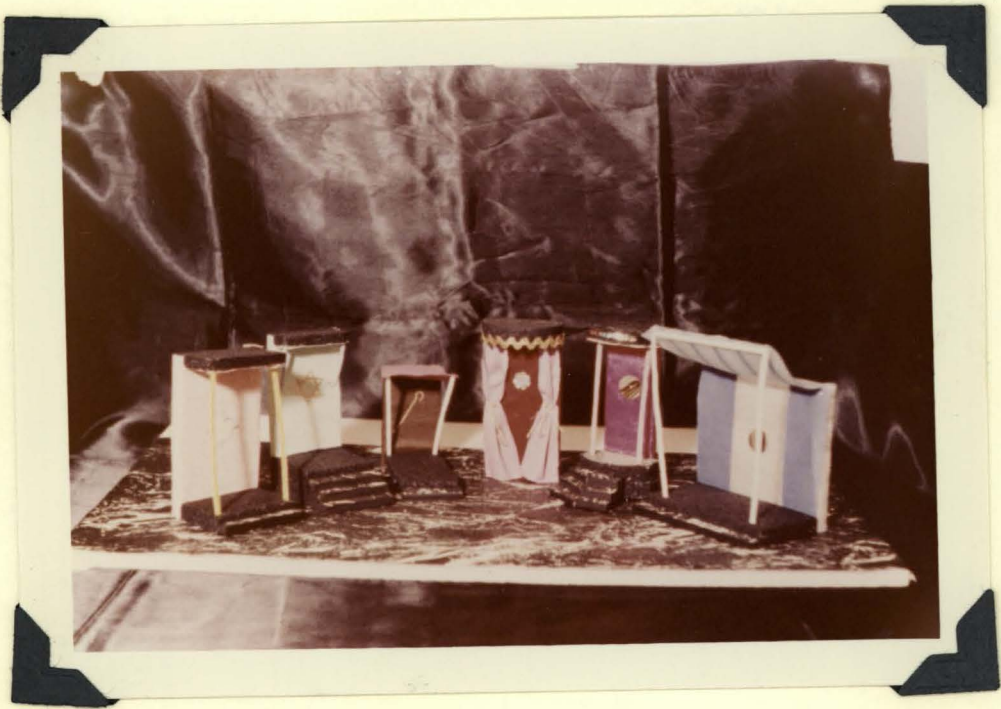
The last mansion is the manger. It is one foot high and the platform is ten feet long and five feet wide. It is approached by one step, ten feet long. The back is eight feet by ten feet and has been covered with white metallic cloth in the center and blue on either end, thus carrying through the elaborate scenes used for the Nativity in medieval drama. The roof covering suggests a tent, using blue jeweled cloth ten feet long, seven feet wide, and pitched at an angle, going to eleven feet in front from the eight-foot back. It is supported by poles on either end, either one by one or one by two.

The stage floor is covered in black and white marble, giving a richness to the overall colorful setting. The tops of all steps have been marbleized, with step risers painted black for emphasis. In staging the production, actors could either pose on or in front of their individual mansions until time for their scenes, or could be behind the mansions, then come around to the front of the mansions for the scenes, at the discretion of the director. If sight lines proved rather awkward in some cases because of roof supports, the supports could easily be altered to suit the

director. The design has been constructed using a scale of one-half inch equals one foot.

The set involves a lot of color, which should help hold the attention of the audience. Since the action in the early medieval period of drama could seem static to modern audiences, it seems necessary to concentrate on unusual staging, bright colors, and colorful costumes to make the play come alive in present-day performances. Although the mansions are quite close together and could, at first glance, appear to be cluttered, there is ample space to make the set very playable. The set shows what can be fashioned from a minimum of materials and could prove to be an inexpensive venture.

The set has been designed with the idea of each character posing on his respective mansion until time for his particular scene. Ideally, each mansion would be on casters, and be rolled slightly forward for the individual scenes. Simplicity of design has been shown.



Chapter III
Medieval
Morality Play

In the mystery plays one occasionally meets with personifications of Biblical and invented characters, and it is probable that the growth of yet another type of medieval drama, the morality play, was inspired from this source. In the moralities all the persons introduced upon the stage are abstract figures, most of them representing vices and virtues. Already in the twelfth century Germany could show, in the Ludus de Antichristo, a morality-type drama introducing Paganism and Synagogue, Hypocrisy and Heresy, as speaking characters.²³

At first glance it would seem as though this were a regressive movement in the theatre, a moving away from living characters to characters of a purely symbolic cast; but examination of the plays themselves must lead us to beware of too hasty judgments. The typical morality handles a plot in which a central figure, called Mankind or Human Genus or Infans, is tempted, falls, and comes again to grace. The pens of some of the playwrights may be heavy and dull and uninspiring; others may permit their moralizing aims to suppress dramatic tensivity; but in general it will be found that this basic theme aids rather than hinders the medieval dramatist in the writing of vividly conceived scenes, many of them based on the life he has seen around him.²⁴

²³Nicoll, *World Drama*, p. 164.

²⁴Ibid.

Of all the moralities and the Anglo-Dutch Everyman, or Elckerlijck, is both the most typical and the best. Its story is well known. God summons Everyman by ordering Death to take him for his own. Everyman pleads delay, and then seeks around for anyone who may bear him company. First he turns to Fellowship. When, however, he hears what is wanted he quickly draws back. A similar answer is given by Kindred and Goods; Knowledge, Confession, Beauty, Strength, Discretion, Five-Wits, all fail Everyman; in the end only Good Deeds, although faint and "lying cold" in the ground, is prepared to stand at his side.

The quality of this drama has deservedly rescued it from oblivion. In the original form and in the rather voluptuously expanded German Jedermann it has seen many performances during recent years and has always worked its magic on its audiences. This magic derives, of course, largely from the universal appeal of its theme, but it is contributed to by the manner in which the unknown playwright has made his figures, despite their abstract names, vital human characters--and this is true of all the moralities. Even in the dullest of these pieces there are flashes of this quality.²⁵

In France the "morality" went even further, and, although it preserved its ethical coloring, actually sloughed off the personifications and substituted a real or type names in their places. Thus, for example, we find a New Morality of a Poor

²⁵Ibid.

Village Girl who chose rather to have her Head cut off by her Father than be violated by her Lord, in honour of all Chaste and Honest Maids.²⁶

Some of the moralities called for a simultaneous setting akin to that which served the mysteries, but the majority, both French and English, asked for no more than a single simple platform. This meant that they could step out of the world of the amateurs with their elaborate, cumbersome, and costly mansions or pageants and adapt themselves to the needs of those small professional companies which came into being towards the end of the fifteenth century. The morality, therefore, formed the true link between the medieval theatre and the modern. Shakespeare almost certainly witnessed performances of mystery plays in his youth, but there was a vast gulf between the stages they demanded and the London stages upon which he became an actor.²⁷

The morality play attempted to furnish answers to the question, "What must I do--what must I believe--to be saved?" In its later development this type of play became dull, narrow, and essentially sectarian, its didacticism relieved only by the scenes of low humor; but the finest example of the morality play is the genuinely profound and moving drama called Everyman.

Some scholars believe that Everyman is a translation from a Dutch play called Elckerlyc, or that both plays have a common source in a Latin work called Homulus. It is more likely, how-

²⁶Ibid., p. 166.

²⁷Ibid., p. 167.

ever, judging from internal evidence and from the spirit of the piece, that the play is of English origin. It may have been written around 1475 in the reign of Edward IV.²⁸

Although we do not know the name of the play's author or a single biographical fact concerning him, it is safe to say that Everyman is the work of a priest or theologian. Everyman, for example, puts on the jewel of penance, later wears the robe of contrition, and then takes the seven "blessed sacraments," including "holy and extreme unction." In the final scene of the play, Everyman, holding a small wooden cross, asks his companions to touch the "rodde"; in this symbolic gesture, the various personages who are the abstract concepts of Everyman's own potentialities--his strength, discretion, five wits, beauty, knowledge, and good deeds--signify the full resignation of all the powers of body and soul in the acceptance of death according to God's will. The play is thus a graphic expression of Catholic doctrine relating to sin and contrition, confession, grace, and salvation.²⁹

Although the author of Everyman depicts life in this world as a spiritual adventure, he makes this abstract concept convincingly concrete by introducing into his play human situations and vivid figures. By creating characters whose reasoning is psychologically sound and whose behavior is recognizably realistic, the author manages to engage the interest and sympathy

²⁸Goodman, Drama On Stage, p. 62.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 62, 63.

of his audiences. Everyman, for instance, lonely and terrified in the face of death, is thoroughly understandable and moving; while the figures who surround him and display various human weaknesses, also evoke pathos and pity. Such characters are not arid personifications but possess genuine and fundamental attributes common to all of us.³⁰

* * * * *

One runs into a major problem in adapting Everyman to many modern stages, and that is space. Since Everyman meets ten different people, begging them to accompany him, one must provide ten different "stations." Many stages of today are not large enough to allow sufficient acting area for this.

