

Spring 2007

Direction of the Play: Treehouses

Darryl Blaine Hovis

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Direction of the Play: Treehouses

A Project Report
Presented to
the Graduate Faculty
Central Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
Theatre Production

by
Darryl Blaine Hovis
Spring, 2007

CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Graduate Studies

We hereby approve the project report of

Darryl Blaine Hovis

Candidate for the degree of Master of Arts:

Theatre Production

APPROVED FOR THE GRADUATE FACULTY

5/21/07

Date of Signature

Professor Scott Robinson
Committee Chair

5/21/07

Date of Signature

Professor George Bellah

5/21/07

Date of Signature

Professor Brenda Hubbard

ABSTRACT

PROJECT REPORT

Treehouses

SONY PICTURES THEATRE

CULVER CITY ACADEMY OF VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS

Directed by

Darryl Blaine Hovis

December 2006

This project entailed the selection, background research and documentation, casting, direction, and post-production analysis of the Culver City Academy of Visual and Performing Arts' production Treehouses, by Elizabeth Kuti. Documentation includes research and analysis of the play, directorial vision, and an evaluation of the play as a production vehicle for the Blurred Vision Theatre Company, the theatre department of the Culver City Academy of Visual & Performing Arts at Culver City High School.

CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Graduate Studies

Final Examination of

Darryl Blaine Hovis

B.A. California State University, Long Beach, 1988

For the Degree of

Master of Arts

Theatre Production

Committee in Charge

Professor Scott Robinson

Professor George Bellah

Professor Brenda Hubbard

McConnell Hall

Room 117

Spring, 2007

2:00 PM

Darryl Blaine Hovis

Courses presented for the Master's degree

Course No.	Course Title	Number of Credits	Instructor	Quarter Completed
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Total Credit Requirements—50

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Darryl Blaine Hovis

Undergraduate Study:

Orange Coast College, 1983-1985
California State University, Long Beach, 1985-1988

Graduate Study

University California, San Diego, 1993
Central Washington University, 2002-2007

Professional Experience:

Professional Actor: 1985-Present
Professional Director: 1990-Present
Professional Lighting Designer: 2002-Present
High School Teacher: Theatre and Social Studies, Calvary Chapel High,
1988-1989
Substitute Teacher: Orange County, 1989-1990
High School Teacher: Vocal Music and Social Studies, Whittier High School,
1990-1992
High School Teacher: Theatre, Edison High School, 1990-1993
High School Teacher: Theatre, Culver City High School, 1993-Present
Artistic Director: Culver City Academy of Visual & Performing Arts,
1996-present
Executive Director: Culver City Academy of Visual & Performing Arts,
2004-2005

Certification

California State Single-Subject Clear Credential: History and Theatre

Additional Training

South Coast Repertory: Adult Theatre Conservatory, 1990-1993
La Jolla Playhouse: Professional Acting Conservatory, 1994

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Student

RECEIVED

GRADUATE COMMITTEE AND OPTION APPROVAL FORM CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY (Submit the original and three copies)

JUL 13 2006

GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

Note: This form is to be completed as soon as the student has formed a committee and selected an option from the list below. Submit the original and three copies to the Office of Graduate Studies in Barge 305.

Student Name Darryl Hovis Birth Date [redacted] Mailing Address [redacted] Student ID [redacted] City, State, Zipcode [redacted] Date 07/06/2006

Table with 3 columns: Check option, Indicate credits to be received for the thesis or option, Credits. Rows include Written Exam*, Non-Thesis Project, Creative Project (checked), Studio Project, Portfolio Review, Thesis.

*Students taking written exam option may omit items 1-5 below.

- 1. Proposed Title: Direction of the production "Treehouses" by Elizabeth Kuti
2. Purpose of Study: Scholarly analysis of dramatic text leading to valid artistic choices as demonstrated through documentation.
3. Scope of Study: The culmination of coursework in Theatre Arts Masters Program, documented based on preparation, evaluation and the direction of the project, including but not limited to: casting and rehearsal of the actors, preparation of the Director's Production Book, and oral examination.
4. Procedure to be used: Direction of a full length play at home school location, completed and documented in three phases including 1) pre-production research and thesis documentation in the MLA style, 2) rehearsal and direction of the production, 3) post-production evaluation and documentation.

5. Does the procedure involve collection of data obtained from Human Subjects (including use of surveys)? Yes** [] No [x] Use of Animals? Yes** [] No [x]

** If yes, your procedures must be approved in writing by the Human Subjects Committee or the Animal Care and Use Committee before you initiate your research.

Signature and Date section for Committee Chair (Scott Robinson), Committee Member (George Bellah, Brenda Hubbard), and Associate VP of Graduate Studies.

Students will be required to submit two copies of all motion picture film, film strips, sound film strips, slides, tapes, cassettes, pictures, etc. produced as part of the thesis. These are to be submitted at the time the thesis (three copies) is submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies and Research.

MASTER'S THESIS PROJECT PLAYSCRIPT APPROVAL FORM

(PLEASE MAKE SURE THAT YOU HAVE READ THE PLAY SELECTION CRITERIA SECTION IN YOUR GRADUATE HANDBOOK)

SCRIPT TITLE: Treehouses

PLAYWRIGHT(S) [If musical, list lyricist/composer]: Elizabeth Kuti

NUMBER OF ACTS: Two APPROXIMATE TOTAL PLAYING TIME 2 HOURS 0 MIN.

CAST (fill in with the appropriate numbers)

MEN: 2 WOMEN: 4 CHILDREN: none OVER 40: none

ROLES REQUIRING PEOPLE OF COLOR: none

ROLES COULD DOUBLE: none

TOTAL NUMBER OF CAST: 6

OTHER CASTING CONCERNS: The role of Old Magda which is much older in age. I believe I have a couple of students who would be able to pull it off with honesty.

ARTISTIC STAFF (check those needed for this play or production idea)

MUSICAL DIRECTOR _____ DANCE CHOREOGRAPHER _____

FIGHT CHOREOGRAPHER _____ DIALECT COACH

SPECIALTY HIRE Technical Director, Set Designer, Sound Designer (specify what kind)

ORCHESTRA/BAND (specify what size) _____

Will you be fulfilling any of the above? Yes _____ If so, which? Lighting Designer

Will a guest artist be fulfilling any of the above? Yes _____ If so, which? Dialect Coach

SCENERY/PROPS (check those needed for this play or your concept of the play)

UNIT SET? YES NO (CIRCLE ONE) NUMBER OF SETTINGS Three

HISTORICAL PERIOD Contemporary/1940's GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION: Residence in Ireland /elderly home in Dublin/ a small farm in middle Europe (Hungary).

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF SET CONCERNS OR SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS:

There are three locations for the setting of the play. Therefore, the set needs to be more open and suggestive, allowing a free flow from one location to the other. The setting in the middle European farm is seen from in the mind of one of the characters, suggesting a slight surrealistic feel.

APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF PROPS: 10-15 PERIOD: Contemporary/1940's rustic

DIFFICULT OR UNUSUAL PROPS? YES NO (CIRCLE ONE) DESCRIBE:

WEAPONS OR FIREARMS? No HOW MANY _____ DESCRIBE:

COSTUMES (CHECK THOSE NEEDED FOR THIS PLAY OR YOUR CONCEPT OF THE PLAY)

APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF COSTUMES PER CHARACTER: 1

HISTORICAL PERIOD Contemporary/1940's SEASON: Summer

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS: There are no real requirements. The period costumes should have a rural look to them. Eva's costume should signify the impending funeral.

JUSTIFICATION FOR CHOICE OF SCRIPT

HAVE YOU SEEN THIS SCRIPT PRODUCED? YES NO (CIRCLE ONE)

HAVE YOU DONE THIS PLAY BEFORE? BRIEFLY DESCRIBE YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN THE PRODUCTION:

No

WHY SHOULD YOUR ORGANIZATION PRODUCE THIS SCRIPT?

The story is a powerful vehicle to teach about the human condition and the emotional turmoil both brought on by the holocaust . It could tie into the history curriculum at the school. There is the opportunity to include a talk back with a guest The primary roles are female with two teenage males. This fits the breakdown in the theatre company, which is female dominant. The roles are strong and provide a great opportunity for my students. The current males have a young look to them, making it easy to cast. The set can be flexible and can be staged in either our auditorium, or our black box theatre.

WHAT ARE THE DRAWBACKS (IF ANY) TO DOING THIS PRODUCTION AT YOUR SCHOOL?

I do not see any drawbacks at this point.

PLEASE GIVE A BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF THE SCRIPT ON A SEPARATE SHEET OF PAPER AND ATTACH.

PLEASE INCLUDE A COPY OF THE SCRIPT FOR THE THESIS COMMITTEE TO REVIEW.

SUBMITTED BY: (Printed Name) Darryl B. Hovis

Date Submitted: April 4, 2006

(Signature) _____

Thesis Chair Approval: _____

Date Approved : 4/12/06

Thesis Committee Members Approval: _____

Date Approved : 4/12/06

Graduate Coordinator Approval: _____

Date Approved : _____

Summary of Treehouses

Treehouses tells the story of two women whose lives are intrinsically connected through one man. On the day of her father's funeral Eva is still haunted by the betrayal she witnessed from her childhood haven—the treehouse in the garden. On the same day another woman, Magda, remembers the ghosts of another hiding place and a different betrayal—ghosts from which she still seeks forgiveness.

A 70-year-old Magda reflects on her growing up in a country like Hungary, when she began a deep emotional relationship with a Jewish boy whom the family was hiding during the Holocaust. Her story unfolds onstage as we watch a young Magda, conflicted with the life that she is expected to lead (she is soon to be engaged to a young man, Stephen, whom she does love), and her sense of duty of saving the life of the young boy. The ramifications of these decisions will stay with her for the rest of her life. When the family turns the boy away out of fear for their own safety, she must choose between saving the boy's life by helping him across the border, or staying home and continue living life as is, which she eventually does. As she sits in a residential home for the elderly, she still wonders what became of the boy and whether her betrayal led to his death.

Interwoven is the story of Eva, a woman in her thirties, who is preparing a eulogy for her father's funeral. She is still dealing with the emotional betrayal she has been dealt by her father's remarriage, seeking resolution at the place that was once her refuge—the charred remains of a treehouse her father built for her. She recounts the tempestuous relationship between her childhood self, her father and his second wife-to-be, trying to find the peace she once had with her father.

It is not until the end that the true connections between the two women come together. The one treehouse in the play is Eva's asylum. A barn where the Jewish boy has found refuge (however temporarily) is a metaphorical treehouse. The more important connection is that the young boy Magda so desperately wanted to save is Eva's father. Yet, Magda will never know that her efforts were not fruitless.

Parameters Established by the Producing Organization

Treehouses will be produced at Culver City Academy of Visual and Performing Arts at Culver City High School (AVPA), 4401 Elenda Street, Culver City, California. The play will be performed in the Sony Pictures Theatre located on the campus of Culver City High School, 4401 Elenda Street, Culver City California. The performances will run December 7, 8, 9, 13, 14, 15, and 16, 2006 at 7:00pm.

This production will have a budget of \$9000, to be overseen by the director/creative director, Darryl Hovis, AVPA producing manager, Stacey Wilson, and AVPA executive director, Dr. Tony Spano. The design team is as follows: Set Design, Resa Deverich (AVPA graduate); Lighting Design, Joseph Horn (AVPA faculty); Sound Design, Omar Inguanzo (AVPA graduate); Technical Direction, Joseph Horn; Costume Design, Shannon Kennedy (AVPA Faculty; Dialect Coach, Vanessa Mizzone (AVPA faculty). Darryl Hovis will be paid \$2000 to direct, Joseph Horn will be paid an additional stipend of \$2000 as technical director and lighting designer, Omar Inguanzo will be paid \$500 for sound design, and Shannon Kennedy will be paid \$500 as costume designer. The production budget will be as follows: \$1500 for set; \$1000 for publicity (posters, postcards, and programs); \$200 for lighting (expendables only); \$500 for costumes and properties. Royalties are approximately \$500 for the two week run. Students working on the production will be expected to contribute to the production by raising \$100 each through program advertising sales.

The Sony Pictures Theatre is a black box theatre that can seat sixty to one hundred people, depending on seating arrangement. The space poses challenges due to its pie-wedge shape, brick and concrete walls, and hard tile floor. Curtains have been

installed against one wall to help absorb sound and can be moved depending on the set design. A portable stage floor has been built in sections that can be installed in various positions. The theater lighting has a two-scene preset, twenty-four channel ETC 24/48 Express lighting board, 40 ETC Source Four lighting instruments, two intelligent lights, and two ETC 6 channel dimmers. The theatre department will also be receiving a grant through Carl Perkins, which will allow for the purchase of an ETC 12 channel smartpack dimmers, as well as more ETC source four instruments. No lighting instruments will have to be rented. The Theatre also contains a quality sound system with CD and Mini-Disc capability, including a twelve channel Mackie mixer, QVC power amp, and two JBL speakers. All sound design will be done in-house using a Macintosh-based Pro-Tools design station. AVPA students, especially theatre-design and acting majors, will be responsible for helping design, and operate all technical elements of the production. One of the strongest attributes of AVPA is the collaboration between arts disciplines. Although Treehouses is not necessarily a good vehicle for multi-media, there is space to allow collaboration between the theatre, film, and music departments.

Another major challenge is casting. Three of the characters range in age from 30's (Eva) to 70's (Old Magda). In contrast, the age of Young Magda is seventeen, and Boy is sixteen. This could be a problem in that high school-age students will play all roles. The immediate pool of actors the play will be cast from is predominately female heavy, which is one of the reasons for the choice of this show. The role of Eva poses a challenge in that her role is basically a very long monologue. Therefore, it will require casting an actor that has the ability to hold the audience's attention for a good amount of time. The role of Old Magda, another casting challenge, is an old woman. Having high

school students play elderly roles presents a trap in that they consume themselves in trying to create the physical being at the sake of the honesty. This role will require a vulnerable student actor that can find a connection to the loss the character has undergone, and the conflict she is going through. Another factor is that rehearsals for Treehouses will slightly overlap with the first production, which is slated to be The Metamorphosis. Therefore, no actors may overlap and both directors will be pulling from the same pool of actors.



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July 6, 2006

Theatre Arts Thesis Committee
Central Washington University
400 E. 8th Avenue
Ellensburg Washington, 98926-7510

Dear Committee Members,

I'm delighted to inform you that Darryl Hovis will be undertaking his thesis project here at Culver City High School on December 6-16, 2006. The project will be a production of *Treehouses* by Elizabeth Kuti. The play we be performed in the Sony Pictures Theatre located on the campus of Culver City High School. The budget for the show will be approximately \$8,000 to be drawn from Academy of Visual & Performing Arts funds.

I'm looking forward to seeing the production, as I'm sure you are also.

Sincerely,

Pam Magee
Principal
Culver City High School

Evaluation of Treehouses as a Production Vehicle at AVPA

Treehouses will serve well as a production vehicle for the Academy of Visual and Performing Arts on many levels. It features strong roles for women. The themes underlying the story are relevant to contemporary circumstances, as well to their education by exposing students to the Holocaust in a different way. The concept for the production will allow for artistic growth for all disciplines in the Academy.

At this point in time, the majority of student actors are female, with a very small pool of male actors. It is difficult to find plays that feature strong roles for women and Treehouses has four of them. Three of these roles will require actors that can play more mature characters, especially the role of Old Magda. There are some students that are ready for the challenge. The play will also require different dialect work (Hungarian, British, and Irish), also presenting a good challenge for the actors.

The themes that run through Treehouses are relevant to our modern society. The threat of war, once seeming so distant, has become a reality for the students. Numerous students have a relative or friend who has, or is currently serving overseas in Iraq, or have relatives living close to the Israeli-Hezbollah conflict. These students are beginning to grapple with their own political, philosophical, and emotional perspective on the war. The root of the play is centered on a Jewish boy seeking refuge during the Holocaust and Magda's decision (or indecision) to risk her own life to save his. This production will serve as a strong point of discussion for the students as well as their parents, and community.

Another theme is the importance of forgiveness of the past. Treehouses deals with this theme on two levels. First is Magda's haunting decision to stay with Stephen

and abandon the Boy. She is seeking forgiveness for her inability to follow through with helping him across the border. Eva, on the other hand, is learning to forgive her father for “abandoning her” by entering into a relationship with another woman. It is important to note that the characters of the Boy and Father are one and the same, and serves as the pivot point from one story to the next. Many students are going through their own internal conflicts and might identify with the characters of Magda and Eva.

The concept for Treehouses will be challenging to staff and student designers alike to create a design that will allow for the multiple stories to be told, while allowing a flow from event to event, in a small space. Second, the impressionistic, symbolic style will allow for creativity in design as well. Film students will have a chance to create video projections to be used throughout the play. One idea used to incorporate art students is to showcase original work based on the play by displaying it in the lobby. Treehouses offers a chance to be creative, to think outside the box, as well as work closely together to create an innovative, clear, and cohesive production.

Director's Concept for Treehouses

Treehouses is a letter written in tears. A memory play, both stories are told through the recollection of two of its central characters, Magda and Eva. Emanating from their perspective, the words are written with their tears and subject to their interpretation. The stories center on the theme of growing up and facing the decision of whether to leave the comfort and safety of one's refuge, both a literal and figurative treehouse. Eva destroys her treehouse, thus freeing her to grow up, while Magda remains imprisoned in her own. Both characters are seeking forgiveness of the past. Eva comes to terms with her relationship with her father who is the Boy in Magda's story. Magda is seeking forgiveness from his ghost. A Jewish refugee, whom Magda abandons, and father of Eva, the Boy plays both betrayer and victim.

Treehouses has an impressionistic quality to it, which serves as the main source of inspiration for the concept. There are several lines that indicate that the stories being told are subjective to the interpretation of the storyteller. Old Magda repeats "That is the lie of a lazy memory" (Kuti Treehouses 3, 30) and goes on to say, "Kindness or unkindness get harder and harder over the years to judge. There are things we have done, things we have not done. That is all" (9). Later in the play, Magda states, "I don't know sometimes what is memory and what is knowledge" (16). This is an indication that as we watch the events unfold before us, they are dramatic interpretations, or impressions, rather than being absolute truth.

Two impressionistic paintings will serve as reference points for the color and texture, as well as style choices. Portrait of a Young Girl from the Warsaw Ghetto by Genia (Gela) Seksztajn-Lichtensztajn (see appendix), an artist born in Warsaw and

murdered in the Treblinka Concentration camps in 1942, will be the primary source for emotional content, colors, and texture. This painting reflects an emotional turmoil that is similar to that experienced by Young Magda. Although Magda is not the one facing death in a literal sense, she assumes the burden of the Boy. She chooses death in a symbolic form by abandoning her beliefs and remaining in her “treehouse” at home with Stephen. Tree Trunks by John Constable (see appendix), a landscape artist who became a point of influence for the French Impressionistic movement, also reflects natural and earthy qualities that will be reflective in the set, costumes, and lighting choices.

There are three settings for Treehouses. Although Kuti gives no specific locations, there are clues as to where these stories could unfold. The location for Eva’s story is in her father’s garden in present day Kent. I have chosen this location because it is the place where Kuti grew up. Old Magda’s story takes place in a residential home for the elderly in present day Dublin, where Kuti’s father moved to from Hungary. The memories of Magda will take place on a farm in Hungary, based more specifically in a town based on Rabakoz, located in the Northwest Transdanubia region. This story is set in the summer of 1944 after the deportation of Jews from Hungary to Auschwitz had begun. These literal locations are only a basis from which to work. There should be a dreamy, hazy, slightly surreal quality in the scenes with Young Magda since it is coming from the memory of Magda. The events in all stories happen in the summer so there should be a sense of heat reflected in the set, and lighting, as well as costume choices.

The garden of Eva’s father’s house and the residential home for the elderly in which Old Magda lives should be more rooted in realism, yet it should be suggestive rather than complete. There will be difficulties in keeping the small stage open enough

for all stories to be played out. A thrust or arena style stage will be used with some specific playing areas pertaining to each story. However, most of the stage will have to remain open for all stories. Therefore, the set should have a more suggestive, impressionistic quality rather than a detailed one, and not be too connected to one story specifically. The treehouse is an important visual element and should be integrated into the set in some way, but more symbolically than literally. It stands for both a literal and a figurative temporary place of refuge for the characters. Eva destroys her treehouse, which is an act of release, allowing her to become her own person, while Magda chose to remain in hers, abandoning the Boy to an unknown fate. Colors should have an earthy and warm quality since the main story takes place in a rural area, and references to the earth are frequently used in the language of the characters.

Lighting is going to play a crucial role in helping tell the story and convey the sense of time and place. Since the set needs to be flexible, the lighting will help keep it moving from one event to another, one story to the other. The three worlds should be subtly set apart by different color choices. Warm colors should slightly dominate Young Magda's world, except in the night scenes, helping express the heat of the summer. The same should be true for Eva's world due to her frequent references to the heat of summer. Old Magda's world can contain cooler or even sterile colors since the location is inside a nursing home. Scenes with projections should have more dramatic and nonrealistic lighting.

The ambient sounds of Treehouses mostly should mostly be rooted in nature, yet also play a very restrained role, as to not draw attention to themselves. Sounds such as crickets, rivers, or birds will be used but perhaps could have slightly distorted quality to

them in the scenes with Young Magda. This would be in keeping with the dreamy quality of the world. Music will be classical in nature and should not be too dramatic. Composers such as Zoltan Kodaly and Bela Bartok will serve as sources of inspiration. One goal is to have a live violinist play throughout, and play a primary role in the Boy's recollection of his father playing in the movie house.

Although Treehouses is not written using multimedia, video projections will be used when the Boy speaks of his father playing in the movie house. The images will be projected over the actors on the stage and do not have to be clear. However, the quality should be that of a black and white film coming from an old style movie projector. Projections may be used very subtly in other points in the play, specifically in the beginning and during Eva's longer passages. None of the projections should give a modern feel and should only be used to help enforce the story.

The costumes should be appropriate to the location and period of each story. Eva, Old Magda, and Ger will be in contemporary dress. The costumes of Young Magda, Stephen, and Boy will be rooted in the time period of 1944, and reflective of the Eastern European region. The colors of Young Magda, Boy, and Eva should have elements of warm earthy colors and textures to them. Old Magda and Ger should have more cool colors resonating in their costumes. The costumes should remain subtle and play a secondary role in the storytelling.

The concept of Treehouses as a letter written in tears will help unify the technical elements of the production, as well as enforce the major themes of the play. The design choices will help set the three worlds apart, yet allow for a flow from one world to another. The set will remain open and suggestive, with the lighting serving as an

important element in the storytelling, Music, sound and costumes will subtly enforce, influenced by the historical era and region, and video projections will add visual dimension and depth to various scenes. Together, these elements will help bring the rich and beautiful play that Kuti has created to life.

Rehearsal Schedule for Treehouses

August

28	Design Meeting: Concept	6:00-8:00pm	Hovis House
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September

6	Parent Meeting	6:00-8:00pm	Robert Frost Auditorium
11	General Auditions	3:00-8:00pm	Sony Pictures Theatre
13	Auditions: Callbacks	3:00-8:00pm	Sony Pictures Theatre
18	Design Meeting: Renderings	6:00-8:00pm	Hovis House

October

23	Table Reading & Discussion	3:00-6:00pm	Sony Pictures Theatre
24	Block/Work pp. 1-10 (1:A-F)	5:30-8:30pm	Sony Pictures Theatre
25	Block/Work pp. 10-20 (1:G-L)	5:30-8:30pm	Sony Pictures Theatre
26	Block/Work pp. 20-30 (1:M-Q)	5:30-8:30pm	Sony Pictures Theatre
27	Block/Work pp. 30-39 (1:R-X)	5:30-8:30pm	Sony Pictures Theatre
30	Block/Work pp. 39-49 (1:Y-AA)	5:30-8:30pm	Sony Pictures Theatre
31	Block/Work pp. 49-58 (1:BB-EE)	5:30-8:30pm	Sony Pictures Theatre

November

1	Run/Work Part 1 (Offbook)	5:30-8:30pm	Sony Pictures Theatre
2	Run/Work Part 1 (Offbook)	5:30-8:30pm	Sony Pictures Theatre
3	Block/Work pp. 59-67 (2:A-H)	5:30-8:30pm	Sony Pictures Theatre
6	Block/Work pp. 67-81 (2:I-L))	5:30-8:30pm	Sony Pictures Theatre
7	Run/Work Part 2 (Offbook)	5:30-8:30pm	Sony Pictures Theatre
8	Run/Work 1:B,D,F,H,M	5:30-8:30pm	Sony Pictures Theatre
9	Run/Work 1:Q,U,ZZ,BB/2:B,D,X	5:30-8:30pm	Sony Pictures Theatre
10	Run/Work 1: O, S, W	5:30-8:30pm	Sony Pictures Theatre
11	Paper Tech	12:00-4:00pm	Sony Pictures Theatre
13	Work/Run 1: K, N / 2: A, C, G	5:30-8:30pm	Sony Pictures Theatre
14	Work/Run 1:C, E, I, R, T	5:30-8:30pm	Sony Pictures Theatre
15	Work Eva (TBA)	5:30-8:30pm	Sony Pictures Theatre
16	Run/Work Part 1	5:30-8:30pm	Sony Pictures Theatre
17	Run/Work Part 1	5:30-8:30pm	Sony Pictures Theatre
20	Run/Work Part 2	5:30-8:30pm	Robert Frost Auditorium
21	Run/Work pp. 1-20	5:30-8:30pm	Robert Frost Auditorium
22	Run/Work pp. 20-39	5:30-8:30pm	Robert Frost Auditorium
27	Run/Work pp. 39-58	5:30-8:30pm	Robert Frost Auditorium
28	Run/Work pp. 59-81	5:30-8:30pm	Robert Frost Auditorium
29	Run/Work TBA	5:30-8:30pm	Robert Frost Auditorium
30	Run/Work	3:00-10:00pm	Robert Frost Auditorium

December

1	Run/Work	3:00-10:00pm	Robert Frost Auditorium
2	Run/Work	10:00am-10:00pm	Robert Frost Auditorium
3	Wet Tech: Cue-to-Cue	10:00am-10:00pm	Sony Pictures Theatre
4	Dress Rehearsal/Work	3:00-10:00pm	Sony Pictures Theatre
5	Invitational Dress/Work	3:00-10:00pm	Sony Pictures Theatre
6	Dress Rehearsal/Work	3:00-10:00pm	Sony Pictures Theatre
7	Performance	5:30-11:00pm	Sony Pictures Theatre
8	Performance	5:30-11:00pm	Sony Pictures Theatre
9	Performance	5:30-11:00pm	Sony Pictures Theatre
13	Performance	5:30-11:00pm	Sony Pictures Theatre
14	Performance	5:30-11:00pm	Sony Pictures Theatre
15	Performance	5:30-11:00pm	Sony Pictures Theatre
16	Performance	5:30-11:00pm	Sony Pictures Theatre
17	Strike	10:00am-6:00pm	Sony Pictures Theatre

Production Schedule for Treehouses

August

28 Design Meeting: Concept 6:00-8:00pm Hovis House

September

6 Parent Meeting 6:00-8:00pm Robert Frost Auditorium
 11 General Auditions 3:00-8:00pm Sony Pictures Theatre
 13 Auditions: Callbacks 3:00-8:00pm Sony Pictures Theatre
 18 Design Meeting: Renderings 5:30-8:30pm Hovis House

October

23 Table Reading & Discussion 3:00-6:00pm Sony Pictures Theatre Paper

November

10 Set Build 3:00-10:00pm Sony Pictures Theatre
 11 Set Build 10:00am-10:00pm Sony Pictures Theatre
 Paper Tech 12:00-4:00pm Sony Pictures Theatre
 12 Set Build 10:00am-10:00pm Sony Pictures Theatre
 13 Set Build 3:00-10:00pm Sony Pictures Theatre
 14 Set Build 3:00-10:00pm Sony Pictures Theatre
 15 Set Build 3:00-10:00pm Sony Pictures Theatre
 16 Set Build 3:00-10:00pm Sony Pictures Theatre
 17 Set Build 3:00-10:00pm Sony Pictures Theatre
 18 Set Build 10:00am-10:00pm Sony Pictures Theatre
 19 Set Build 10:00am-10:00pm Sony Pictures Theatre
 20 Set Build 3:00-10:00pm Sony Pictures Theatre
 21 Set Build 3:00-10:00pm Sony Pictures Theatre
 22 Set Build 3:00-10:00pm Sony Pictures Theatre
 27 Light Hang & Focus 3:00-10:00pm Sony Pictures Theatre
 28 Light Hang & Focus 3:00-10:00pm Sony Pictures Theatre
 29 Light Hang & Focus 3:00-10:00pm Sony Pictures Theatre
 30 Light Hang & Focus 3:00-10:00pm Sony Pictures Theatre