In adapting Everyman one should try to make use of as much color as possible by using the allegorical symbolic colors for each of the characters.³¹ In order to add richness to the vivid colors, one could accent with black.

Use of the trap doors has been made in this set, for they can be very practical and useful mechanisms in many instances. Their use in this play is in the graves. The trap on stage left is draped in black, and in staging the play Death would appear from this spot. A portion of black material, gauze, or cotton, could be used to line the trap, and it should spill over the sides, to suggest the open grave. Cotton batting could be used for the padding. Death would also be costumed in black, and

³⁰Ibid., pp. 63, 64.

³¹Henry Turner Bailey and Ethel Pool, Symbolism for Artists Creative and Appreciative, (Worcester: Davis Press, 1925).

white could be substituted for black in the grave lining and still be authentic for Medieval symbolism.³² Naturally a ladder would have to be used under the trap, the length determined by the height of the room below the stage.

Death would find Everyman in front of the platforms, or platea. The platea area on the model is covered in brown, and this is for two reasons. First, in Medieval drama, often the platea was an area of ground or a street; secondly, Everyman meets his first two allegorical characters in this area, Fellowship and Kindred and Cousin, who both desert him. Brown is a somber color, and Everyman is disappointed that they fail him. Fellowship would be met down left stage, Kindred and Cousin, down right. Their bright costumes would brighten the platea in appearance. These characters, as well as all of the other allegorical characters, would pose as statues except during their scenes with Everyman; thus being in full view of the audience for the entire production.

After Kindred and Cousin turn their backs on him, Everyman goes to Goods. Goods is to be found on a platform eight feet long, four feet wide, and one foot high, left stage. It is approached by a single step eight feet long. Goods is covered or painted in gold, the symbolic color for this allegorical character. Next Everyman approaches Good Deeds, found opposite Goods, on right stage. Good Deeds is on a platform identical

³²Clara Erskine Clement, A Handbook of Legendary and Mythological Art, (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1881), pp. 7, 8.

to Goods and it, too, is approached by a single eight-foot step. The symbolic color is yellow.

The next station is Knowledge, which is played on a platform eight feet long, four feet wide, and two feet high. There is a single step, four feet long, leading from the platform for Good Deeds to this one. The color for Knowledge is yellow-orange. Everyman's next stop is Confession, which is approached from the platform for Knowledge by another single step, again four feet long. This leads us to the platform across the back of the set, which is thirty-two feet long, four feet wide, and three feet high. This is assembled from four three-foot platforms, using standard-size plywood (four feet by eight feet). This entire platform is painted black.

After Everyman goes from the platform for Knowledge and reaches the platform across the back, he finds another platform, four feet square and one foot high, covered in violet, which is Confession. From there he goes to Beauty, which also is on the back platform. Beauty is a platform eight feet by three feet and one foot high. The color used here is rose. Everyman can get from Confession to Beauty by means of the step unit across the back, which consists of five steps, each twenty-four feet long. They rise from the upstage side of the traps and lead directly to the back platforms.

Everyman's next stop is Strength, a platform left stage exactly like that of Knowledge, being eight feet long, four feet wide and two feet high. The color for Strength is red. Again, there is a single step unit, four feet in length, leading from

this platform to the back platform. Everyman moves from Strength to the back platform again, where he meets Discretion, a platform four feet square and one foot high, painted gray, the appropriate symbolic color.

The last allegorical character is Five Wits, which would be found in the middle of the step unit across the back. On the third step would be the character dressed in sapphire, the symbolic color. This color would make him stand out from the black steps.

Everyman has now completed his cycle except for the final stop, which is the grave. Everyman's grave is the trap right stage. This trap is draped as the trap used by Death except that the color used here is soft ivory-gray, as is often used for lining caskets. Again, the draping spills over the sides, to suggest the open grave, and a ladder would be needed below the trap.

In constructing this set, the materials needed would be two eight feet by four feet by one foot platforms (Good Deeds and Goods); two four feet by four feet by one foot platforms (Confession and Discretion); one eight feet by three feet by one foot platform (Beauty); two eight feet by four feet by two feet platforms (Knowledge and Strength); and three eight feet by four feet by three feet platforms for the back platform. Also included would be two single step units, each eight feet long and four single step units, each four feet long. For the large step unit across the back would be used individual planks, totaling twenty-four feet in length and five steps high. Ten two by

eights, each twelve feet long would take care of the steps. All steps are painted black.

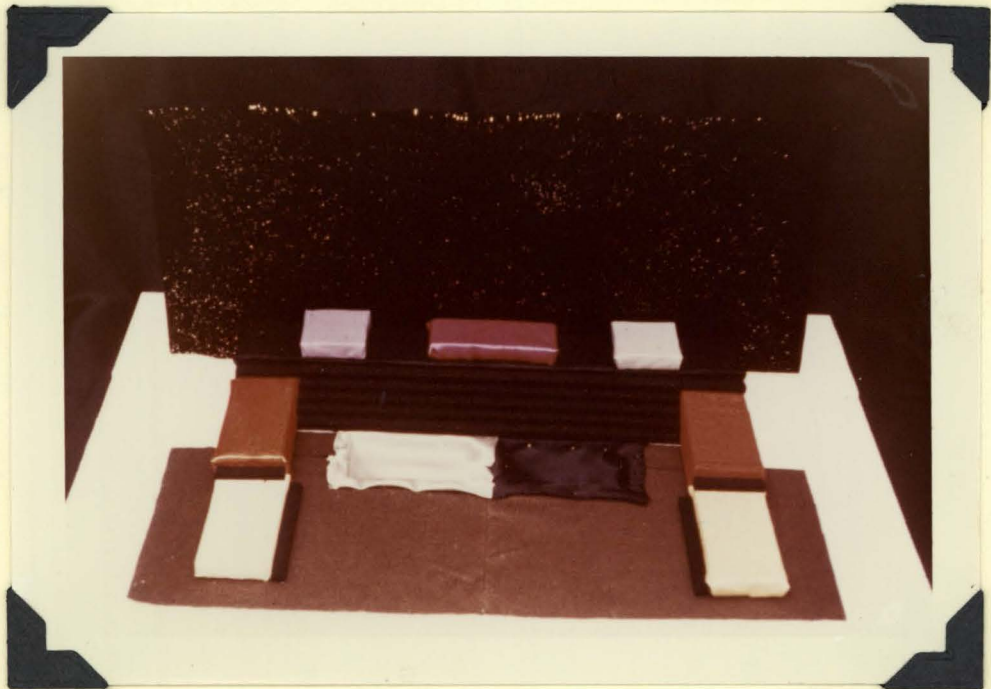
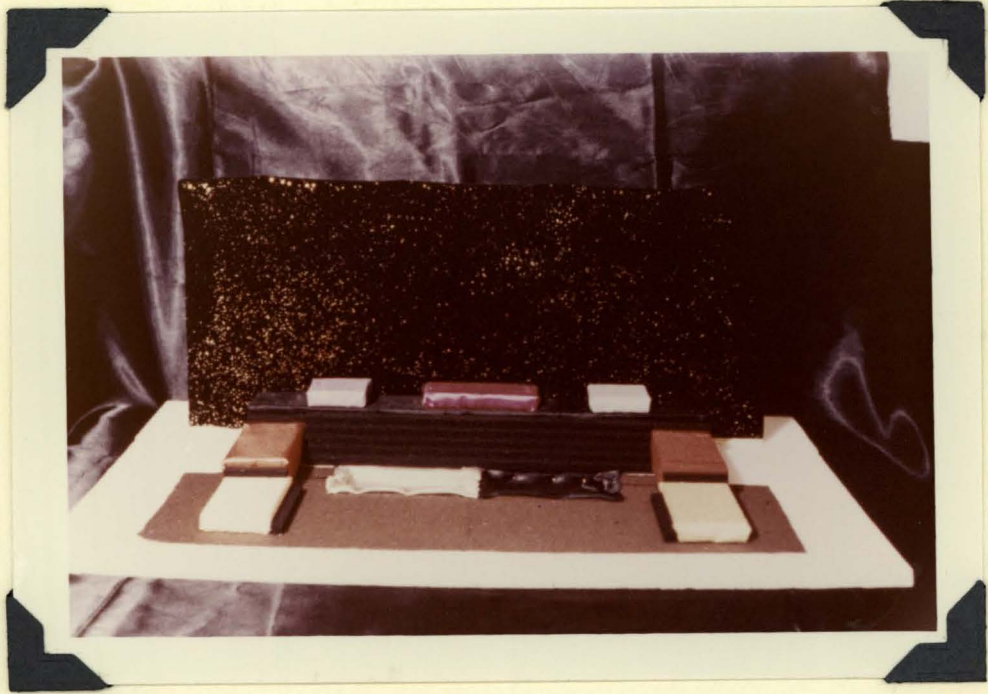
One other piece of equipment would be needed, and that is a public address system for the voice of God. The production could be much more effective if God were never seen and only His voice were heard. This method has been used frequently in producing the play.