December

1 Light Hang & Focus 3:00-10:00pm Sony Pictures Theatre
 2 Dry Tech 10:00am-10:00pm Sony Pictures Theatre
 3 Wet Tech: Cue-to-Cue 10:00am-10:00pm Sony Pictures Theatre
 4 Dress Rehearsal/Work 3:00-10:00pm Sony Pictures Theatre
 5 Invitational Dress/Work 3:00-10:00pm Sony Pictures Theatre
 6 Dress Rehearsal/Work 3:00-10:00pm Sony Pictures Theatre
 7 Performance 5:30-11:00pm Sony Pictures Theatre
 8 Performance 5:30-11:00pm Sony Pictures Theatre
 9 Performance 5:30-11:00pm Sony Pictures Theatre
 13 Performance 5:30-11:00pm Sony Pictures Theatre
 14 Performance 5:30-11:00pm Sony Pictures Theatre

15	Performance	5:30-11:00pm	Sony Pictures Theatre
16	Performance	5:30-11:00pm	Sony Pictures Theatre
17	Strike	10:00am-6:00pm	Sony Pictures Theatre

Performance Schedule for Treehouses

To be performed at the Sony Pictures Theatre,
Culver City High School Academy of Visual and Performing Arts
on the following dates:

Tuesday, December 5, 2006 at 6:00pm
Invitation Dress

Thursday, December 7, 2006 at 7:00pm
Public Performance

Friday, December 8, 2006 at 7:00pm
Public Performance

Saturday, December 9, 2006 at 7:00pm
Public Performance

Wednesday, December 13, 2006 at 7:00pm
Public Performance

Thursday, December 14, 2006 at 7:00pm
Public Performance

Friday, December 15, 2006 at 7:00pm
Public Performance

Saturday, December 16, 2006 at 7:00pm
Public Performance

Given Circumstances

Treehouses is set in a three locations during two time periods. Two of the locations are not given exactly, while the third is “on a small farm somewhere in the middle Europe about fifty years ago” (Kuti, Treehouses ix). For this production, I have placed the story of Young Magda in Hungary during the summer and fall of 1944, specifically based the location in the Western Transdanubia region. The reason for this is for the many rural areas that exist, and it’s proximity to Budapest. Magda’s uncle, who has harbored the Jewish refugee boy, runs a flower shop in the city, which could be a suburb of Budapest (9). It is important to note the Kuti does not intend for the location to be realistic, but more of symbolic place. In an interview, Kuti states, “I meant the Hungarian part of the story to have a very simple, archetypal outlines—to have the simplicity of a fairy-tale, or a Biblical simplicity—to be not a real place but a poetic place, a nostalgic, elegiac place—the lost childhood where it’s always summer” (Kurdi 3). There are several clues from the play and from the research that lead to this setting and time period. Although Hungary is never referred to directly in the play, Kuti does mention in the interview that she included the Hungarian folk song “Repülj madár, repülj” as a way for the audience to connect the story to the location. “It was a good way to signal to the audience that Magda and Stephen’s story is happening in Hungary . . .” (Kurdi 3). Both Magda and Eva sing “Repülj” seven times throughout the play (Kuti, Treehouses 11, 20, 24, 31, 53, 64). In addition, the timeline makes it easy to place in Hungary. The stories of Old Magda and Eva take place “now” (ix), according to Kuti, and since Treehouses was published and first performed in 2000, the choice has been made to place it in the year 2000. Kuti also states that Old Magda is “in her 70’s” (ix).

Therefore it is easy to conclude that Magda was born in the 1927 and would have been seventeen in the summer of 1944. Kuti gives clues to the summertime with Old Magda remembering the boy: “The smell of summer breaths from him. The smell of warm earth and sunbaked leaves, of fruit and corn moving towards ripeness and the promise of harvest” (35). Magda plans to help the boy escape, “during the harvest festival” (55). Early in the play, Young Magda talks about the hen’s not laying eggs due to the planes: “I think they don’t like the planes.” Stephen replies, “There were two last night . . . they were really low” (4). They are clearly referencing military planes under the German occupation of Hungary. Later, Young Magda states that her uncle is asking the family for a favor that has “Something to do with the war” (9) and that he “found this boy, he was hiding, he escaped deportation” (13). The Hungarian Jews were the last to be deported, mostly to Auschwitz. In The Holocaust: the Fate of European Jewry, Leni Yahil writes, “The deportation to Auschwitz began on May 15, 1944, and by May 24 between 12,000 and 14,000 Jews were being sent out of one or two areas every day, for a total of 116,000 people in a ten-day period” (510). Later on in the play, the boy tells of the trains transferring the Jews to the concentration camps: “I saw all these hundreds of people being jammed onto trains” and when he asked a guard where the trains were headed, he replied, “these trains are going east and all these people have got a one-way ticket . . . to another sort of province altogether” (Kuti, Treehouses 32). In reflection of the events, Old Magda says, “that summer seems filled with the noises of flight and exodus, our frightened countryside filled with burnt out and empty houses, homes emptied of their families, and trains, trains, trains, always rains passing through . . .” (16).

The story of Young Magda happens over a series of a few weeks and at different times. Kuti occasionally gives an indication when the scene takes place, and some scenes give clues to the time of day, but they are only significant in just a few scenes, specifically when the symbol of the moon is used. When Magda brings the Boy into the barn to show him where he is going to stay, he stands “staring up through the skylight, moonlight pouring onto him” (19). This is how Old Magda remembers him (10). With this, Kuti casts a sense of mystery that is often associated with moonlight. Most of the scenes between Young Magda and Stephen occur during the day to help further the sense of heat of the summer, as well as establish Stephen’s character as a teacher. The other scene where time is significant is in the night of the Harvest Dance. This is because this is the evening Magda intends to go with the Boy across the border.

The stories of Eva and Old Magda parallel each other in that they mostly happen in the course of one day, starting with early morning until evening. Eva begins the play as “thin shafts of dawn light slowly rise” on the treehouse in her father’s garden (1). In Old Magda’s first scene, Ger mentions that Magda is up early (17). At the end of Part One, Eva “prepares to leave for the funeral service” (58). Old Magda and Ger continue to look for the key, a search that has begun earlier in the play (48). Old Magda starts Part Two in the late afternoon when Ger is afraid that she might have awoken her, but says “I know you don’t usually have your forty winks till later” and brings cake to Magda, indicating that it is not late at night (59). It is late afternoon when Eva appears in Part Two. It is after the funeral since Eva appears with a plate of food. From this, we presume there is a gathering at her father’s house (64). Kuti indicates that during one of Eva’s later speeches, there is “moonlight” on her (67). The last scene with Eva, she has

changed clothes and is going through her father's belongings. The scene between Young Magda and Stephen directly before happens at dawn, and it could apply to Eva and Magda as well (79). This would help emphasize the cycle of life, from life to death, to memory, as well as day into night, then day again.

Economically, Magda's family could be considered lower middle class. They live in a rural area on a farm, living off the land. Magda, worrying about the hens not laying eggs, says, "Though there's something wrong with the hens, they're hardly laying at all at the moment" (4). She goes on to say, "I wonder what's wrong with them" (8). Economic conditions play an indirect role in the story in that it is not the governing factor that drives the characters, nor is it a major conflict. It is true that taking on the task of hiding Jewish refugees created financial hardships, especially for families that were economically disadvantaged. "In rural villages, the daily chore of finding food and other basic necessities for those in hiding was nearly a full-time job." (Fogelman 70). Stephen remarks "a whole egg to himself" when he finds Magda bringing food to the Boy (Kuti, Treehouses 21). None of the characters are well off, but none would be considered poor, except for maybe the Boy since his only possessions are what he carries with him. This would enhance Magda's need to take care of him.

The political circumstances are what really drive the story in Young Magda's world. In the early 1940's, Hungary found itself torn between trying to keep relations open to the west and dealing with the political pressure Germany was placing on them. As an ally, Miklós Horthy, regent of Hungary, allowed Germany to involve themselves in Hungary's political affairs after Hungarian Prime Minister Lázló Bárdossy withdrew The Rapid Army Corps after Soviet advancement. Peter F. Sugar, Péter Hanák, and

Tibor Frank, in their book A History of Hungary write, "These measures induced Germany's secret efforts to get deeply involved in Hungary's internal affairs in the fall of 1941. These efforts produced a realignment of the Hungarian fascist movement" (347). Horthy, who ran the government more as a conservative authoritarian state rather than fascist, was experiencing internal unrest and tried to keep diplomatic relations with the west. However, he did not have wherewithal to go against Hitler's demands. Sugar, Hanak, and Frank go on to write:

Since the fall of 1943, the Germans had worked on secret plans for the occupation of Hungary and the establishment of a puppet government. In March 1944 they moved. Hitler called Horthy to Germany and informed him that the occupation was unavoidable. By threatening him with the use of troops from the rival satellite states should he object, he gained Horthy's agreement. (351)

The purging of Jews of the Hungarian provinces began in March, 1944, when German troops marched into Budapest, under the watch of SS Colonel Adolf Eichmann. The institution of the yellow star system, as well as ghettoization began on March 31 (Yahil 505). Deportation of Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz began on May 15, "and by May 24 between 12,000 and 14,000 Jews were being sent out of one or two areas every day, for a total of 116,000 people in a ten-day period" (510). In July, Horthy halted the deportations out of pressure from the neutral countries, but they were resumed under Eichman in August (Sugar, Hanák, and Frank 514-515). On August 23, Horthy, wanting to restore Hungarian independence, surrendered to allies, although German soldiers were still on Hungarian soil. The Arrowcross, a fascist party, filled the political vacuum

establishing their leader, Ferenc Szálasi as prime minister (353). The Arrowcross party stayed in command until the Red Army completed the invasion of Hungary in the winter of 1945 (Yahil 515). These circumstances are what set up the story of the Boy needing to find sanctuary as a Jewish refugee. The Boy tells Magda of his constant nightmares of losing his family during the deportations. “I was dreaming . . . my mother’s shoes . . . they were black. Little black heels. She was walking in front of me. That was all I could see.” He goes on to say, “I kept telling them we had to leave. I kept telling them—I’ve known for ages we had to go—all of us, we just should have gone” (Kuti, Treehouses 31-32). It is also these circumstances that drive Stephen to tell Magda’s father of the imminent danger that awaits them, should he be found. “Magda. What you’re doing is illegal, it’s a hanging offence. You have to see reason about this” (51). It was common for the family and close friends of people harboring Jewish refugees to feel threatened by their actions. In Eva Fogelman’s book, Conscience and Courage, she states, “As in any relationship, things happened which strained the original term” (135). She continues, “As each set of expectations was replaced with new ones, each individual’s role and responsibilities had to be redefined, new problems had to be overcome, and new strategies developed” (135). The social circumstances help further the dilemma Magda faces with trying to help the Boy. In the play, Magda’s mother is non-existent, and it is implied that she helps take care of her father. She seems to be the only child since there is no mention of any brothers or sisters. When her father makes the decision of sending the Boy away, she is split between obeying his wishes, and doing, what she feels, is the right thing. The village in which Magda and Stephen live appears to be a small knit community. The harvest festival plays a large part in the village life. Magda mentions

that the festival dance “lasts for three days” and that “everyone will be in the village hall . . .” (Kuti, Treehouses 55). Stephen feels that it is appropriate to announce their engagement at the dance (64-65).

Religion plays as plot device to set up the present circumstance. Magda’s decision could have been a result of her Christian religious beliefs, since Old Magda is constantly reciting passages from Exodus and Song of Solomon throughout the play. As of now, the largest religion in Hungary is Christianity, with the largest population being Roman Catholic (“Hungary”). Young Magda makes no references to biblical passages, but it could be an underlying factor in her relationship with Stephen and the Boy. Stephen is very sexually physical which might provide inner conflict for Magda. It could also play a motivating factor of her decision to help the Boy. Of more importance is the religion of the Boy, and religious persecution the Jews were facing in Hungary at the time, and what forced the Boy to seek help from Magda’s family.

The decision to place Old Magda’s world in Dublin, Ireland, is based on the fact Kuti moved to Ireland (Kurdi 1). She gives no direct reference to the location but we do know that Magda is living in a place where she has had to learn the language. Kuti does give clues that the location is “an island” and near the sea. Old Magda comments, “They are very soft, these afternoons of late summer, they bring little sound in the window. Many people strolling along the sea front. Wind brings their voices in my window sometimes” (Kuti, Treehouses 59). Location plays more of a factor in that Magda has had to learn to live in a world that is not her own, while still dealing with her past. Magda speaks of “the smell of the beach. Is good. Is a beautiful country sometimes, this island. But the words of this language—harder and harder to remember. In spite so

many years I live here. More and more I remember words only from when I was young, and the places where I spoke those words” (6). The fact that the nursing home has been placed in Dublin might clue us into the behavior of Ger, who is a Dublin native. Ger is like a whirlwind when she enters Magda’s room. It is even in the nature of how she speaks, constantly thinking of what she should do, whether it is getting breakfast, or cleaning the room (18). She is constantly moving, taking care of Magda as well as other patients. Dublin is a very sociable and fast paced city (Kilfeather 12, 15).

Religion of Dublin plays no role. Magda’s religion (as a child in Hungary) might have played a factor in her desire to save the boy. Because Kuti gives no direct information regarding the geographic location of Eva’s father’s house, it is safe to assume that it plays little importance in the understanding of the play. What is important are the earthy elements of her father’s garden, as well as the location of the actual treehouse Eva’s father built which plays into the imagery of the play. The county of Kent was chosen since it is the place where Kuti grew up after her father immigrated from Hungary. Eva’s language does help place it in England. In the opening monologue, she speaks of “chips” and “pubs” (Kuti, Treehouses 1). Later on, she tells of having “tea in front of the telly” and eating toast with “bloody jam” (46). These word choices reflect the English location.

Eva’s story takes place in the summer of 2000, in the late afternoon before and after the funeral of her father. The theme of summer heat is repeated often and serves as a connection between the life and death of her father. It seems that every memory, good or bad, is in someway connected with summer. In the beginning of the play she speaks of “just sitting on the grass in summer with a beer and the day was full of bees and pollen . .

. this day which promises to be hot you can see it from the haze . . . ” (1). The summer is when her father built the treehouse (15, 17). It is also when Eva’s father began to become distant from her. Eva states “I can only think of that summer as the summer everything changed . . . ” (31). She continues, “. . . a day in July that was the beginning of the end a day of muggy July heat . . . ” (37); Furthermore, it is time her father, from Eva’s perspective, betrayed her by marrying Miriam. Eva talks of “the day of his wedding was so—dawned so hot and still . . . a midsummer wedding.” (58); “. . . freed by fire on this wedding night . . . ” (77).

Political and economic circumstances play little, if any, importance in Eva’s story. It is apparent that Eva grew up in a middle class suburban setting (38, 45). There are references to the home with has basic modern comforts such as a television (38). Eva also speaks of vacations to Wales and going to the cinema (33, 38). The fact that the story is placed in England is only based on Kuti’s personal background, and does not play a direct role in the story except for some of the language Eva’s uses, such as “mum,” “pubs,” “telly,” and “bloody” (1, 38, 46).

It is the social circumstances that govern Eva’s actions. Having grown up without a mother who left, she found a deep relationship with her father. Once her father found comfort in the arms of another woman, Miriam, Eva spiraled into a world of bitterness. It is at the end that she finally finds release and comes to terms with her relationship. This resentment towards Miriam is quite apparent as Eva speaks of “smash the bloody everything all of you . . . ” (56). It is this bitterness that Eva must deal with in order to heal herself, as well as the memory of her father.

Previous Action

The previous action in Treehouses plays an important part in each woman's story as it helps either motivate their present action, and plays into the conflict of each character. Very much like a memory play, the past is a tumultuous demon that is haunting both Eva and Old Magda. In retrospect, it is the present actions that Magda will take that will set the events into motion, releasing their respective demons. In Young Magda's story, the past events play a more practical role. As stated earlier, Hungary was under German occupation nearing the end of World War 2. It is clear that the Boy's family was victim of the Jewish deportations and that according to Magda, "he was hiding, he escaped deportation. So my uncle let him hide in the store cupboard above the shop" (Kuti, Treehouses 13). She knows that her uncle needs a favor from her father, and that "it has something to do with the war" (9). We also know that Stephen and Magda have been romantically and emotionally involved. In the first scene Stephen insists that instead of going inside, he would rather stay out because "if we go in I can't kiss you" (4). We know that Magda lives with her father, but there is no clear indication as to whether Magda's mother is still alive. One can deduce that she does not live with them due to the fact that there is no mention of her. When asked what her father would do without her, Magda replies, "He'd get a housekeeper and everything would go on just the same" (7). It is apparent that Magda's duties at home are to take care of her father, thus leading us to believe the mother is not there.

The previous action for Old Magda's story is what we will see unfold onstage, but it is clear from the beginning that she has a tremendous amount of internal conflict based on an event in her life, and that event somehow has something to do with the boy. As we

watch a young woman kissing the Boy, Old Magda says, “That kiss. That kiss. It will not leave me alone. Forgive me. I am too old to be dreaming of such things. But today—it struggles, this kiss, it shouts, it will not lie down” (2). We later learn the young woman is Magda in her teenage years. She goes on to say, “If I have fallen from grace—if I fell—do I not have the right to let it be what it was, to let I pass from me, without this struggle, to justify, to explain. Why cannot it simply be what it was? No more words” (3), and “my eyes were closed to some very dark things. Adult things. Phrases only half understood. Dark things. What else is it to be a child?” (8). Clearly she feels she has failed at something, and is finding it difficult to live with the consequences. In addition, we know that Magda no longer lives in her mother country but has immigrated and had to learn a new language. However, as she grows older she longs for home in that “I remember words only from when I was young, and the places where I spoke those words” (6). Magda and Stephen married and had children who moved to the United States. In a conversation with Ger, Ger asks, “How’s your grandson doing these days Maggie?” Magda replies, “He will be starting junior high school in September. And he must play American football” (25).

The foremost past circumstance that Eva is dealing with is the death of her father. It is this relationship that is the center of Eva’s monologues. From the beginning, we know that she has come back to her father’s garden to write a eulogy for his funeral. She consults her notepad as she says, “I would like to say a few words about my father” (2). Eva’s mother left when she was young, which drew her and her father closer together. She says “funny thing was you used to say I was your only girl your one and only like all dads except in our case it was true—after my mum left . . .” (7). She goes on to say, “I

really was your one and only and sometimes when you told me things your sadness
brimmed out of you and into me until I was stained the same colour couldn't tell anymore
which was you and which was me" (8-9). Eva's father remarried to a woman named
Miriam, against Eva's wishes, causing a sense of betrayal which Eva must find
forgiveness. Eva speaks of this when she says "I saw from my nest in the tree belongs to
us to me and him, before it all ended, before I had to share it, before I stopped being mine
and his and became something he shared with someone else and I was no longer queen
but minion in some occupied territory" (17). The treehouse, that the title suggests,
represents both the closeness she shared with her father, and the disloyalty she
experiences as her father finds love in another woman. We know this by her act of
burning down the treehouse: "he built it and I burnt it down my house in the tree my
treehouse my refuge" (15). It is this journey of reconciliation that she must undertake
over the course of the play.

Analysis of Dialogue

Kuti's word choice and sentence structure not only reveals time and place, but also gives insight to the inner world of the characters. It is clear that Old Magda is living in a world that is not her own. Her use of broken English is apparent throughout the play in contrast to all the other characters. Location is indicated in Eva's use of British slang such as "crisps," "pub," "mum," and "telly" (Kuti, *Treehouse* 1, 7, 38). Kuti also uses words to reflect character and relationships such as in Young Magda, who constantly says "stop it" to show her present state of being, as well as moral choices when Stephen gets physical with her (4, 22). Eva uses the word "bloody" in reference to Miriam showing her resentment of the woman her father married (46, 56). Ger's use of words "love," and "pet" shows her gentleness and caring attitude toward Old Magda (17, 26, 27, 60, 78). The Boy's lack of words shows his trepidation as well as respect toward Magda.

Phrases and sentence structure are used very effectively by Kuti to give greater insight into the characters and the world in which they live. All of the scenes consist of modern and realistic speech, with the exception of Eva. She speaks with very little punctuation, in a style more like stream of consciousness. What we are witnessing is the inner monologue of Eva, the emotional journey in which she is taking:

"it's the little things of course always the little things that get you unguarded moments which survive for some mysterious reason just snapshots a boring day a trivial act . . ." " . . . what do you wear on this day this day which promises to be hot you can see it from the haze the grass is wet and smells sweet smells of summer death in the summer the

birds still sing that's what they say isn't it the bird still sing fuck them the world still beautiful full of pleasures full of full . . . ” (1)

This exemplifies the emotional rollercoaster Eva has been on since the death of her father. The scenes between Magda and Stephen are more combative and lively in nature showing their age. Their sentences tend to be shorter as in the following example:

YOUNG MAGDA. Have you been waiting long?

STEPHEN. Ages. I was just giving up on you.

YOUNG MAGDA. Do you want to come in or shall we sit here?

STEPHEN. Is your father back?

YOUNG MAGDA. He probably will be by now.

STEPHEN. Then let's stay here. If we go in I can't kiss you. (4)

As presented earlier, Old Magda's speech pattern is indicative of the fact that she is an emigrant and still struggles with the language of her new culture. She is the only character in the play that, according to Kuti, should speak with an accent to help further this point (i). Her sentences are disjointed: “The smell of the beach. Is good. Is a beautiful country sometimes, this island” (6). This contrast sharply to Ger's speech patterns which are Irish. “We meet Old Magda in an Irish nursing home. Through her speech patterns, we realize she is speaking accented English in contrast to Ger whose patterns are very Irish. We know Magda is other. She is not Irish” (Headrick 4).

There are several phrases that are repeated throughout the play to help us cross the barrier of time and place.. Old Magda states “That's the lie of a lazy memory” furthering the point that the story is somewhat subjective as it is told through her memory (Kuti, Treehouses 3, 30). This point is driven home by Kuti:

So Eva's story can be told—perhaps must be told—very subjectively, in her own words, as a monologue, whereas Magda's, being enacted, has a more rounded, more objective presentation to the audience, although it is of course summoned by her memory so you could argue it's equally subjectively told. (Kurdi 3)

The most significant repetition is that of the song “Repülj, madár, repülj” which is sung first by Eva, then by Young and Old Magda. This helps tie the character's stories together. Kuti states, “I love songs and singing on stage, and I needed devices to line Eva to the other characters, and clues to help the audience with the realization that the Boy is her father” (3). The song is sung in both Hungarian and English revealing place and relationship. It is a “love song that Eva's father sang to her as a lullaby” (Headrick 4).

Other repeated phrases include “how many chances are we given in love” (Kuti Treehouses, 34, 37, 48, 58) to help emphasize the internal struggle and the regret that she is feeling about the decision she made to stay. “You are kind” and “you are very kind” are repeated by both the Boy and Old Magda (11, 16, 27, 28, 60, 77, 78). The Boy speaks it to Young Magda reflecting his gratitude for what she is doing for him. Old Magda repeats it to Ger for her kindness that Ger exhibits towards her. In essence, it comes full circle as Magda was once the caretaker, and now needs care. It also serves as a conflict intensifier for Old Magda exhibited in the lines “I'm not kind. I am not kind. I have not always been kind” (10-11). Both Eva and Old Magda speak of a “pale sliver of a moon” and “a thumbnail moon” which parallels and helps strengthen the longing both characters are feeling toward the same man (2, 15, 16). “Set me as a seal upon thy heart. As a seal upon thine arm. For love is as strong as death” is repeated by Old Magda (35, 38, 39). A

Biblical phrases from the Song of Solomon, it shows the strong feelings of love she still carries for the boy. Her recitations of passages of Exodus help create a parallel between her story and that of Moses.

Kuti uses imagery in the dialogue to help further the themes in Treehouses. The season of summer and its heat is interwoven in the memories of Old Magda: “The smell of summer breathes from him. The smell of warm earth and sunbaked leaves . . . ” (35) Eva speaks of “...a day in July that was the beginning of the end a day of muggy July heat . . . ”, “. . . I scream that I’m leaving I’m leaving and I run out the door and into the garden hot summer morning . . . ”, and “. . . this day which promises to be hot you can see it from the haze . . . ” (1, 37, 46). This heat signifies a fever that the characters are going through, whether it be emotional such as Eva and Magda, or physical such as Stephen.

Nature plays a large role in the dialogue. Eva uses nature imagery through her monologue: “. . . the grass is wet and smells sweet smells of summer . . . ”, “. . . the rain rained or the sun shone or the wind blew each day clean and fresh like a new shirt put on . . . ” (3); “. . . the treehouse was a refuge, an ark nothing to see but leaves and sky nothing to hear but birds and the breath of the wind . . . ” (20); “. . . a gusty cold wet and Welsh August, full of sheep and rain and mountains I don’t want to climb . . . ” (33); “. . . I run out the door and into the garden hot summer morning but the grass still cool beneath my feet . . . ” (46). The treehouse, Eva’s refuge, sits in an apple tree, which in a way, signifies the family. Old Magda talks of “the smell of the beach. Is good.” (6). Nature is imbedded in her memories of home: “I love the heat of June and the deep snows of January” and “My father’s house and farm. The pond with its fringe of flags and bulrushes. The yard with the vegetable patch and hen-coop. The barn and the hayloft”

(8, 30). Ger speaks of the day being “Bit hazy still but that’s often the way, isn’t it, these hot days” (18).

The Moon is an image Kuti uses to signify both the love and the longing that Magda and Eva feel. Old Magda talks of “Just a pale sliver of moon, a summer moon, so tiny, like the paring of a fingernail or a . . .” when she thinks of the Boy (2). This is how she remembers him, glowing in the moonlight as it came through the skylight. One of the first things Eva said when she climbed into the treehouse for the first time was “. . . I can see the moon the moon! Even though it was day . . .” (2). She repeats this later on in the play in the following passages: “. . . And when it was finished I climbed up on his shoulders that first time and I looked up and saw the moon through the branches, just like it is now, no bigger than the paring of a thumbnail—I can see the moon! I cried I can see the moon!” (16); “. . . how I looked up and saw the moon, no bigger than my thumb, I can see the moon . . .” (67). The moon helps tie Eva and Magda together. “Eva does not know Old Magda, yet their words echo each other . . . the moon is the universal connector. No matter where the characters are, they see the moon and are seen often in moonlight (Headrick 5-6).

The harvest is another source of imagery Kuti uses. It not only is indicative of the rural setting but also drives the characters. In a sense, the characters have their own “harvest.” Old Magda reflects on the Boy in the following passage: “The smell of warm earth and sunbaked leaves, of fruit and corn moving towards ripeness and the promise of harvest. The sickle and the scythe propped in the corner.” (Kuti, Treehouses 35). Magda wants to run away with the Boy on the night of the harvest dance, which is her

“harvest.” Stephen’s harvest is Magda. He wants her to marry him because he thinks they were “meant to be together” (30).

Flying and birds are a constant imagery found in Treehouses. Young Magda, Old Magda, and Eva sing the Hungarian folk song “Repülj, madár, repülj” which translates to “Fly, bird, fly.” This is a song about a prisoner in a cell, asking a bird to fly away and take his letter to his love. Kuti uses this effectively to echo the prison that holds most of her characters. Magda is imprisoned by her present and future circumstances with Stephen and her father, Stephen is imprisoned by his feelings for Magda, the Boy is imprisoned by the persecution he faces at the hands of the Nazi’s, Old Magda is imprisoned by the memory of the Boy and her decision to stay, and Eva is imprisoned by her father’s betrayal. Old Magda refers to herself as “a bird that can migrate no longer” indicating not only her status as a foreigner, but also her inability to escape the past (59). Eva talks about how the birds continue to sing despite the horrific circumstances that she faces: “the birds still sing that’s what they say the birds still sing fuck them” (1). She goes on to say “and the birds sang just like today . . .” (58). She also uses flying as a metaphor for her mother leaving: “. . . but people fly, they will fly out, they can’t be kept, nothing will keep them and that is all . . . my mother flew and he couldn’t catch her or keep her” (28).