The backdrop has not as yet been mentioned. A star backdrop has been used which adds a great deal to the richness of the allegorical colors. The background is black and the stars are constant. A dark blue curtain could be easily substituted for this if no such backdrop were available. The backdrop replaces the usual cyclorama.

The colors are vivid, yet are toned down by the black accents. Costuming would be interesting, if Medieval costumes were used.

As one looks at the set it is very evident that it builds in stature as it approaches the backdrop. Yet, the use of the bright allegorical colors and the trap doors help to focus attention on each of the areas.

No space is wasted, thus showing economy of materials and movement. But Everyman has a chance to use much variety in movement as he plays with each character. No area is over-emphasized and this gives balance.



Chapter IV

Shakespearean

The uniqueness of Shakespeare's genius is universally admitted; it is so overwhelming, in fact, that some believe that he could not have been the author of the plays ascribed to him in view of his conventional background and uneventful existence. A careful analysis of the plays indicates, however, that his very conventionality is the basis for his continuing appeal. His moral values are the generally accepted ones; his view of life is never sordid; his treatment of women, children, the aged, and unfortunate is sympathetic, and his characteristic viewpoint is distinctly idealistic.

William Shakespeare, son of John Shakespeare and Mary Arden, was born on or about April 23, 1564, in Stratford-on-Avon, England. We first hear of his connection with the London theatre in 1592 and by 1594 he had become a member of the Lord Chamberlain's Company and shared in the profits as actor and playwright.

With their settling down in one building and thus abandoning their former itinerant performances, the actors soon bethought them of erecting especially constructed buildings for the presentation of their shows, and in this they were aided by a number of men who, gifted with the money that the players lacked, saw in the rapidly developing drama an opportunity of adding to their gains.³³

³³Allardyce Nicoll, The English Theatre, (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1936), p. 32, 33.

It was with the Lord Chamberlain company that Shakespeare was affiliated for the rest of his life; and for its notable members, headed by Richard Burbage, the finest actor of his day, he wrote at least two plays a year for twenty consecutive years. The actors became the close personal friends of the playwright, and after his death his plays were collected and published in the First Folio (1623) by two of them--Heminges and Condell.

In order to escape from the restrictions and reproaches, James Burbage conceived the idea and drew up plans for a building to be devoted solely to the presentation of plays. This building, the first of its kind in England, would be his own. The Theatre, as the playhouse was called, began to go up in April, 1576, and showed clearly that it embodied the best features of the bull- and bear-baiting rings as well as those of innyards. Like the bull-ring, it was circular in shape to accommodate large numbers of people and provide excellent sight lines; like the innyards it had a platform stage and balconies around the interior. In 1577 another playhouse, The Curtain, was build close by The Theatre, and this too, came under the control of Burbage. Their design served, with improvements, as the model for all the theatres of the period.³⁴

When James Burbage died in 1597, his property was left to his sons, Cuthbert and Richard, who two years later formed a company with the actors in the troupe, including William Shakespeare, John Heminges, Augustine Phillips, Thomas Pope, and Will

³⁴Goodman, Drama On Stage, p. 121.

Kempe, for the erection of a new house to replace The Theatre. The old building was torn down and the timber was transported to the south bank of the Thames, which had become the new theatre district; there, with the assistance of Peter Street, an expert carpenter and builder, the Burbages built the celebrated Globe Theatre.³⁵

There have been some rather detailed conjectures about the physical structure of The Globe, but few actual records survive. The house, it is said, was octagonal in shape and open to the sky; it was three stories high and accommodated over two thousand people. The building had two entrances--one in front for the audience; one in the rear for the actors, musicians, and the personnell of the theatre. Inside the building, a rectangular platform stage--about forty feet wide, twenty-five feet deep and six feet high--projected into the middle of the yard. There were no seats on the ground floor; the audience, called "groundlings," stood in front of an on both sides of the stage. Around and above the yard ran three galleries approached by interior stairs and divided into "rooms" or boxes where the better class of spectators sat on stools. Over a large part of the platform stage there extended a wooden roof, called "the heavens" or "the shadow," which was supported by two pillars that rested on the stage; the roof served partly to protect the actors from bad weather, but primarily to contain the machinery needed to let down such stage properties as thrones or to "fly" actors imperson-

³⁵Ibid.

ating fairies or gods. At the rear of the stage there was a deep recess, or alcove, called an "inner stage," that was curtained off and served as a playing area, mainly for interior scenes. On the right and left at the rear of the platform, there were doors leading into the tiring-house, where the dressing rooms were situated; these doors were used for entrances and exits by the players. In the floors of the platform and of the inner stage there were trap doors through which actors or properties could be made suddenly to appear or disappear. On each of the three stories there was a recess above the inner stage; the recess on the second floor, like the one below it, was curtained off and served as an acting area--for balcony or battlements; the alcove on the third floor was called the Music Room as it was used by the men who supplied the musical accompaniment to the play. Above the "heavens" were little huts and a tower; the huts were used by the sound-effects men and possibly for the storage of costumes and properties; from the tower a flag was unfurled on the days that performances were given in the theatre, and in the tower there was a great bell; also from the tower a trumpeter blew three blasts on his horn to announce the beginning of the play. Over the front door of the theatre swung a wooden sign showing Hercules carrying the globe on his back, and under him appeared the legend, Totus mundus agit histrionem (All the world's a stage).³⁶

³⁶Ibid., pp. 121, 122.

The Elizabethan theatre, like the medieval, had no front curtain, and the platform stage was unlocalized; that is, it was neutral ground that might represent a public square, a forest, a street, or a seacoast, in rapid succession. This feat was performed by a stagehand who, in full view of the audience, carried on and off such simple set-pieces and properties as a rock, a tree, or a gate. In addition to these significant and movable items, the lines of the play would indicate the locale and the time of day or night at the opening of each scene; it was up to the audience to exercise its imagination and supply the missing details in the decor. On this type of stage, different times and places could succeed each other as rapidly as stagehands and actors came and went.³⁷

The inner stage and the chamber above it were curtained off, as has been said, so that it was possible for these areas to be furnished to represent definite places--a bedroom, a prison, or a throne-room. Painted canvas or tapestries were hung in the alcoves to help suggest locale; if a tragedy was being performed, the draperies were black. Very often the inner stage and the platform were combined into a single set; the curtain would open and disclose, for instance, that the inner stage was a throne-room--king and queen would be seated on two large gilded chairs and courtiers stood about. As the scene progressed, the actors would move out of the alcove on to the platform thus making that area part of the throne-room; in sim-

³⁷Ibid., p. 123.

ilar manner various other acting areas could be used in combination, thus giving the Elizabethan stage enormous flexibility, variety, and interest.

The Elizabethan play took two and one half to three hours to perform and was presented in the afternoon from three to six in the summer and from two to five in the winter. In this open-air theatre, general illumination was provided by natural daylight; the platform always had enough light upon it, and even the alcoves, under the "heavens," were amply lit. But many scenes were supposed to take place at night or in the darkness of caves and cells, and this provided the opportunity for the use of torches, cressets, candles, and lanterns. The fact that all of these things were going on in broad daylight did not disturb the Elizabethan spectator; it was one of the conventions of his theatre which he accepted.³⁸

The properties in use of the Elizabethan stage served an impressionistic or a symbolic rather than a realistic purpose. Large gilded chairs would signify a throne-room; a fourposter, a bedroom; and a rough-hewn table and some stools a tavern. The locales changed so quickly that it would have been impossible to "dress a set" in minute detail. There were innumerable hand properties--daggers and swords, fans, handkerchiefs, goblets, musical instruments, and, in the Senecan melodramas, such as Titus Andronicus, several heads and hands--but all of these were carried on and off by the actors.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 123, 124.

The arras, an imitation tapestry, or "painted cloth," was one type of hanging, but there were various kinds of curtains, all easily removable; and the floors of all the acting areas were covered with rushes, a kind of dried grass, in lieu of carpeting. The rushes were swept out after each performance, and the stage was freshly strewn for the next. Occasionally we hear of matting or rugs being used.³⁹

All Elizabethan plays were done, so to speak, in modern dress; that is, the costumes of the actors were the last word in contemporary fashion. The women wore the wide-spreading fathin-gale made of satin, velvet, taffeta, cloth of gold, silver, or copper, and the ruff of stiff lawn. The person was ornamented with gold and silver jewelry, precious stones, and strings of pearls. The men wore doublets and hose made of rich and contrasting materials, trimmed with lace of gold, silver, or thread; the jacket and cloak were made of silk or velvet; the ruffs, of stiff lawn; the shoes of fine, soft leather; and the outer robes were heavily furred. The actors, like the fops and ladies of the period, were also interested in the high styles of foreign countries and so appeared in German trunks, French hose, Spanish hats, and Italian cloaks confusingly mixed.⁴⁰

The colors were dazzling and symbolic. White, gold, silver, red, and green might be used in one costume, while black, purple, crimson, and white in another. Coral pink, silver, and gray

³⁹Ibid., p. 124.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 126.

were used together. Elizabethan stage costumes were undoubtedly magnificent and costly; they represented, in fact, the most expensive item in the production budget.