Kuti uses biblical imagery to support the story and its characters. Old Magda recites from the Song of Solomon: “Set me a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm; for love is as strong as death; jealousy as cruel as the grave” (35, 38). When speaking of the holocaust she speaks of “lintels splashed with blood” (8). She compares the Boy to Moses when she cites passages from Exodus:

And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi. And the woman conceived and bare a son; and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months. And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink. (15, 76-77)

This comparison is also in the reflections of home on her father's ranch and the pond "with its fringe of flags and bulrushes" (30). She repeats "I will make an ark and set it among the rushes for some Pharaoh's daughter to find" (11, 81). Eva refers to her treehouse as a "refuge, an ark", and "this ark rides through the dark towards towards—the lost territories of love the landscapes changed forever . . ." (20, 76). Later she says, ". . . And then it came to me—the perfect end for this ark, this nest, this safe place . . ." (77).

Treehouses poetic language becomes even more powerful when combined with the urgency of the characters need for forgiveness. Kuti has created a beautiful play with much depth to the characters as they deal with life and death. As the layers are revealed, and their worlds exposed, so are their souls, for all their beauty and vulnerability. Headrick summed it up best when she said, "Kuti's skillful layering of forms, genres, and her gift as a storyteller make *Treehouses* the award-winning play it is. It is a play that deserves more productions" (10).

Part One

VIT ¹¹ Δ: THE BLAME "

E: CONFESSES

E: REBUKES

E: APOLOGIZES

UNIT 2: "THE
HAUNTING"

OM: PLEADS

EM: FURIOUSLY
QUESTIONS



E: REGROUPS

UNIT 3: "THE MOON"

E: REGRESSES

UNIT 4: "THE RIGHT
WORDS"

E: REPRESSES

UNIT 5; "IN THE
BEGINNING"
E: REMINISCES

OM: REFLECTS

OM: SHOVES

UNIT 6: "I LOVE YOU BECAUSE?"

S: PLAYFULLY AMBUSHES

YM: BEGS

—
QUESTIONS
TEASES

—
Y.M. INVITES
S: STRATEGIZES

—
Y.M. : EXPLAINS
S: REALIZES

—
Y.M. : INVESTIGATES
S: DEDUCES

TEASES
U: DENIES

—
ROBES
ANSWERS

VANCE S
QUESTIONS

ATHEARTEDLY SCOLDS
BATES

S.
AISSES

S: PROMPTS
YM: EVADES

S: SULKS
YM: PLACATES

M: ACCUSES
S: CHALLENGES

UNIT 7: "THE
JOURNEY

OM: DREAMS

E: RECOGNIZES

B: "NOBODY NEEDS ME"
TEONS
STORIES

INQUIRE S
UNFESS
CHASTISES

ENCOURAGES
DISMISSES

J: RES
K: OWLEDGES

M: PRODS
S: ENCOURAGES

E: STRAIGHT
EVENTS

E: DIRECTS
D: KNOWS

UNIT 9: "INFUSION"
E: CONFRONTS
E: REJECTS

E: CHARGES

UNIT: 10

"THE PLAGUE"

OM: AVOIDING

OM: CONFESSES



E: YEARN'S



T II: "THE FAVOR"

! INQUIRES
ACCOMODATES

RECALLS

INVESTIGATES



INTERROGATES
RECOLLECTS



S: RECALLS
YM: GIVES IN
YM: BRUSHES ASIDE
S: FLIRTS

S: FLUTS
YM: BRUSHES ASIDE

RES
S

UNIT: "DON'T
12: MOK ME"

DM: RECRETS

OM: PLEADS

B: APPRECIATES
M: COMFORTS

B: COMPLIMENTS
OM: REJECTS

B: APPEALS
OM: ADMITS

"DIFFERENT
LANGUAGE"
MOONS

E: WRESTLES

Y: "HE FOUND
"S A BOY"
"S

S: ACCUSES
YM: AVOIDS
S: REWENTS

M: INQUIRES
S: PONTIFICATES

W: ENSNARES
S: WAFFLES

'M: CHARGES
S: ELUDES

S: PROBES
YM: EVADES

BES
ADES



S: THREATENS
YM: GIVES IN
S: EXAMINES

YM: IMPLURES
S: AGREES

S: BEGS
YM: SPILLS

S: EXAMINES
YM: CONFESSES

S: EXAMINES
YM: CONFESSES



M: BESEECHES
S: QUESTIONS

S: CHARMS
YM: FLIRTS

M: DOUBTING
S: CONFIRMS

M: RATIONALIZING
S: INTERROGATES

S: CLARIFIES
M: ACCEPTS

UNIT 14: "EXODUS"

DM!

UNIT 15: "THE LOST KINGDOM"

ADMITS

OM: PROFESSORS

UNIT 14: "THE
ARRIVAL"

V: TENDS TO

B: RESPECTS

EM: CONFESSES

E: REBUKES

G: INQUIRES

"TAKING CARE
OF MADA"

OM: INVITES

G: JUSTIFIES
OM: INFORMS

G: INQUIRES
OM: ADMITS

OM: DENIES

OM: DENIES
G: CONCEDES

G: ENSPIRITS
OM: ACCEPTS

G: EXPLORES
OM: RECALLS

UNIT 18: "A PLACE
TO REST"

YM: MOTHERS

B: WELCOMES

B: SETTLES



UNIT 19: "A PLACE
TO BE NOTHING"

E: RETREATS

Character Analysis for Eva

What others say about Eva:

Playwright:

- About 30 (Kuti, Treehouses x),
- Wears black because she is in mourning (1)

What Eva says about herself:

- “I would like to say a few words about my father. I would like to say a few words” ; “I want—just for today—to find the right words—if just today I could say the right words . . . ” (2)
- “He loved his garden this garden this was ours”; “His garden—mine and his—when everything was ours alone, just him and me, that was a good time . . . ” (3)
- “I knew what was home this garden and it was ours from where the house ended to the hedge at the back these were our territories ours alone mine and his no one else.” (8)
- “today this garden his garden this day of all days it is so full of that summer the summer I was twelve that last summer when everything I saw from my nest in the tree belonged to us to me and him, before it all ended . . . ” (17)
- “I’d like to remember that way. Before—I can remember best that way. Simplest.” (3)
- “. . . you used to say I was your only girl your one and only like all dads do except in our case it was true—after my mum left . . . ” (7)

- “his loneliness—our loneliness—it was like a skin coating the surface of our lives a dust that got everywhere and settled there for so long it became invisible to both of us.” (20)
- “perhaps we blamed each other for losing her.” (28)
- “I really was your one and only and sometimes when you told me things your sadness brimmed out of you and into me until I was stained the same colour couldn’t tell anymore which was you and which was me.” (7-8)
- “He squeezed my hand and looked up at the grey sky with just one bird blowing across it and smiled a huge smile down at me, and I know then I had been foolish to be scared . . . ” (34)
- “my bed-time song the bird that flies away with a love-note in its beak . . . (11)
- “. . . didn’t know much of his language the one he was born either . . . ” (11)
- “he built it and I burnt it down my treehouse my refuge...” (15)
- “. . . to release my treehouse to be consumed and exhaled, freed by fire on this wedding night . . . ” (77)
- “. . . before it all ended, before I had to share it before I stopped being the one and only and became one of three and everything stopped being mine and his and became something he shared with someone else and I was no longer queen but minion in some occupied territory.” (17)

- “That was before Miriam.” (34)
- “I will admit they tried very hard to be nice incredibly hard really there was a lot of niceness not from me though now way . . . ” (41)
- “he courts her woos her it’s sickening . . . ” (45)
- “she’s lonely he’s lonely it’s obvious I hate them . . . ” (45)
- “with her stupid brown hair and stupid laugh . . . how could they how could they . . . ” ; “I run straight up to my treehouse, cursing and cursing, and flinging down on the wooden floor I hate you, I hate you I hate you I hate you . . . ” (46)
- “I always knew of course, knew absolutely where it would go, your thing with Miriam . . . to be the fruit of our first, your reminder of someone you lost, a permanent reminder of loss it hurt to be that to you you must understand it hurt me then it still hurts sometimes . . . ” (53)
- “I’d like to smash I’d like to smash the bloody everything all of you . . . ” (56)
- “I could be your rock, your guardian angel, your little Eva—but this time this time is like no other . . . ” (56)
- “I wish this tree would be my new mother not her and would come to my rescue and save me from this travesty of a family, this funeral of a wedding . . . ” (66)
- “the treehouse was a refuge, an ark . . . ” (20)
- “This house, this treehouse, this ark . . . ” (76)

- “And then it came to me—the perfect end for this ark, this nest, this safeplace...” (77)
- “And I’m to be a bridesmaid, in a white dress—real wedding—my father’s wedding . . .” (57)
- “in my bridesmaid dress I am wandering through my daddy’s wedding . . .” (66)
- Sets fire to the treehouse (79)

Whereas most children move away from their parents, it is Eva’s father that moved away from her by remarrying to Miriam. This act has left Eva resentful and bitter towards her father. Once “his guardian angel,” Eva is relegated to playing a foreigner in once was her own land (56). Eva explains:

I saw from my nest in the tree belonged to us to me and him, before it all ended, before I had to share it, before I stopped being the one and only and became one of three and everything stopped being mine and his and became something he shared with someone else and I was no longer queen but minion in some occupied territory. (17)

With this line, Kuti compares Eva’s world with that of Magda’s; a country occupied by Nazi forces. Eva is trying to make sense of what has happened with her relationship and trying to cope with the death of the very person she so longed to forgive. “No matter how much I have tried to forgive I can only think of that summer as the summer everything changed . . . the summer I wasn’t enough, the summer he chose another woman. The summer he betrayed me” (31). In a sense, her father died to her when he married Mariam. Eva talks about being a bridesmaid at the wedding and “how weird, to

walk behind your father up the aisle on his wedding day—strange reversal in a way— with mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage” (57).

Eva’s internal journey to forgiveness mirrors the external journey Magda takes. Whereas Magda is seeking forgiveness from the Boy, Eva is seeking to forgive him. Kuti explains, “Eva’s story is ‘smaller’ than Magda’s—Magda’s is obviously to do with the Holocaust whereas Eva’s is in some ways a minor story—well not minor to her emotionally—but minor in the sense of being domestic and personal” (Kurdi 3). Kuti continues, “It seems appropriate that as Eva’s talking about a dead man, her father, he should not physically be present on the stage, he exists only as a memory now” (3). Through the act of destruction of the treehouse, she is able to find redemption for her father, and ultimately herself. She speaks, “to release my treehouse to be consumed and exhaled, freed by fire on this wedding night this funeral night even as somewhere new lovers whisper new promises and old promises are burned away or transformed by the flames into new covenants” (Kuti, Treehouses 77). She now accepts her father’s actions as a necessary step towards finding herself.

Character Analysis for Young Magda

What others say about Young Magda:

Playwright:

- “About 18.” (x)

Stephen:

- “You are so easily scared.” (4)
- “You must have been snoring too loudly.” (4)
- “You’re completely absurd.” (5)
- “You never have an answer (why you love me).” (5)
- “You are good at things.” (7)
- “Why are you always working?” (11)
- “You’re the busiest person I’ve ever met.” (11)
- “Yes, you definitely like butter.” (15)
- “God you confuse me.” (23)
- “You’re so young. You’re so beautiful.” (30)
- “You’re hopeless.” (41)
- “It’s lucky you’re good-looking . . .” (41)
- “And then there’s the fact that you seem to be getting very attached to him (boy).” (43)
- “You are the treasure of my life.” (43)
- “You hurt me so much.” (43)
- “You’re such a cruel girl.” (44)
- “You did what you could.” (50)

- “Don’t be stupid Magda.” (52)
- “You look beautiful.” (60)
- “Don’t go all shy.” (61)
- “Are you embarrassed to be associated with me, is that it?” (63)
- “Oh please don’t look so sad.” (65)
- “You look feverish. Are you ill?” (69)
- “Even now you are doing it to me . . . pushing me away.” ; “Why do you have to? Push me away? All the time. All the time.” (70)
- “There is something. I know there is. I know you Magda, I know when you are lying. I know what your face does when you lie.” (74)
- “Have you ever loved me?” (74)
- “You’re crazy—you have no idea what you’re talking about.” (75)
- “You never could say things.” (75)

Boy:

- “You are very kind.” (16)
- “You are kind, Magda.” (17)
- “You have been kind. You are kind Magda.” (68)
- “You are kind Magda.” (77)
- “You don’t mean it.” (54)
- “You have no idea what you are saying.” (54)
- “You’re getting married.” (54),
- “You are saving my life.” (57)

What Young Magda says about herself:

- “I don’t snore.” (4)
- “I’d love to be good at something.” (7)
- “. . . he (father) might miss me a bit, but he doesn’t need me.” (7)
- embarrassed at her fifteenth birthday party (10)
- “. . . I was all spotty and miserable.” (10)
- “I won’t be bullied . . . ” (23)
- “I hate being mauled around . . . ” (23)
- “I’m stupid. . . . ” (33)
- “I don’t want to change my mind.” (34)
- “I love the movies.” (37)
- “I’m not a child.” (43)
- “I wish you wouldn’t protect me all the time.”(43)
- “This is making me sick.” (52)
- “I don’t know how to make him change his mind.” (52)
- “What if I go with you?” (53)
- “I could protect you.” (54)
- “I don’t want to be stopped.” (54)
- “I promised you I’d look after you. I promised you’d be safe.” (55)
- “. . . I just don’t like fuss and things, you know I don’t.” (63)
- “I’m scared about you (Stephen) being here, it’s not safe.” (69)
- “You’re scaring me.” (70)
- “I wanted to love you. I wanted to.” (75)

- “Perhaps I didn’t love you as much as I should . . . I wanted to love you. I tried to love you.” (75)
- “I trusted you.” (76)
- “I’m no good, Joe. I’m no good.” (76)
- “I made a mistake.” (77)

Magda’s deep desire is to be needed. In the beginning, Magda feels that she is the object of desire, but feels no purpose in her life. She tells Stephen she would “love to be good at something.” She goes on to say “nobody really needs me, nobody really needs what I can do” (7). Although she is wanted by Stephen both romantically and physically, she cannot see her worth apart from Stephen. When Stephen says he needs Magda and that he would miss her, she responds “but you’d survive . . . that’s not needing someone” (7). She has also replaced her mother as caretaker in the household. We presume the mother is no longer living since there is no mention of her, and Stephen questions what would her father do if Magda left. Magda says, “he’d get a housekeeper and everything would go on just the same. I mean he might miss me a bit, but he doesn’t actually need me” (7).