It did not in the least disturb the playgoer that Timon of Athens, Julius Caesar of Rome, and Cleopatra of Egypt all wore Elizabethan costumes. Nor did he appear to be bothered by the fact that ancient and contemporary costumes were worn side by side, a man in medieval armor talking to one in a fashionable doublet, with the occasional intermixture of such foreign items as a Moor's robe, a Turkish turban, or Shylock's "Jewish gaber-dine." No attempt was made to achieve complete historical accuracy of costume until the nineteenth century.⁴¹

A number of fantastic costumes were in use for fairies, devils, and clowns, but these were patterned mainly on traditional representations which had come down from the medieval mystery and miracle plays. The devils wore tails, cloven hoofs, and horns; the clowns were dressed like country yokels or wore the red and yellow motley of the fool; ghosts usually wore sheets, though that of Hamlet's father appeared in full armor; the witches in Macbeth wore ugly masks and fright wigs.⁴²

The costumes were acquired in various ways and might belong to the company jointly or to the individual actors. Some new garments were bought but these were so expensive as to be almost prohibitive; an effort was therefore made to get hold of second-

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid.

hand clothing. Many courtiers, either because they were in need or because they did not wish to be seen too frequently in the same outfits, sold their finery to the players. Upon the deaths of some noblemen their expensive clothes were willed to servants or to poor relatives who sold them in turn to the actors. After the death of Mary of Scotland her wardrobe was turned over to Queen Elizabeth who presented these beautiful gowns to actors in lieu of a fee. If a theatrical company failed, its costumes were sold to active competitors. Some theatre owners rented their costumes to other companies; and each company had at least one or two tailors in regular employ who busily altered or renovated the costumes on hand.

* * * * *

The play chosen from the writings of Shakespeare is the tragedy of Romeo and Juliet. The two lovers are from rival families, the Capulets and the Montagues, and the setting is Verona. Juliet's father wants her to marry Paris, but she secretly marries Romeo, who immediately after the wedding, kills her cousin. As a result, Romeo must flee for his life. Since her marriage to Romeo is unknown to her parents, they are forcing her to marry Paris. In order to keep from exposing her secret to her parents, she turns to Friar Laurence, who has performed her ceremony with Romeo, and he gives her a potion to put her to sleep. Romeo learns that Juliet is believed to be dead and he first kills Paris, then commits suicide. Juliet revives, discovers that Romeo is dead and she, too, commits suicide. This causes the end of the feud between the two families.

In adapting Romeo and Juliet to modern staging one must carefully plan the set so as to include all the necessary acting area. Sufficient space must be allowed for street scenes and the ballroom scene; dueling scenes must be provided for; the home of the Capulets is needed, as is Juliet's bedroom and balcony off the bedroom; scenes take place in Friar Laurence's cell; the tomb is the scene of the entire fifth act.

Black is the color chosen for a floor covering. It would show footprints easily, but black is essential to point up the dramatic action. Old stage curtains could be put to use in this capacity. Street scenes would be played in front of the setting itself. At least six feet of acting area would be needed completely across the front of the set, for the ballroom scenes also would be placed in this area.

The tomb has been placed right stage and in a most prominent area. It is eight feet high, ten feet wide and nine feet deep. This allows enough room for the necessary action in the fifth act. Left and back walls are draped in soft funereal gray and right wall suggests the outer wall of the tomb, containing the door. The door is arched, being seven feet high and four feet wide. Around the door is painted stone work. This section of scenery is made possible by using three three-foot flats, each eight feet tall, for the left wall, and two five-foot flats, each eight feet tall, for the back wall. Right wall is composed of a three-foot flat and a two-foot flat (each eight feet tall), with an arched plug four feet wide and one foot high, to comprise the door. The door should have heavy black strap hinges. Right

wall is a light gray. Seen in the center of the tomb, and jutting beyond the imaginary fourth wall, is the funeral bier, which is eight feet long, four feet wide, and two feet high, constructed from one platform. This is covered in a dull gray.

Covering the tomb is a platform eleven feet square, constructed from plywood. The platform is painted dull gray and forms the cell for Friar Laurence. (This platform extends over the one-foot flat placed full-front and left side of the tomb. The purpose is to give depth to the wall of the tomb.) Extending across the back of the cell is a wall, composed of three three-foot flats and one two-foot flat (each six feet tall). In actual performance this wall could easily be eliminated. On the wall is a gold cross, three feet by two feet. If the wall were not used, the cross could be suspended for a dramatic effect.

In center stage is the area for the home of the Capulets. This area is twelve feet by eight feet and five feet high. To construct this, one would use one row of three two-foot platforms and one row of three three-foot platforms. The area is painted dull gray floor and light gray walls. Located here are two stools, each two feet by three feet and one foot high. One is covered in medium blue, the other light green. Directly in front of the area is a long flight of steps leading from the street to the cell of Friar Laurence. This stairway would have to be constructed, as it is an open stairway (for sight lines) and is sixteen steps high. The steps are painted dull gray sides and top, with black on the under side. The area under the stairway is black and this is the space provided for the apothecary scene.

By using this type of stairway one could either approach the Capulet home or the friar's cell by using only one stairway. Dueling scenes would be played on this staircase.

Leading from the center platform is a step unit (seven steps) leading to Juliet's bedroom. The steps are gray, with black masking used. Juliet's bedroom is twelve feet by eight feet and is nine feet tall, using three rows of three-foot platforms. Again light gray and dull gray are used, with the focal point of the area being a canopy bed, six feet long, three feet wide, and two feet high. The canopy posts are five feet and are covered with pale pink chiffon. The bed is covered in magenta.

Extending from the downstage side of the area is a semi-circular balcony, which is five feet long and two feet wide. It, too, is painted dull gray. Around the balcony is a railing three feet high, and necessary bracing is needed under the balcony to support it. At the bottom of this area is a garden, which has been substituted for the Capulet orchard. Necessary plants and flowers would be used here. All work in the model is done to the scale of one-half inch equals one foot.

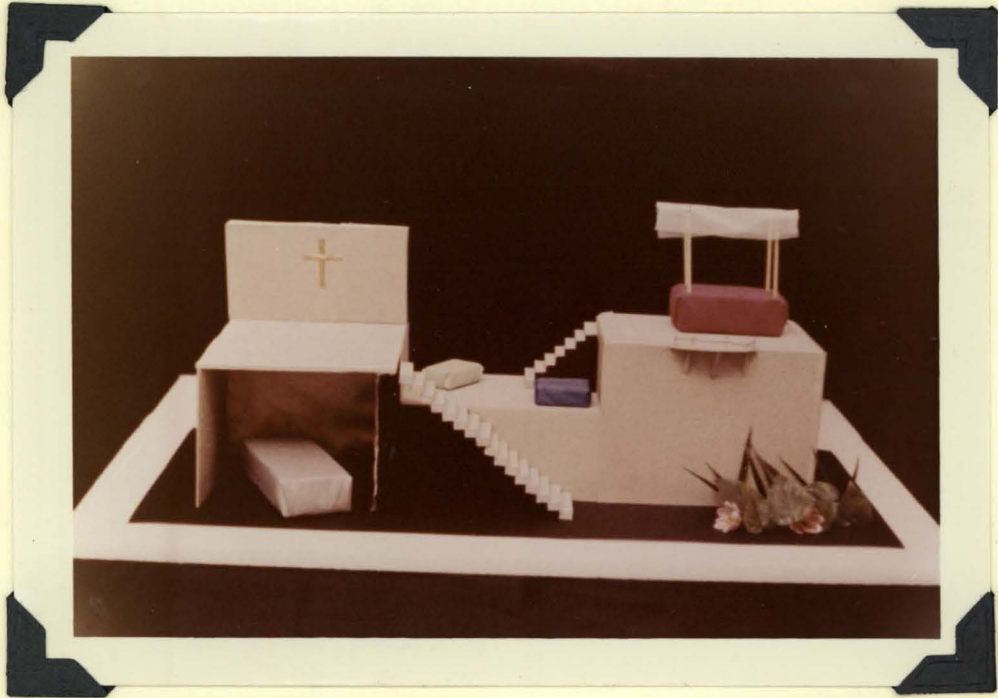
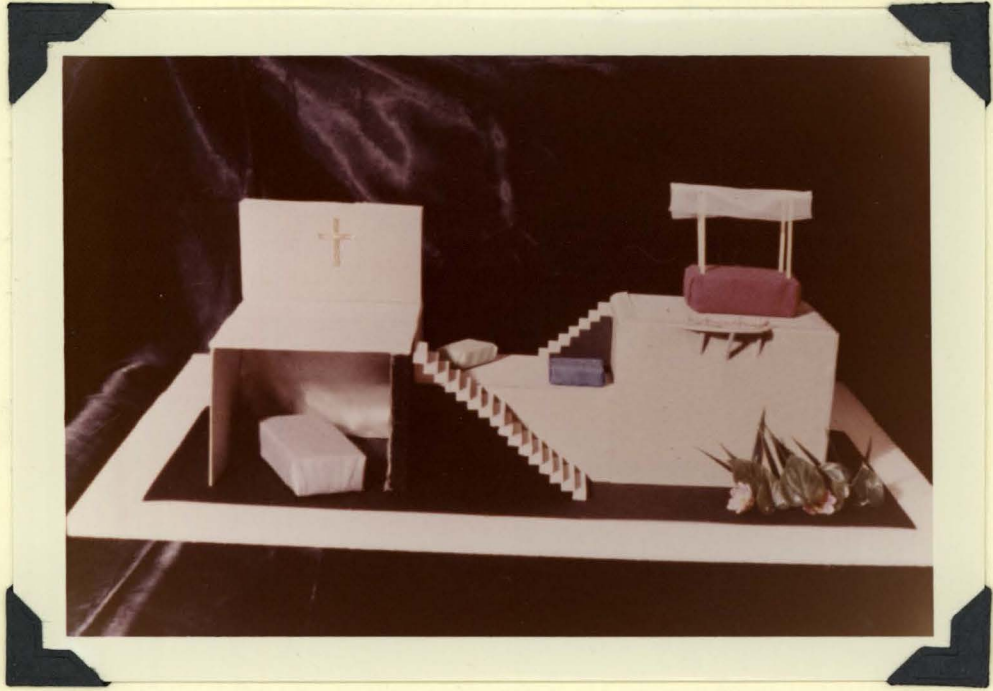
After completing the model set, it is realized that the entire setting should be moved upstage at least four or five feet, to allow sufficient room for the street scenes. Also a platform could be extended offstage on the right side of the cell area, with a stairway leading up to it from behind. This would allow people in street scenes to come up the stairway, across the platform and down the main stairway in front of the set to get to the street. This would add some variety in entrances and exits.