When the boy arrives, Magda takes it upon herself to tend to his needs. She makes sure he has bedding, and food. The boy continually tells Magda that she is “very kind” (16). Suddenly, Magda views her life as having deeper meaning. By providing the basic needs for the boy, she finally views herself as needed. This empowers her temporarily to step outside her relationship with Stephen and her father and to attempt to rescue the boy by helping him across the border. Magda tells the boy “if we left together. I could protect you. I could help you get away” (54). It is not until Stephen questions

her “stupid act of vanity” and threatens to end their relationship that she changes her mind (52, 76). She admits to the boy “that she made a mistake” and that she’s “no good” (77). Ultimately she has given up on her desire, which has created conflict in her for many years to come.

Character Analysis for Old Magda

What others say about Old Magda:

Playwright:

- In her 70's (x)
- Lives in a residential home (x)

Boy:

- "You are kind, Magda." (11),

Ger:

- "You're not usually up so early are you?" (17)
- "... it's far too early in the day to be getting depressed." (18)
- "Though you're looking pretty ship-shape really aren't you." (18)
- "How's your grandson doing these days Maggie?" (25)
- "You're a very far-flung family aren't you?" (25)
- "Thought we'd lost you to another planet for a minute there, you looked so far away." (60)
- "Don't get upset Maggie." (66)
- "... you were young, it's always a struggle." (66)
- "Who is waiting for you?" (66)
- "You don't think he might have forgiven you?" (78)
- "Sweet dreams, my love." (78)

What Old Magda says about herself:

- "That kiss. It will not leave me alone. Forgive me. Forgive me." (2)

- “If I fell from grace—if I fell—do I not have the right to let it be what it was, to let it pass from me, without this struggle, to justify, to explain.” (3)
- “It is like a curse. And still it feels like he is there, in the hayloft, waiting for me.” (66)
- “I am too old to be dreaming such things.” (2)
- “What words would make everything all right? I have looked all my life for such words.” (2)
- “Perhaps I was innocent.” (3)
- “But the words of this language—harder and harder to remember. In spite so many years I live here.” (6),
- “More and more I remember words only from when I was young, and the places where I spoke those words.” (6)
- “What should I say? I was young.”, “. . . what should I be doing with all these tales of horrors and catastrophe?”, “What else is it to be a child? To protect one’s innocence, yes that is the child’s right.” (8)
- “Should I be harder on myself or less hard? I have not been kind. I have been guilty—I have not always been kind. I have not spent time wisely.” (10)
- “I have waited so many years for a sigh. Of clemency. Of forgiveness. Give me a sign. But don’t mock me.” (11)
- “I am not kind. I am not kind. I have not always been kind.” (11)
- “Oh dear, my head is so old, I am losing always...” (26)

- “How many chances are we given in love? Three or four in a lifetime? Two? One?” (37)
- “I should not have promised what I could not keep.” (48)
- “To have saved at least one. One life in all the millions. But not even that. My God, not even one, not even one could I . . .” (49)
- “I promised him my protection. All the promises I made that I could not keep.” (52)
- I am not brave, no, I have never been a person of great courage.” (53)
- “Not even one. I couldn’t even save one little boy . . . No. I lacked courage. I promised—and I broke my promise.” (78)
- “Forgive me.” (79)
- “Perhaps I forget how little we know then. I don’t know sometimes what is memory and what is knowledge.” (16)
- “But to say it was simple. That’s the lie of a lazy memory.” (30)
- “I am just wishing . . . wishing that the party wasn’t so hot and so noisy, it was like an oven . . . yes. So crowded and stuffy. I was over excited. Not concentrating.” (60)
- “I am having some strange dreams, you know.” (17)
- “I’m too old to change.” (18)
- “I have not been back since—I don’t know—many many years.” (19)
- But I am missing it sometimes. I wish I had gone to visit even.” (19)
- I am so jealous to be like that” (26)
- “My husband never wanted to go back.” (19)

- “I was so innocent and so stupid.” (48)
- “I am falling sometimes, being dizzy. I get better now.” (49)
- “I love the sea. I love it holding so many journeys and so many—transportations.” (59)
- “And all the time my heart was—Elsewhere. Planning an escape. Oh, I think—oh, it was a terrible wrong. Terrible.” ; “But I was very wrong...to have such a struggle in my heart” (66)
- “And it still feels like he is there, in the hayloft, waiting for me to come.” (66)
- “. . . he was there all the time but what could I have done? Still, I ask myself, what is it I could have done?” (72)
- “. . . I still held his key on a chain round my neck.” (73)
- “His name was Stephen, my husband. We were married a few months after the war ended” (78).

Old Magda is desperately seeking closure on is relationship with the boy. The quick termination of her relationship with the boy has emotional turmoil Her arc carries her from denial, into guilt, then acceptance. In the beginning she speaks of “the lie of a lazy memory” (3). Haunted by his image, she cries, “ what is it you want? What more is there to be said? What words more do you want me to say?” (2). She has stuffed the memory of the boy deep down inside, but cannot deny his presence. “The years are no barrier to him. He leaps them and here I am waiting” (10). “Old Magda carries survivor guilt. She promised the Boy to help him but realizes that one should never make promises one cannot keep” (Headrick 8). Magda says to Ger, “To have saved at least

one. One life in all the millions. But not even that. My God, not even one, not even one could I . . . ” (49). Fogelman writes, “Often the strong attachments they had formed with the people they had helped were abruptly severed; many never knew if their charges lived or died. They felt cut off and bereft” (xvii).

Towards the end of the play, Old Magda accepts her actions and relieves herself of the burden of thinking she has sent the boy off to his death. When Ger asks, “You don’t ‘think he might have forgiven you? After all this time?,” Magda replies, “perhaps” (78). Later she goes on to say:

And maybe too—maybe he did escape, like I did, through all the upheaval, eventually to a safe place, both of us crossed the border, washed ashore and found some resting place—an ark—or haven—and maybe one day to meet a woman and fall in love—perhaps to marry, have children himself—could it be possible?—even in those terrible times—for a miracle, or if not that, then a lucky chance, another chance—at life and love—and perhaps somewhere too a child of his loves him and forgives him for some betrayal of the heart. (80-81)

From this it is easy to make the conclusion that she has accepted the fate of her decision and therefore is released of the haunting, or rather, transformed.

Character Analysis for Stephen

What others say about Stephen:

Playwright:

- In his 20's (x)

Young Magda:

- "You are always doing this to me." (5)
- "You shouldn't need an answer." (6)
- "But you'd survive (without me)." (7)
- "But you were all grown up and sophisticated . . ." (10)
- "You don't know the answer!" (12)
- "You're sad face. Don't be sad." (43)
- "You have the saddest clown face sometimes." (44)
- "I wonder if you would miss me?" (61)
- "You will be happy Stephen. I know you will." (61)
- "He was pretty drunk." (67)
- "You're drunk, you should go home." (68)
- "You're drunk." (69)
- "I hate it when you're angry." (71)
- "He looked so fine that night. Very strong. And—I suppose—manly, he was manly. In spite so romantic . . . Very gentlemanly." (62)
- ". . . his hair was quite wild and his eyes they were—what is it?—I don't know—burning, is it, you can say . . ." (65)

- “His name was Stephen, my husband. We were married a few months after the war ended.” (78)

What Stephen says about himself:

- Would like to “do things” to Magda. (5)
- “Bored” as a teacher. (6)
- Doesn’t think he is a good teacher often. (7)
- “I was annoyed you were on the other team. I wanted to pass my orange to you.” (10)
- “But I still kind of liked you.” (10)
- “It’s not my job to know the answers. It’s my job to teach.” (12)
- “I don’t bully you Magda . . . ” (23)
- “I ended up with a problem on the blackboard that I couldn’t solve and it was very humiliating.” (28)
- “There’s a lump in my throat and it just doesn’t go away.” (29)
- “All I can think of is you.” (29)
- “I’m in class and some kid is telling me something, and I’m not listening and I’m calling him the wrong name and I’m getting the answers wrong, because all I can think of is you and your body—your eyes . . . ” (30)
- “I think we should be married. I think we ought to be. I think we were meant to be together.” (30)
- “I just think this is dangerous. It’s a dangerous situation.” (42)

- “I hate this. I hate you going up there with stuff for him, I hate this whole thing.” (42)
- “I get angry when I think of you risking . . . ” (43)
- “I’m sorry, I didn’t mean it like that.” (52)
- “I love you.” (57)
- “Don’t be crazy, of course they know us. I teach half their kids.” (63)
- “I’m never going to let you go.” (65)
- “I don’t know what to think, Magda. What should I think? I wish I knew what to think.” (69)
- “It’s not enough for me . . . I don’t want you if it’s—if it’s going to be like this—I don’t want you.” (70)
- “I know you Magda, I’m not stupid.” (73)
- “I never tried to love you. I’ve never had to try.” (75)
- “I trusted you.” (75)
- “If you go, I will forget you . . . Don’t think that I’ll mourn you for ever because I won’t. I’ll love someone else. I will cut you out of my heart and I will never ever let you back in.” (76)
- “I’ve always fought for you, I fought to win you, I’ve always been fighting and now—just when I ought to—I can’t do it anymore. I can’t. I can’t. I just can’t.” (76)

Stephen begins the play with an upbeat and playful attitude. He views Magda as his romantic and sexual object of desire that he “fights to win” (76). In the first scene with Magda, he tells her he would rather stay outside because if they go in they can’t kiss

and that he is thinking of “all the things he would like to do” to Magda (4-5). Later on he says, “I should tell your father what an extremely wicked, disgraceful, desirable daughter he has who needs a very stern talking to” (22). Magda refers to his physical advancements as “being mauled” and “bullied around” (23).

His confidence in himself, and in his relationship with Magda begins to deteriorate as the play goes on. His passion for Magda becomes obsessive, weakening his control over the circumstance:

All I can think of is you, Magda, all I can think of, all the time. I don't know what to do. It's just there all the time, you're there all the time, thoughts of you, thoughts of us—you don't let me go—and then—like this morning—something happens, and I feel you hate me, I feel so strongly that you don't want me. (29)

When Magda tell him that she would like to get married to him in November, he is at a loss for words. “Oh God, that's—that's just—oh God. I love you” (57). The Boy plays a growing threat to him. Upon discovery that Magda has decided to leave with the Boy to help in across the border, Stephen's dreams are crushed and he throws threats at Magda telling her that he should “report the pair of you and get decorated” (75). His resentment towards Magda directly conflicts with his uncontrollable feelings towards her, turning his once very predictable world into confusion. “I've always fought for you, I fought to win you, I've always been fighting and now—just when I ought to—I can't do it anymore. I can't. I can't. I just can't” (76).

Character Analysis for the Boy

What others say about the Boy:

Playwright:

- About 15 or 16 years old. (x)

Young Magda:

- “A city boy.”; “polite”; “He’s filthy”; “His feet are all bloody.” (21)
- “. . . looks like he hasn’t eaten properly in ages. Or slept either.” (21)
- “I thought your feet—they’re really cut...” (31)
- “He has a lot of nightmares.” (42)
- “I could put him out of his misery.” (75)
- Young Magda calls him “Joe” (76-77)

Stephen:

- “Poor little bastard.” (22)

Old Magda:

- “He was so young.” (48)
- “The boy in the barn, he was so young. How old exactly I don’t know. But even then he seemed so young to me.” (52)

Ger:

- “Perhaps he made it.”, “You don’t think he (boy) might have forgiven you?” (78)

What the Boy says about himself:

- “I was dreaming.” (31)
- “I’ve known for ages we had to go.” (32)

- Does not know where he is going to go (36)
- Has a sister the same age as Magda. (36)
- “I lived in a house on the north side of the river.” (36)
- Lived with a women whom they called granny. (36)
- Had a father who played violin in movie house (36, 46)
- Doesn’t play the violin. (47)
- “I got scared waiting for you.” (68)
- “We might not make it. We might get caught.” (68)
- “I can’t go into the woods alone. It’s dark. I can’t.” (76)
- “I’m scared to go alone. I can’t go on my own . . . Am I going to die?” (77).

The Boy’s attitudes in the beginning are displayed in his action. He is grateful of Magda, but also feels a burden. “The children were caught in a complicated situation,” writes Debórah Dwork, in her book entitled Children With a Star. “They were vulnerable and they had no rights. They had no choice but to adapt to the customs and manners of the family that hid them. They recognized that their hosts risked a great deal on their behalf. They felt they ought to be grateful, and tried to please” (78). This is certainly true of the Boy, as he shows his gratitude toward Magda, saying “thank you,” “please,” and telling her she “is kind” (16-17). This attitude is also displayed in the fact that he doesn’t say much in the beginning. He speaks very, using few words, and using them very wisely. In the introduction to her book The Hidden Children, Jane Marks writes, “Remaining calm in the face of unspeakable horror and loss without going crazy or falling apart required hidden children to shut off their feelings in order to survive”

((xxiv). The Boy's caution is a protective device. Marks goes on to say that there is a question the children face of feeling accepted, and giving up on hope that these hidden children will see their parents again (xxiv).

Through interaction with Magda, and through building his trust in her, he opens up to her, speaking longer monologues about his seeing the trains "packed with people" headed towards an unknown fate, of his home where he lived with his parents and sister, and of memories of his father playing violin in the picture-house when he was younger (Kuti, Treehouses 32, 36, 44-47). These monologues, which grow longer in length as the play progresses, are in sharp contrast to the earlier part of the play where he said very little. Upon finding out that Magda has decided to stay with Stephen, the Boy has a new-found courage. He kisses Magda on the mouth, tells her once again she "is kind," and leaves towards his unknown fate, this time completely on his own (77). One would wonder if the Boy could have had the courage if Magda had not invested her time and energy into helping him.