The play was adapted to this setting for several reasons. First of all, in providing for such a large number of scenes, one must be practical about the matter and think in terms of space economy. No space is wasted on the set, yet it is not crowded or cluttered. No scenery would have to be shifted, as all of it has been provided.

An attempt has been made to offer contrast in the elevations, yet keep a balance without it being too symmetrical. In order to avoid the feeling of being too much of a box, a long flight of steps has been put in front of an important acting area. The canopy bed, although of straight lines, keeps the area for Juliet's bedroom from being an area with no personality.

The garden helps show the tenderness of the play by the use of soft colors; the tomb shows the tragedy. The gold cross symbolizes the religious aspect that enters in the story.

The Friar's cell and the tomb are closely related in telling the story; one leads to the other. For that reason one has been put over the other. One must see the close connection. A thick wall divides the tomb from the Capulet home: they are a distance apart, and the thick wall helps the audience to become aware of that distance. The bedroom would be a distance away from the main part of the house, probably upstairs; hence, the elevating of that section.



Chapter V
Neoclassical

Jean-Baptiste Poquelin, better-known as Moliere, was born in Paris on January 16, 1622. He was introduced to the theatre long before starting school, and it was probably at this time he developed his love for it. His father's shop was situated not far from two important theatrical sites, the Pont-Neuf and the Rue Mauconseil. At the Pont-Neuf some quack doctors had set up large platform stages in the street upon which comedians acted out plays for the purpose of selling patent medicines to the crowds that gathered to watch the free shows. Moliere was impressed by the antics of the comic medicine-men, and stored away their tricks for later use.

October 24, 1658, was the date that Moliere acted for the first time before Louis XIV and his courtiers in the Guard Room of the old Louvre Palace. The program consisted of Corneille's tragedy Nicomede, followed by Moliere's farce The Love-Sick Doctor, and the whole was brought to a close by a clever speech which Moliere addressed to the Court. The evening was a triumph; the King immediately decreed that the company was to be known as the Troupe de Monsieur, and that it was to perform at the Hotel du Petit Bourbon.⁴³

Thanks to Moliere, French classical comedy assumed a definite form between 1660 and 1665: the masks of the Italians dis-

⁴³Goodman, Drama On Stage, p. 199.

appeared, characters and situations began to resemble those of contemporary Paris, and plot was developed through the interaction of character rather than through the conduct of intrigues.⁴⁴

Moliere's comedy has remained for the French the best loved of all their works, because it combines gaiety with extreme restraint in the expression of profound feelings, and because of its social outlook. An individual's eccentricity in conflict with accepted norms provides the basis for most social comedy, and Moliere is the undisputed master of this type; no dramatist has ever displayed a keener social consciousness, a sharper wit, more astute common sense, or more Olympian detachment in depicting the foibles of civilized man than he.⁴⁵

Social comedy differs from romantic comedy in that the latter type puts a heavy emphasis upon story and plot, while the former is concerned with the delineation of character and with social criticism. Sentiment is almost entirely lacking in social comedy; there is hardly a word of genuine tenderness between parents and children, or between brothers and sisters, in all of Moliere. Even the tenderness of his lovers is always close to laughter. The most sacred relationships and the most serious situations are made to seem absurd, for the writer of social comedy is a reformer at heart who attacks the follies of society by laughing at them. It is a very difficult art, which explains why even a genius of Moliere's stature required a lifetime to perfect it.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 200.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 202.

Because his plays recreate the world he lived in--with its social climbers, doctors, lawyers, prudes, peasants, servants, lecherous old men, and amorous young women, all done so naturally, so spontaneously, so ridiculously, and so like our own world--Moliere's work has enduring appeal.⁴⁶

The professional neoclassical theatre relied for its support mainly upon the king, the members of the nobility, and the upper middle class, and for these people plays were performed indoors. The earliest indoor theatres were not built specially for dramatic productions but had originally been intended for social gatherings or spectator sports; they had actually been ballrooms or indoor tennis courts which were converted into theatres by building a platform at one end of the long room. Since the space itself was the wrong shape and the people who renovated it had no principles to guide them, the playhouses of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in France were anything but ideal for either playgoers or performers.

All of the important Parisian theatres of the seventeenth century had the same physical layout as that of the Hotel de Bourgogne: The auditorium was a long, narrow room at one end of which there was a narrow, shallow stage; the orchestra floor in front of the stage, called the parterre or pit, had no seats but accommodated standees only. For the better class of patrons, there were boxes in the two galleries that ran round the sides of the room, and beneath the galleries, against the walls, were

⁴⁶Ibid.

loges or grandstands built up from the floor. The "loges de face," which face the stage directly from the rear wall of the theatre, were the only ones which provided a suitable view of the stage, but were farthest from it. The other seats faced into the house so that the wealthier patrons had a better view of the crowd in the pit than of the action on the stage. Both auditorium and stage were lighted by candles, and the stage had no curtains.⁴⁷

The two theatres in Paris occupied by Moliere and his company after 1658 were the Petit Bourbon and the Palais Royal; both were closely connected with the Court, yet, except for the magnificence of the decor, there was very little structural difference between these houses and the others in the city. The Petit Bourbon was a room about two hundred ten feet long by sixty-four feet wide, with a deep apse at one end where the uncurtained stage was located; there were two galleries, the higher one set back, and the usual loges around the side walls. Forced out of the Petit Bourbon in 1660, Moliere was granted the use of the Palais Royal, the theatre which had been built for Cardinal Richelieu in 1637.⁴⁸

Scenery used in the French theatres during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was an adaptation of the type in vogue on the medieval platform stage. The mystery plays of the Middle Ages, as has been noted, were performed on a long platform on

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 207, 208.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 208.

which stood four or five little buildings, called mansions, representing the various locales to be used during the play.

The Hotel de Bourgogne, with its tiny stage, did not have room enough for the building of mansions, but such clever designers as Laurent Mahelot and Michel Laurent solved that problem by covering the rear wall of the stage with a painted backcloth on which were depicted, side by side, the various locales required. As the plays became more and more romantic, in addition to temples and palaces, they called for woods, sea-coasts, grottoes, and arbors, all of which were duly painted on the back curtain. With the aid of the backcloth, the different compartments could represent any of the settings required for tragedy, comedy, tragicomedy, and pastoral. The most important characteristic of these decorations is that they symbolize rather than represent place, and thus have something in common with Elizabethan staging. The actor, having taken a position either in or in front of a given item of decor, moved downstage, and, by convention, the whole stage would become that place. The audience accepted this convention, but as the plays became more complicated and the compartments multiplied, the result was confusing; the audience was often perplexed as to where the action was taking place. Although this type of staging made excessive demands upon the spectators, the simultaneous setting and the unlocalized stage remained in use well into the seventeenth century and returned to play prominent part in German expressionism in the early years of our own country. But a

great curb was put upon the unlocalized stage by the introduction of neoclassical rules.⁴⁹

When the critics began to insist upon the observance of the unities of action, time, and place, the dramatists were constrained to write plays which called for only a single setting, such as a room in a house, a corner of a garden, or a street. The room would be furnished with no more than a single armchair or table; there might be a bench in the garden; while the street scene would need no properties at all. Many of the plays of Racine and Moliere can be acted satisfactorily on a bare stage.⁵⁰

Since no front curtain was used in the neoclassical theatre, the actors merely left the stage after each scene. They could not be "discovered" in their places at the opening of a scene, nor could they form a tableau at the end. It was not until the eighteenth century, when designers learned how to construct shift-able scenery and how to use a front curtain, that various locales could be shown in succession and scenes could begin or end with a surprise.