Character Analysis for Ger

What others say about Ger:

Playwright:

- Middle aged (x)

Old Magda:

- “You are very kind.” (27, 78)
- “I so long to be like that . . . to belong like that, is wonderful” (26)
- “You are a kind lady.” (60)

What Ger says about herself:

- “Tea and toast, don’t tell me the room service in this joint isn’t fantastic.” (24)
- “I can be a bit heavy-handed with it (marmalade).” (24)
- “I might as well sort out your pills now, hadn’t I, before we both forget.” (24)
- “I’m the apple that doesn’t fall far from the tree. I still bump into people that I met on my first day in school.” (25)
- “Horrible losing keys, I know, I hate it.” (26)
- “I’ll look in on you later this afternoon.” (49)
- “I think you should have some of Lily’s cake.” (62)

Of all the characters in Treehouses, Ger is the only one that does not go through a change in attitude. She serves as a catalyst for Old Magda’s change. At the beginning of the play, she is an energetic and loving toward Magda, calling her “love” and “pet” (17, 26, 27, 60, 78). She goes out of her way to serve Magda as well as others in the nursing

home, because that is where, it seems, she finds her purpose in life. An example would be helping Magda find the key the boy gave her. Through her dialogue such as “I’ll come and have a look for it” and “We’ll find it, don’t worry”, one sees that she is determined to not only do her job well, but to take care of her patients out of genuine thoughtfulness and love (26-27). Through Ger’s kindness toward her, Magda is finally able to release the demon that has haunted her so many years. This is due to the fact that her attitude toward Magda reminded her of the caring love she showed the Boy. In a sense, Ger serves as Magda’s treehouse, building the trust in the relationship so that Magda feels safe enough to talk about the past. “Many rescuers did not understand how talking about past events could help,” writes Fogelman. “Many of these men and women were of a generation that was unfamiliar with the practice and benefits of sharing their feelings” (xvii). Ger allows Magda to confront her past, and to come to terms with them, which she appreciates through her words “you are kind” to Ger, echoing the last words that the Boy told her right before he left (Kuti, Treehouses 77).

Ideas of Treehouses

On first reading, one wonders why Kuti didn't name her work The Treehouse, since there is only one actual treehouse in the play. On further study, it comes to light that she refers to the three treehouses, all of which have both tangible and intangible elements. The treehouse, according to Kuti, is a place where one finds refuge from the world around. It is a private place where one seeks comfort and security. "I meant it to suggest not only Eva's refuge, but the other refuges in the play—Magda's little room, and the barn where the boy hides" (Kurdi 3). Eva's treehouse is the only one that is actual, but it also represents the place where she became as one with her father, and a place that stood for his betrayal. The year her father built it for her, Eva burnt it down out of rage for her father's decision to remarry. The second "treehouse" in the play is the barn in which the Boy seeks refuge. Not only is it a place where he can hide, and find safety from the elements, it is also a place where he has found an unselfish love and kindness through Magda. The third treehouse is the Irish nursing home where Magda has come to stay in her old age. Although this is not "home" for Magda, it has become an escape. The emotional refuge Magda finds is in Ger. Ger serves as a catalyst for Magda's change, and a place of comfort and safety.

There are several themes that run through Treehouses. The first, and primary theme is that of forgiveness. The Encarta World English Dictionary Online defines forgiveness as: 1) the act of pardoning somebody for a mistake or wrongdoing; 2) the tendency to forgive offenses readily and easily ("Forgiveness"). Magda has been haunted by the thought of the Boy perishing due to her decision to stay with Stephen and not help him across the border. She has been seeking forgiveness from the Boy, but

cannot attain it for she does not know the outcome of her actions. Not knowing whether the boy survived, she ultimately finds forgiveness within herself in the memory of the boy. In the last part of the play, the words “forgive me” profoundly echo as she finds that forgiveness is inside. These words are doubled by Young Magda making them even more intense (79).

Eva is seeking the courage to forgive her father for his betrayal. For several years, she has held on to the bitterness, causing tumult in her life. She has come to the garden to find redemption, and to redeem her father. Early on, she says, “If today marks an end then it must also make a beginning—the beginning of how it will be . . .” (6). Eva wanted so bad to fill the void in her father left by her mother leaving, that she was devastated when her father turned to someone else. Describing this void, she says, “he was a man full of silences lots of gaps between us never quite leapt his loneliness—our loneliness—it was a skin coating the surface of our lives a dust that got everywhere and settled there for so long it became invisible to both of us . . .” (20). Later, creating her own holocaust as she lights fire to the treehouse, Eva says:

And then it came to me—the perfect end for this ark, this nest, this safe place—to release my treehouse to be consumed and exhaled, freed by fire on this wedding night this funeral night even as somewhere new lovers whisper new promises and old promises are burned away or transformed by the flames into new covenants. (77)

This new covenant that is formed in the flames is forgiveness: forgiveness that Eva grants her father posthumously, as well as a forgiveness of self for the bitterness she held against her father for so long. “I was not your burden you didn’t let me stop you and now

I know I'm grateful for that though then I did not could not know it you never promised protection against everything you never promised protection from the dark form alone from death that was not in your gift" (49). She is finally able to come to terms with her relationship and move forwards.

A second theme is identity. Both Magda and Eva have let their past and present circumstances define who they are. At the same time, both are seeking an identity that is set apart from the actions of themselves, and of others. Young Magda is faced with the dilemma of helping the Boy, and by that very act, placing those around her in danger. Society in play, represented by Stephen and the words of Magda's father, is not willing to risk the danger that the Boy presence creates. Stephen tells Magda, "I just think this is dangerous. It's a dangerous situation. It's not a game, that's all" (42). He later tells her, "What you are doing is illegal, it's a hanging offense. You have to see reason about this" (51). When Magda's father makes the decision that the Boy has to leave, Magda is left in a struggle to figure out what is the right things to do. Battling between reason and her conscience, Magda tells Stephen, "He (father) says it's too dangerous for him to stay here any longer. He wouldn't listen to me. He says I've got to tell him to go tonight or he'll tell him. But how can I? How can I tell him just to go?" (49). In Conscience & Courage, Eva Fogelman writes:

A core confidence, a strong sense of self, and a supportive situation had allowed bystanders to undertake the rescue . . . But once the decision to help had been reached and the rescue begun, a different self—as rescuer self—emerged, to do what had to be done and to keep rescuers from becoming overwhelmed by new responsibilities and pressure. (68)

Before the boy's arrival, Magda felt that she wasn't really needed by the people around her. "Nobody really needs me, nobody really needs what I can do" (7). She doesn't have an identity apart from her father and Stephen. Through her efforts to save the boy, she finds purpose, as well as her individual identity. However, when she backs down from her decision, she reverts back to her previous identity causing her much regret. Sitting in the nursing home, Old Magda reflects on her decision to stay, "If I fell from grace—if I fell—do I not have the right to let it be what it was, to let it pass from me, without this struggle, to justify, to explain. Why cannot it simply be what it was? No more words" (3). In the later stages of her life, Magda pursues an identity that is not rooted in the decision she made when she was young.

Eva's search for identity is even clearer. Since her mother leaving, Eva and her father became very close. Since then, Eva's identity was wrapped up in her father's identity. Early in the play she relates to the audience through speaking to her father, "so I really was our one and only and sometimes when you told me things your sadness brimmed out of you and into me until I was stained the same colour couldn't tell anymore which was you and which was me" (8). Later on, as she lights the treehouse on fire, she says, "so I made a torch of your vows as you embraced your bride your miriam, your new chance I fed all of what we have been to the fire to be free from you to free you from me just like today—this safe place this nook this nest this safe as houses tree—to be freed by fire and fed to the passionate skies" (78-79). This symbolic act of burning the treehouse has allowed her to begin a search for her own identity set apart from her father.

In the beginning of the play, Stephen's identity is fused with Magda's. Stephen's love for Magda governs his thoughts and actions. He confesses to her, "I swear to God,

Magda—I'm in class and some kid is telling me something, and I'm not listening and I'm calling him the wrong name and I'm getting the answers wrong, because all I can think of is you, and your body—and your eyes . . . ” (30). Later on he says, “. . . you are everything to me. You are the treasure of my life” (43). He cannot exist separate from Magda, and the thought confuses him. He expresses, “this lump in my throat. If you could just let me go, I think, or tell me to go, then, all right, it would be over, I could cry at least, and perhaps that's what I need to make it go away” (29). It is clear that he does not hold the power and looks to Magda to make the decisions. After he discovers Magda's plan to leave with the Boy, he finds the inner strength and his own identity as he tells Magda, “If you go, I will forget you. I will cut you out of my heart” (76).

The Boy has a more complicated journey. He is searching for his past identity, that with his family. Current circumstances have labeled him as a “refugee,” and has to act accordingly by hiding. He is cautious in the beginning, is marked by his choice of saying very little. Once he feels safe, he begins to open up to Magda, marked by longer monologues about his family, and his memories of his father in particular, playing in the picture-house (44-45). His act of giving the key of the music box to Magda is his attempt to go back to his previous identity (58).

A third theme is that of diaspora. This happens on two different levels. There is the emigration that happens on a more global level, and there is the microcosm of the family. First, it is clear that emigration plays a large part in the story. Charlotte J. Headrick writes, “Kuti's Treehouses tells the story of two distinct emigrations, one of the Jewish boy escaping WW II Hungary and on of a Hungarian woman who has ended up in an Irish nursing home” (1). Magda has moved from her home in Hungary to Ireland,

probably sometime during the 1950's when there was a flood of people leaving Hungary as a result of the Hungarian Revolution. In his book, Vanishing Diaspora, Bernard Wasserstein writes:

Among the tens of thousands of Hungarians who fled, mostly on foot, across the frontier to Austria were not only anti-communist revolutionaries fleeing revenge at the hands of the Soviets and their puppets but also nearly 20,000 Jews in flight, as many feared, for their lives. Nearly 9,000 went to Israel. A similar number settled in the United States and Canada, and about 2,000 in Britain". (208).

Still, Magda longs for her home. "In spite so many years I live here. More and more I remember words only from when I was young, and the places where I spoke those words" (Kuti, Treehouses 6). Later she confesses to Ger that "I am missing it sometimes. I wish I had gone to visit even" (19). Her children have moved to the United States causing Ger to describe Magda's family as "far flung" (25). The boy is a forced emigration. He has to leave his home in Hungary to save his own life, which we find out, he does. He eventually ends up in England where marries and had a child, who we know as Eva.

There is a displacement that happens on a smaller familial level. In the early stages, the family is concentrated in the home. As the children grow up, they leave the house to start a life of their own. In describing a treehouse, Kuti says:

I also had a visual image of a treehouse—the little house perched in the branches of a tree—as an image for the family one grows up in—an enclave nestled in the family tree, but one that is temporary, that gets

dismantled—because children grow up and move away from their parents (or in Eva’s case, almost vice versa) . . . And by extension that could apply to all the houses we live in—homes, houses, cities, countries, the world—they are often temporary shelters, that serve their purpose and then get dismantled” (Kurdi 3).

Symbolism plays a large part in Treehouses. The most obvious is that of the treehouse which is referred to by Eva as a place of refuge: “my house in the tree my treehouse my refuge . . .” (15). Later on she once again refers to it as a “refuge” and an “ark” (20). Old Magda refers to the ark at the end of the play: “I will make an ark and set it among the rushes for some Pharaoh’s daughter to find.” Birds and flight as symbols are also found in the play. Throughout, the characters of Young Magda, Old Magda, and Eva sing an old Hungarian folk song entitled “Repülj, Madár Repülj” which translates to “Fly, bird fly.” Headrick writes, “the song is a traditional Hungarian tune about a prisoner in a cell, asking a bird to fly away, to take his letter of love” (6). As well as serving a practical role by cluing the audience in on the location of the play, as well as connecting Eva to Magda, it also serves as an internal symbol of their internal conflict. Each character sees themselves as imprisoned by their circumstances and wishes to rise above it. Magda is fighting to do what she feels is right versus what is correct. Eva is searching for redemption for both her father and herself. Eva refers to her mother’s leaving as “flying away.” She says, “My mother flew and he couldn’t catch her or keep her” (28). Later on in the play, Old Magda refers to herself as a “bird that can migrate no longer” (79). The harvest is used a metaphor for the cycle of life. Eva must grow up, her father must die, and she must find a new life away from him. Old Magda is near the end

of her life as she thinks about “the smell of warm earth and sunbaked leaves, of fruit and corn moving towards ripeness and the promise of harvest. The sickle and the scythe propped up in the corner” (35). It can be argued that the harvest also symbolizes Stephens longing for Magda, his pressuring to marry her, and to “harvest” what he thinks is his. It is found in his words as he tells Magda “I think we should be married. I think we ought to be. I think we were meant to be together” (30). Fire plays a crucial role as symbol of destruction and renewal. As the Jewish Holocaust paints the background of the play, each character must destroy themselves in order to find their own rebirth. Eva’s act of destruction is, according to Kuti, “a moving on...that by burning down the treehouse, Eva releases her father, or destroys the very particular relationship they once had, allowing him to remarry and herself to grow up and move away from him” (Kurdi 4). The moon is another important symbol used by both Eva and Magda. They both refer to “thumbnail moon.” It serves as a practical source of light in the barn, but also refers to Magda and Eva’s longing for the past. The Encarta World English Dictionary Online defines moon as a verb that means “to be stricken with longing for an absent loved one, and rendered listless and dreamy as a result” (“Moon”). Both Madga and Eva are at a stage in their lives where they cannot move forward until they deal with their longing. The heat of summer can be seen as a symbol for the feverish actions of the characters. Magda has a deep desire to save the boy which ultimately ends up in a physical relationship, Stephen has a love and lustful desire for Magda, and Eva desires a return to the relationship she had with her father.