The seventeenth-century theatre was lighted by hundreds of candles in chandeliers, both in the auditorium and on the stage. There was only general illumination on the stage since the lights could not be controlled easily; they could not be focused on particular areas, spotlighted, dimmed or brightened at will. It was considered a great innovation in stage lighting when at a

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 209.

⁵⁰Ibid.

tragic moment in one production many candles were snuffed out suddenly to produce an eerie effect.⁵¹

Unlike the tragedies and the high comedies which were considered works of neoclassical art, the comedy-ballets, interludes, and pastorals, which were presented at Court and later at the Palais Royal for the entertainment of the King made use of an enormous amount of built and movable scenery and many complex properties. Under the direction of an Italian designer, Gaspare Vigarani, a special theatre called the Salle des Machines was erected with a stage thirty-two feet wide at the proscenium opening and depth of about one hundred thirty-two feet. There remarkable effects were obtained, the immense size of the stage permitting the building of temples and houses surrounded by bushes, trees, and mountains; and in the sky were floating clouds on which sat many gods and goddesses. A movable platform, forty feet wide by sixty feet long, could raise sixty persons into the air, as well as such properties as great horse-drawn chariots. To light this stage brightly, thousands of candles and oil-lamps were required, many of them concealed behind columns and in the sidewings which had now come into use.⁵²

French actors of the seventeenth century, like English actors of the same period appeared on the stage in contemporary dress; no attempt was made to achieve historical accuracy. If the characters were supposed to represent members of the upper classes

⁵¹Ibid., p. 210.

⁵²Ibid.

they wore clothing that was the last word in current fashion; if they represented characters of a lower social order, they wore the dress of the man in the street.

By 1620 the stiff old styles of farthingales and bombasted and padded limbs, stiff ruffles, and tight waists had given way to a new fashion that called for softly curling hair, full loose skirts, and dainty ribbons and laces. Men's fashions followed closely upon those of women's and both revealed the endless possibilities of folds and draperies.

A new masculine costume gave the figure a firm outline and a slender and distinguished look after 1660. It was a tight-fitting coat that reached to the knees, worn over a long vest and narrow knee-breeches. Women's fashions resembled men's in attempting to make the figure look slimmer and more dignified; women wore tight-waisted gowns, cut low at the neck, with three-quarter sleeves and trains of varying lengths. The materials were rich and ornate; even the high-heeled shoes were made of embroidered silk.

Men began to wear wigs which were curled or waved, the thick hair reaching below the shoulders. At first the wigs were golden-hued; later they were brown or black. Before the women took to wearing wigs, their heads were adorned with a tall cap, called a fontange, made of silk ribbons, starched lace and linen, in which they piled their own hair and created an effect similar to that of the wigs of the men. The fashions of this period had all the splendor and dignity for which the court of Louis XIV

was noted, and it was from this time that Paris became known as the fashion center of the world.⁵³

In addition to their contemporary clothes, as described above, the actors wore two special costumes called a la Romaine and a la Turque. For the tragedies in which the action took place in Greece or Rome the actors donned a costume that was more or less modeled on genuine Roman style. It consisted of breast plates, a short skirt, a cloak, a plumed helmet, and high cross-gartered boots. Such a costume was extremely expensive as it was made of very fine materials, including real gold and silver. The Turkish costume consisted of long gowns of rich materials with which were worn silk and brocaded robes, a huge feathered turban, and boots of soft leather; this costume signified that the wearer was of Middle Eastern or of Oriental origin. A third type of stage costume was the fantastic or comic get-up worn by affected or simple-minded people, by yokels and clowns. These were often intended as a form of satire.⁵⁴

Music and dance were important elements in French drama from its very beginning. The medieval mystery plays featured solo and choral singing, and the later morality plays concluded with gay folk dances. Such practices continued and developed with the complete approval of the public as well as of the Court. Louis XIII was so fond of the ballet that the late sixteenth century came to be known as "the age of dancing."

⁵³Ibid., p. 214.

⁵⁴Ibid.

Songs and dances which had nothing to do with the story were introduced into many of the comedies of the day; and music was played before, during, and after the performances of tragedies. The King was entertained by the ballet de cour, a form of production very much like an extravagant vaudeville show or revue, composed of dances, tableaux, songs, music, and poetry which had no relation to one another.⁵⁵

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The Doctor in Spite of Himself has been chosen to represent the neoclassical period. It centers around Sgnarelle, a wood-cutter, and his fights with his wife, Martine, as well as the attempts of servants of a well-to-do man, Geronte, as they try to convince Sgnarelle that he is a well-known doctor. He finally even convinces himself (temporarily) that he really does have powers to cure, which almost lead him to the gallows.

The Doctor in Spite of Himself has been adapted to a very modern setting. The simplicity of the set makes it very workable. The set has been divided into two areas, the forest and the home of Geronte. No furniture is used, thus keeping it in the original neoclassical style. A few trees suggest the forest, two columns and yardage for draping suggest the scene in Geronte's home; nothing else is used.

The right-stage half of the set is elevated two feet. This entire section is twenty-four feet long at its longest point, fifteen feet at its shortest. It tapers from twelve to sixteen

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 215.

feet in width. The left-stage half is elevated three feet, and is sixteen feet long at its shortest point, twenty-one feet long at its longest point. It varies from twelve to sixteen feet in width. The entire stage setting is in the shape of a kidney, and at its longest point is thirty-six feet long, sixteen feet wide at the ends and curves to twelve feet wide in the middle.

Constructing the set would be done by placing the platforms in the desired way, then using upson board or plywood to cover the front of the platforms, molding it into the desired curving. Platforms four feet by eight feet and two feet tall would be used to comprise the forest half of the stage, but some special platforms might have to be built for the various parts of the curved area. The left half of the stage would be constructed in the same manner, using platforms four feet by eight feet and three feet tall.

The two acting areas are connected by a single step, which is fifteen feet long. Two other step units are used: a three-step unit is placed in front of the forest scene platforms, leading from the stage floor to this area. The steps are four feet wide. A five-step unit is placed in a similar manner leading from the stage floor to the higher platform. It, too, is four feet wide. These steps have been left open, for it adds to the simplicity of the set.

The forest scene is achieved by either using artificial trees, stage trees after they are constructed, or using real trees. Real trees could readily be used. A fir tree has been used which is twelve feet tall, and two other trees which are about twelve

feet tall. Placed around and in front of them are shorter trees or shrubs. The variety of trees is unimportant. On left stage may be seen two columns, each one and one-half feet wide (to be constructed from nine-inch boards). One is fourteen feet tall, the other is twelve feet tall. They are painted cocoa brown, as are the steps. Draped around the tall column, swagged to the second column, and draped to the back of the set is a large curtain effect, achieved from a piece of material about twelve yards long and three and one-third yards wide. This material is light brown. This material has also been continued around the front of the stage, thus tying the entire set together. Paint could be used for this effect across the front if material were impractical. The columns could be used for a variety of things. They could be strictly stage ornamentations, they could form a window or they could form a doorway, with a step unit behind them.

In acting the play on this stage, one could use either area for the forest scene or the house scene; in other words, begin the scene in the designated area, then use the other platform as a continuation of that scene. The stage floor could also be used in either scene. The platforms are covered in light brown, and stage curtains or a rug, or even burlap, could be used for this purpose. All building is done to the scale of one-half inch equals one foot.

This set is very adaptable and could be used for an innumerable number of plays with slight variations of accessories and step units. Sight lines are excellent. One of the reasons the play has been adapted to this form of staging is because it shows

the advantages of the neoclassical unities of action, time and place. It affords variety in acting levels, using the two platforms and the three step units, plus the stage floor proper. The playability of the set is evident, and there are so few stage accessories to hamper acting. The platforms flow from one to the other. Little time and expense would be involved in building the set. The gentle curving of the front area of the platforms gives the soft, genteel feeling of wealth and comfort, which would be expected of a man of Geronte's social position. The forest is simple and suggestive of the crudeness of Sgnarelle, the woodcutter. The open steps continue this suggested crudeness. Lighting should be no problem on this set, for there is nothing to cause complicated light plots.



Chapter VI
Expressionistic

Impressionism is characteristically French; expressionism is characteristically Germanic. Impressionism is a term that applies to a mood, or to an aesthetic endeavor merely; there is no particular dramatic form or technique associated with its aims. Expressionism, on the other hand, implies both a definite manner of approach towards theatrical material and a fresh means of treating this material.⁵⁶

Such distinctions between the two movements would suggest that expressionism might be explained and defined in simpler and clearer terms than is possible where we are concerned with the diverse schools of dramatic inwardness, yet, strangely, the precise opposite is true. Developed in Berlin between 1910 and 1920, the expressionistic style has embraced within itself the most varied talents, and, by concentrating on one or another of these talents, the several critics who have applied themselves to analyzing the general qualities of the style as a whole fine themselves seriously at odds both with regard to their diagnosis of the movement's origins and with regard to its particular manifestations.⁵⁷

For the most part the divergences in opinion are due to two causes: first, a confusion between the means and the aims; and,

⁵⁶Nicoll, World Drama, p. 794.

⁵⁷Ibid.

second, a failure to see that the expressionistic movement, fundamentally anti-realistic in its objectives, gathered to itself a considerable number of adherents whose ideals were far other than those of the men who stood at the core of the school. Thus, for example, it is easy to see that some of the methods used by Strindberg and Wedekind anticipate the methods which the expressionists eagerly adopted as their own, but any attempt to prove that the aims of these two earlier authors were "expressionistic" is false and confusing. In searching for a true definition of what these German revolutionaries sought when they established Expressionismus as an artistic objective we must, therefore, endeavor at once to separate in our minds the technical devices they employed and the ideals for which these devices were but the means, and to track down the core of the true expressionistic spirit amid the confusion of contradictory aims apparent in the works of those who attached themselves directly or indirectly to the school. ⁵⁸

Generally speaking, the expressionist dramatists seized upon and developed further the kind of dramatic technique in which diverse experiments had already been made by Hauptmann, Wedekind, and Strindberg. Short scenes took the place of longer acts; dialogue was made abrupt and given a staccato effect; symbolic forms were substituted for "real" characters; realistic scenery was abandoned, and in its place the use of light was freely substituted; frequently choral, or mass, effects were preferred to

⁵⁸Ibid., pp. 794, 795.

the employment of single figures, or else single figures were elevated into positions where they became representative of forces larger than themselves.⁵⁹

These means exercised a peculiar fascination on many minds during the twenties, and often they employed for purposes far removed from those which explicitly were announced as the aims of expressionism. They were seized upon, particularly, by some writers who, excited by the new psychoanalytic researches, sought to develop a "subjective" theatre. If the picture is to be kept clear, we must recognize that, so far from aiming at the subjective, the true expressionists are in conscious revolt against the whole impressionistic theatre of inwardness. Instead of searching into the reaches of the individual soul, they seek to put upon the stage representations of man in the mass. If they are influenced by psychoanalysis it is the crowd emotions they desire to display. Indeed, we might almost say that, while the impressionists are the last descendants of the romantic poets, the expressionists belong to a modern classicism.

What these men sought to do, fundamentally, was to escape from the detailed exploration of the psyche and from the indirect methods implied in the entirety of neo-romantic endeavor, and to substitute the typical representation of humanity along with a sharp, economic, straight-line effect. In method the expressionists are closely associated with the school of cubism, which, born at Paris in 1908, endeavored to get beneath the curves or

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 795.

The expressionistic form seized on the ever-questioning imagination of Elmer Rice, one of that powerful group of young playwrights who so ably provided a rich background for Eugene O'Neill in and around the years of the First World War. In The Adding Machine (1923) we are given a vigorous and effective theatrical study akin in spirit to the writings of Toller and Kaiser. The hero is an elderly clerk, Mr. Zero, who, when dismissed from his post because mechanical adding machines can do his work more accurately and more economically, goes mad and murders his employer. For this crime he is executed, and his spirit wanders through eternity until, reaching heaven, he is set to work on a monstrous adding machine. This was undoubtedly Rice's most powerful essay in this particular kind of dramatic technique, but the expressionistic method, although not in such extreme terms, has ever laid its spell upon him.⁶²

In the twentieth century there have been three main types of costume: historical, contemporary, and theatricalistic.

Designers of historical costumes strive for authenticity of silhouette, texture, and color. Before embarking on a project, the designer will study the records and pictures of the period in which he is interested in order to reproduce the clothing with high degree of reality. The stage costume will not be identical to the real one; it will merely appear to be so. Properties and make-up are also designed with an eye for archeological accuracy.

⁶²Ibid., pp. 805, 806.

reality to express basic flat planes, and with Italian futurism, which established by F. T. Marinetti in 1909, similarly aimed at the exploitation of the straight line and the "synthetic."⁶⁰ Out of the futurist movement developed two cardinal concepts: the idea or sense of function, wherein all romantic ornament was stripped away until only the absolutely essential (the typical) remained.

The development of the new style is intimately bound up with a realization of the mechanistic nature of our civilization. For the neo-romanticist there is always the desire to escape from the machine--escape into a world inhabited by Pelleas and Melisande, escape into the realm of vague emotional symbols, escape into the misty reaches of the human soul. In effect, the mechanistic is here deliberately avoided, and, if possible, forgotten. The true expressionist takes a different line. Whether he shares Marinetti's enthusiasm for the machine or whether he stands aghast at the way in which the machine is gradually imposing itself on the living organism, he accepts its existence and endeavors to deal boldly with the problems it raises. The expressionist often is a tortured, sometimes a desperate soul, but he does not wish to abnegate the world he lives in, and thus, so far from exploiting the dream realm in Strindbergian style (as some critics of expressionism have averred, he takes a firm stand in a position diametrically opposed to that of the subjective impressionist.⁶¹

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 796.

Contemporary clothing is designed to create a realistic effect, but stage costumes are usually done more broadly than those ordinarily worn at home. This is necessary so that they will be visible from the stage; to achieve the desired effect the lines of the costume are exaggerated and certain elements are emphasized. Colors are frequently modified and cover large areas; and fabrics are specially selected for ease of handling and to facilitate the movement of the actor.

Theatricalistic costumes are the stylized or fantastic creations used in nonnaturalistic plays. Many expressionist, constructivist, and theatricalistic plays use highly stylized costumes for the purpose of symbolism and allegory.

Incidental music may or may not be called for by the dramatist in modern theatre, but it is specially composed to accompany the action and is intended to enhance the emotional impact of the play. Irrelevant music is still occasionally heard in many theatres where it serves as an overture to the play and as entertainment between acts; its use appears to be declining.

Nonnaturalistic drama leans much more heavily upon music and dance than does drama that attempts to create the illusion of reality. The Epic theatre of Bertolt Brecht, the Expressionism of Ernst Toller, and the Theatricalism of the Habima make extensive use of choreographic movement that resembles dance, chanted speech that approaches song, and specially composed musical scores. These new styles of production have had a noticeable influence on modern musical comedies and revues,

which often contain allegorical and symbolic elements expressed in abstract movement and atonal music.⁶³

Two leaders in the revolt against naturalistic settings were Gordon Craig and Adolphe Appia; neither was a man of the theatre; both were influential theoreticians who objected to papier-mache buildings, painted canvas, and cluttered stages, and advocated instead almost bare stages with stylized and impressionistic scenery and the creative use of lights and shadows. Their theories were brought to fruition by such men as Robert Edmond Jones, Norman Bel Geddes, Lee Simonson, Jo Mielziner, and Teo Otto. As Sheldon Cheney remarks, "Today the setting is flat, perspectiveless, simplified almost to bareness; surface reality no longer is pictured, but only faintly suggested, the 'atmosphere' is caught in color and light. Progress today seems all in the direction of space stages and honestly architectural stages. Painting on the stage seems to have gone into almost complete eclipse." The newer styles in scene design include Expressionism, in which the forms are sculptural and symbolic; Constructivism, in which they are architectural and skeletal; and Theatricalism, in which they are antirealistic, symbolic, and fantastic.⁶⁴

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The Adding Machine is a very difficult play to adapt to modern staging when using platforms and step units. It is nec-

⁶³Goodman, Drama On Stage, p. 290.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 286.

essary to keep in the mind the staccato-type dialogue and the impersonalness of the plot. Five acting areas are needed: the home of the Zeros, the office, the courtroom, the grave, and the Elysian Fields.

To keep the coldness, the impersonalness, the floor has been covered in cold gray. Canvas or a tarpauline could be used for this. A vivid, yet faded, blue, spattered in faded pink is used for the main part of the set, with accents in black and ice blue.

The home of Mr. Zero is right stage. The walls are angled, and the room is eight feet wide, ten feet deep, and eight feet tall. It is made by using a five-foot flat eight feet tall, a window plug, and two-foot flat. The window plug is three feet wide, and the window opening is three feet from the floor. The window is five feet tall. Across the back wall are two four-foot flats, each eight feet tall. The left wall of the room is eight feet tall and is cut away at a sharp angle in order to allow sight lines into the room. The wall would have to be composed of a specially-constructed piece of scenery, one and one-half feet wide at the top and six feet wide at the bottom. Over this piece of scenery is a one-foot flat, in order to suggest depth to the wall.

Extending left-stage from the home is a wall which is twelve feet long at the bottom and thirteen feet long at the top. This is made by using three tiers of platforms, two tiers of three-foot platforms (each four feet by eight feet) and one tier of two-foot platforms. This gives a height of eight feet for the

back wall and the height for a platform above the wall. A piece of scenery in the shape of a triangle would have to be constructed, tapered from a one-foot top, coming to a point at the bottom. This fills in the section next to the slanted wall of the Zero area. Coming out from an angle to the wall section is another triangular section of scenery, and it, too, would have to be specially constructed. It is eight feet tall and six feet across the top, tapering to a point at the bottom. A piece of plywood would be needed to cover this area for playing purposes. The plywood is a triangular piece, fourteen feet long by three and one-half feet wide.

Over the home of Mr. Zero is another acting area. It is used for the last office scene. It is approached from the long platform section by going up a single step, five feet long. This leads to the platform, which is fifteen feet long and nine feet wide, with an additional platform attached to the side. The additional platform is five feet by three feet. The purpose of this platform is to suggest an area resembling a fire-escape. Descending from this platform to the stage floor is an open-step stairway, which is fifteen feet long and consists of nineteen two-foot steps. The stairway would be constructed from four by four or two by six.

Leading from the stage floor on the left side is a similar step unit, three steps high. It leads to a landing which is four feet by eight feet and is two feet tall. A single two-foot platform would provide this landing. Leading from the landing to the platform across the back of the set is another open stairway,

which is ten feet long and is made up of twelve open steps. It would be constructed in the same manner at the other stairways. Four posts are needed for supports, and they are made from boards or two by fours. They are each six inches square. One is needed to support the down left corner of Mr. Zero's home, and is set at the same angle as the wall. It is eight and one-half feet long. Two are needed to support the "fire-escape" platform back right stage, and they are each nine feet long. Another is used behind the main stairway leading to the long platform. It supports the down left corner of the platform and is eight and one-half feet long.

Leading across the back and above the entire set is a triangular "backdrop," which is five feet tall on the right-stage end and tapers to ten feet on the left-stage end. It has a length of forty-two feet. It is made by joining eight five-foot flats and a two-foot flat together (each ten feet tall), and suspending them in such a way as to get the correct angle.

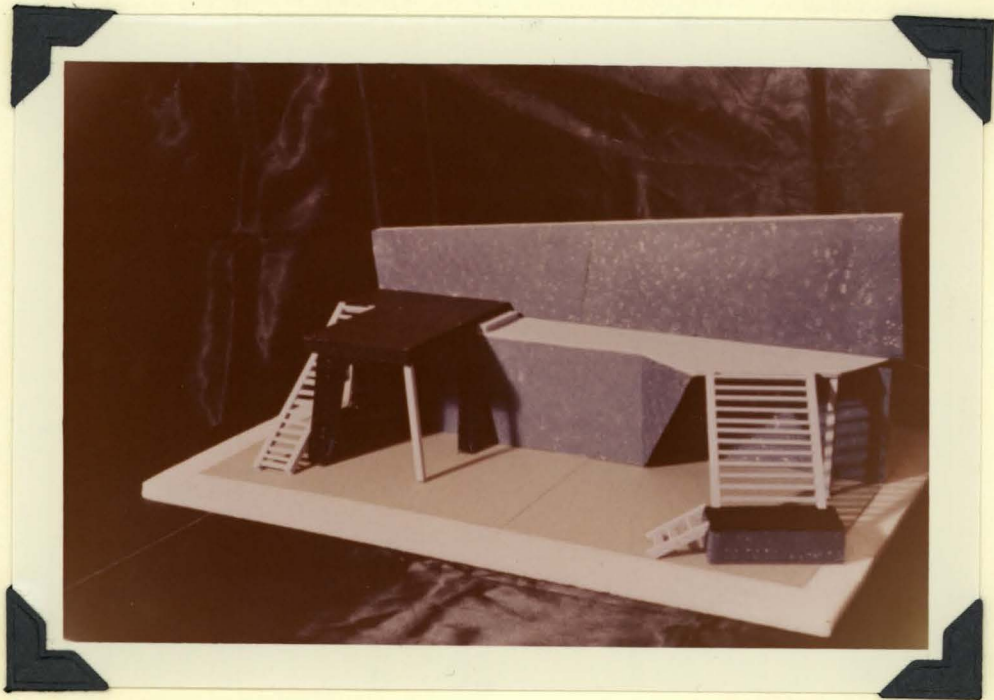
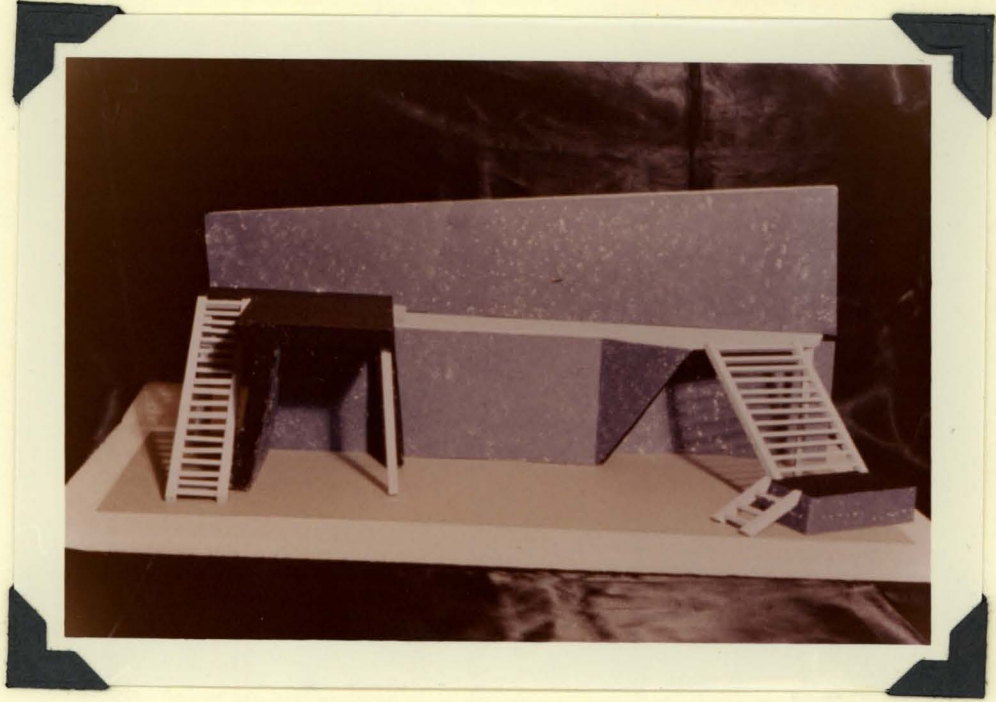
The play would be staged in the following way: the two scenes in the home of Mr. Zero are played in his "home" and could be extended beyond the confines of the imaginary left wall when needed in Scene III. The stairway from the platform above comes across the window, which would give Mrs. Zero some business in Scene I. Mr. Zero's office would be played on the long platform. The boss in this scene could either approach from the other platform or appear by way of the main stairway. The courtroom scene would be played with Mr. Zero pleading his case on the stage floor with the policeman being on the triangular plat-

form just off the main stairway and the jury placed on the stairway, each member on a different step. The graveyard scene would be played under and to the right of the main stairway. Elysian Fields would be played in front of the long platform on the stage floor. The final scene would be played on the higher platform.

Entrances and exits could be made by using either of the stairways, coming under the main stairway, or, if practical due to the construction, it would be very effective to have characters appear from around the large triangular piece of scenery joining the main stairway, coming under the long platform. This very probably would not be possible, depending upon the placing of the platforms. Other entrances could be made from around the back of the set.

Although the set would involve a great deal of special construction as well as a good supply of flats in addition to platforms, it would prove to be a most playable one. All step units would have to be specially constructed, which would involve a lot of expense and time, but the play calls for open stairways, to carry through the sharpness of the motif. Practically no right angles are used in the entire set. An attempt has been made to convey coldness, solidarity, unity, and impersonalness. Although the backdrop is not in the exact shape of an adding machine, its angle suggests what it is. An attempt has been made to create a subtle set which is workable without using cubes and sterile platforms; there is enough warmth in Mr. Zero in certain spots to merit some warmth in design. The sharp angles are the way the staccato-type mood of the play has been inter-

preted and at the same time make the set to appear very modern in design. An attempt has been made to show the nosiness of Mrs. Zero by having the fire-escape come across her bedroom window; the grave scene played under the open stairway would suggest to the audience that they are "peeking" into the lives of the people involved; the office platforms are void of personality. Although the set is impersonal, it affords many acting areas and platforms for playing area.



CONCLUSION

It is concluded, after an attempt has been made to give the historical aspects of periods of drama in terms of playwrights, theatres, types of drama, staging, and costuming, and after constructing model stage settings for these periods of drama, that period dramatic productions can be adapted to modern staging, using stage platforms, step units, and set pieces or accessories.

The six periods of drama used have been Greek, early Medieval, late Medieval, Shakespearean, Neoclassical, and Expressionistic. As these six periods are considered among the major historical periods in theatre, it would seem that almost any period in drama could be adapted to modern staging by the use of platforms and step units and set pieces or accessories.

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