Playwright Elizabeth Kuti

Elizabeth Kuti was born in the United Kingdom in 1969, and then lived in Dublin from 1993 to 2004, where she studied at Trinity College and then worked as an actress with a number of Irish theatres and companies (including Com Exchange, Loose Canon, Rough Magic, the Peacock, the Abbey and the Lyric Theatre in Belfast). Her first play, The Whisperers, a completion of Frances Sheridan's 18th century comedy A Trip to Bath, was produced by Rough Magic in 1999 (Irish tour; Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh). Treehouses was first produced at the Peacock in 2000; and subsequently at the Northcott Theatre, Exeter (2001). It has now been produced in the United States, and twice more in the U.K. It won second prize in the Susan Smith Blackburn Awards for the year 2000 and the BBC Radio Drama prize in the Stewart Parker Awards 2000. The Countrywoman, adapted from the novel by Paul Smith, was produced by Upstate Theatre Project (Civic Theatre, Dublin and Drogheda Arts Centre, 2000). May Child was broadcast on BBC Radio 4 starring Patricia Routledge (July 2004). Other radio plays for the BBC include The Glasswright for Radio 4 (broadcast August 2005) and Mr Fielding's Scandal-Shop, for Radio 3 (broadcast Christmas Day, 2005). The Sugar Wife was commissioned by Rough Magic Theatre Company and premiered at the Project Arts Centre, Dublin in April 2005; it transferred to the Soho Theatre, London in January 2006. It was nominated for Best New Play in the Irish Times Theatre Awards for 2005, and it was joint winner of the Susan Smith Blackburn Award 2005/6. The Sugar Wife has been given a reading off-Broadway in New York and has been translated into German for performance at Theater Tri-Buhne in Stuttgart, November 2006.

Elizabeth Kuti is married with two sons and has been a lecturer in drama at the University of Essex since September 2004. She is currently under commission to develop a new play for the National Theatre Studio.

Although Treehouses is not considered autobiographical, it does reflect Kuti's experiences as an emigrant, and her family's experience in the Holocaust. In a letter to Charlotte Headrick, Kuti wrote:

The play definitely came out of events in my family history, in that my father (who is Hungarian and Jewish) was hidden during the war by someone in Budapest. I met her in the summer of 1996 she was a very old lady. She's dead now. She was made a hero of the people, I believe, for what she did during the second world war. My father always kept in touch with her family. They were Catholics, I think, and I think she had my father christened to protect him. It's always been very hard to talk about the Holocaust with any members of my family. My father survived the war, and so did his father (my grandfather) but his mother (my grandmother) did in Auschwitz. My grandfather married again after the war, a lady called Clara, and I always knew Clara as my grandmother ("Nagyama"). She survived Auschwitz. So, yes, there's quite a lot of all that influencing the play, but the characters, setting and incidents are all made up. (Kuti "Re:Treehouses")

Headrick writes, "Kuti knows what it is to be an emigrant. She is an Anglo-Hungarian who emigrated to Ireland. She is now listed as an 'Irish' playwright . . . Kuti expands the parameters of what the them of an 'Irish' play should be" (2). In an

interview where Maria Kurdi compared Kuti with the style of other Irish playwrights, Kuti responded, “I didn’t feel myself to be writing in an Irish way at all . . . my love of Irish literature has brought me here . . .”. She continued, “Guilt and lament and sadness about the past often seem to be a big part of memory plays, and perhaps that’s common to Irish and to Jewish culture and literature” (3).

Learning Goals for Students

Through the experiences of creating Treehouses, the students will:

1. Acquire a greater understanding of the Holocaust, and the effects it had on the both the Jewish community, and those that rescued them.
2. Work together to create a cohesive, professional level theatrical production.
3. Learn to achieve honesty and truth in their acting.
4. Analyze a character, including their essential action, motivation, and both external and internal conflict in a written character analysis. They will understand the arc of the character and the change that they go through.
5. Learn to apply an intensive acting technique as learned from their Academy courses.
6. Learn effective communication skills pertaining to the rehearsal process. They will learn the improvisational elements of give and take as it applies to their stage work.
7. Learn how to effectively collaborate with other theatre artists in the creation of the set, costumes, and lighting.
8. Display the discipline necessary in creating a role for the stage.
9. Learn how to analyze a play for its literary value.

Production Journal

August 9

I received a gracious email from Elizabeth Kuti today wishing me the best of luck on my production. She offered to mail information regarding reviews and articles about her and the play. I was excited to get a reply since I did not think she would. I told her I would be traveling through London and would love to meet her.

August 10

Received a reply from "Liz" regarding a possible meeting, but she will be out of town when I am in the area. She again offered her help, which I am ecstatic about.

August 20

The package from Liz came in the mail. She has been very nice to help me. She also included contacts for other people who produced the play. I asked if she had any copies of her scripts that were not available to purchase, which she promised to email.

August 25

Liz emailed copies of her unavailable scripts, which consist of a couple of plays, and teleplays that were aired in the U.K. How cool is that?

August 28

Met with Joseph (technical director and lighting designer) and Shannon (Set Build) to discuss the play and why I want to do it. They seem very confident about it and think it is a good vehicle for us. I explained to them my concept and tried my best to make sure I set them on the right track to do their magic. I feel very confident about most aspects and am very excited to begin our work. The big question is whether Resa is on board or not as scenic designer. It is really hard to get started without the scenic designer. Joseph reassured me that things would work out. They seem to always do.

September 11

Today we held the general auditions for the Academy as well as our first two productions. I was not sure exactly who would be there in terms of new people, but I was hoping we would have a good turnout since the orientation had good attendance. As it turns out, quite a few people did turn out, and we accepted 40 students into the company. I felt encourage with the actors and feel like I am in good shape when I cast my show. I see several options available, but it will get tough since we have to cast two shows.

September 12

Callbacks went fairly smooth. We did some warm-up exercises as well as organic improve to encourage give and take. From there, I paired them up for cold-readings of scenes from the play, according to what I am considering casting for. I had a firm idea of whom I imagined in what role. However, when we did cast, I surprised myself with some choices that I didn't really consider. Ali really impressed me tonight with her audition and feel deserves the role of Eva. Molly was a surprise as well for Young Magda. I am concerned with my casting of Halimah for Old Magda, primarily because I think she is getting a little tired of playing the "mature" roles and wants to try something different. However, her maturity and life experience will be a huge asset in the role. I guess we will cross that bridge when we get to it. All in all, I feel very good about my cast, as well as the cast for The Metamorphosis. It's funny, but the two actors I was dead set on we cast in the other show.

September 18

Met with Joseph, Shannon, and design students who will be working on the play. I feel very excited about their ideas. Still no Resa. I think I may need Shannon to do the actual design, which probably is a better idea since she will be doing the build. I really want to work with Resa and we have been talking about this for about a year. She is waiting on an answer from her advisors as to her schedule.

October 23

Today was our first read through of the script. I played traditional Hungarian music as the actors came in and greeted each other. Before we began, I reminded the actors that because this is my thesis project, it is very important to me, and that is why they are sitting at the table. I cast them for a reason... I trust them and it is an honor to work with them. However, auditions are over, and I did not want them to fall into any kind of readings or feel they have to prove why they deserved the part. I wanted them simply to read for sense and get a feel for the story we are about to tell. Through the reading, I had a concern for Halimah. Her reading seemed rather removed. Since this was a first read-through, I did not say anything. I will keep an eye out, however. After the reading we discussed what we feel the story was and how it made us feel. Some good insight. Finally, I assigned master lists for each character. Halimah and I spoke earlier in the day about the choice for her in the role and she confirmed my suspicions. She was frustrated with being cast as the old person again, but knew that she did not have the goods when she read for Eva. I told her that it is her strengths that are needed for the role of Old Magda, but that I understood and encourage her to do other roles. I asked if she wanted to still do the play, and she replied with a strong yes. We discussed trying to have fun in the creation of the character, since there is so much depth. It will be a good opportunity to do some dialect work as well. I realize that my attempt to begin blocking right away will be fruitless until they really grasp the material, and until I have a firm idea of the set. They see the surface, but have no clue as to the depth of the material. I think we need to discuss more.

October 24

Tonight was a juggle fest. Not only did we have rehearsal, we had back-to-school night so I went over character analysis with student to help them with researching their part. Ali mentioned that she felt very intimidated with the fact that her entire part is one long monologue. I told her that I would help her, and that I don't see it as a monologue-that all monologues are dialogues. I told to think about how she would say these words to her father, to Miriam, to her best friend. Try everything and don't rule anything out. Through the rehearsal process, we will find what works best to tell the story. As I met with the parents, I had them watch a documentary about the Holocaust in Hungary. Unfortunately, we did not have the remote and the students accidentally watched the wrong one, which was in Spanish about survivors who live in Argentina. I guess we will try again at the next rehearsal.

October 25

After weeks of not getting a final answer from Resa on whether she is going to design my set or not, I finally got a no. She has a gig on the Oscars, which is a great opportunity for her and I am very proud of her. Luckily, Shannon, who was to build the set, is a great designer and will be awesome to work with so I am still in good shape. The only issue is I am hesitant in starting blocking rehearsals until we have finalized the set so I have to make adjustments to the schedule. The rehearsal started out with one of my actors (Alexandria) in tears because her mother is making her go home and miss rehearsal. After reassuring her that we will work through it, and that she need not worry about it, she calmed down. She is one of my most dependable students and I know that if she could, she would be there. We started the rehearsal out with discussing some of the research I completed regarding the motivations of rescuers during the holocaust. Although we discussed some pertinent information, I can't help but feel that most of the cast would rather be somewhere else right now. I tried not to take it personally, blaming it on "something in the air," but it did give me cause for concern about the future of this show. We discussed a common language for the rehearsal process and what analysis I need them to do in writing. Norman challenged me (respectfully) by telling me he felt this process of beats and actions distracted him from "getting into the scene." I replied by telling him this is the process that is necessary, but what is more necessary is that the actor must get it out of his head and into his soul. He must not think it, but know it. To demonstrate, I asked him to recite the words to the Beatles' "Twist and Shout." After hesitation, he began reciting, trying to get the words correct. Then I asked him to recite his ABCs. He launched into immediately without any moments of thought, from which I said, "That is the difference." Then we entered into the discussion of whether I thought the actor becomes the character. I didn't know if I wanted to spend the time in a philosophical discussion, but then I thought if the actor's are clear on my philosophy on acting, then they will understand where I am coming from with my directions. I strongly believe the actor finds the character within, which to me is more exciting and more dangerous at the same time. After a bit of discussion, I believed they understood. I also told them that it is their job as actors to breathe life into the characters, using whatever techniques that work for them, and that is what is expected of them. Although I feel it is

extremely important to share in this table work, I can't help but feel that they need to get on their feet. They are anxious.

October 26

I decided tonight would be a good night for my team to watch the documentary on the Holocaust they were supposed to see earlier. The documentary, "The Eyes of the Holocaust," tells the story of the events in Hungary from the viewpoint of survivors. It is also a chance for Halimah to hear the Hungarian language. They found it very interesting and sad. It gave them a good background into the political, religious, and social troubles of Hungary during that time and led to some very interesting discussion.

October 27

More discussion on the play and it's meaning. We began reading through and discussing the beats, which went well, but we didn't get as far as I had hoped. Partly it is due to the discussions we were having so I am not too worried. I told them that I expect them to apply what we have been doing to the rest of the script. I think they are beginning to see the importance of the table work, I hope. I am concerned about Norman. He is the only actor that has not given me his character analysis work. I am not surprised however. If it were a matter of time, I would understand and work with him. But having worked with him for the past three years, he is one that wants to skip the process, and that is what frightens me. We discussed this in casting and whether he should get a part. He is talented, no doubt, but seems to only want to do what he wants. That is not the type of student I want to produce. I don't know whether I should give him an ultimatum or not. His father passed away over the summer and he really needs to be a part of something. However, he did this kind of thing since he was a freshman. I feel like I need to give him a final deadline and recast if he doesn't do it. I don't like that idea. I feel that once director casts, he has to stick to his decisions unless there is something major that is affecting the entire cast on a bigger level. I guess I need to think about it further.

October 30

Today's reading and discussion went quite well, despite the fact we were missing an actor, and two other actor's were late. We discussed further the ideas of the play, but wanted to make sure what our central idea was. I said to me the play is about forgiveness: forgiveness of self, and others, which leads to a new identity. Most of the characters in his play are fighting against letting their circumstance define who they are. Then we discussed each character stemming from their master lists. The most encouraging thing wasn't so much that their information was so complete, but that they were beginning to see how valuable the process is and how that they are in such better shape to make decisions on character choices than they were in the beginning. I asked them if they could see the difference in the meaning of the play to them personally from tonight's reading compared to the first reading. They agreed that the play had much more depth; therefore, they felt much safer that they were jumping off from firm ground. I told them this is only the beginning. After rehearsal, I shared my concern for Norman with

Joseph to get his opinion. We both agreed that whatever I did, I would hold the others to the same thing. I am not sure what I am going to do, but I do know I cannot coddle him anymore. The decision has to be his, not mine.

October 31

We start blocking today. I decided to put it off until I was able to have a good meeting with Shannon to get a basic idea of what this set is going to look like. It's a good thing I waited. We both decided that the original idea for the set (thrust) would flatten out the look, so we decided to do it in arena setting. This helps create the sense of separate worlds in the four corners, and how they collide in the center. I love working in the round, but we come down to the issue of lighting since it requires more instruments, and more dimmers. I will have to discuss this with Joseph later on. The actors were happy to get up from the table and get on their feet. Perhaps a little too happy. I called everyone since the plan is to block the entire play this week. Since the entire cast knows each other very well, they have a tendency to socialize a lot and become distracting to the process. Their focus was a bit off as well. It is Halloween, however, so I will chalk it up to that. However we got through and blocked the up to page 20. I felt good at the end since we accomplished our goal. Let's see if we can keep it up.

November 1

We blocked another 30 pages tonight. So far, so good. I feel a bit frustrated with Eva's blocking. Since her speeches are, in essence, one long monologue, I want to make sure I am keeping the tension and suspense, without having her do too much. I am rethinking my original idea to use video projections to help enhance some of the speech, because I feel it would distract and not further the story. I don't want it to be a crutch. Should I even have projections at all? I am still struggling with that decision. I haven't met with the video designer yet, so I am anxious to hear what he has to say. Tonight I lost an actor (Max) for the evening due to the flu, so that put us a bit behind. Most of his blocking is not complicated, so I am not worried too much. I lost my stage manager (Bobbie) for the next two weeks because she is head of the lighting crew for The Metamorphosis. Deepika (my assistant director) is on top of things and is recording all the blocking. I feel like sometimes I am just getting through the scenes. I must admit that I hate this part of the rehearsal process because it seems so cut and dry, with the actors still stuck in their scripts.

November 2

This was, by far, the hardest rehearsal to get through. We had to finish blocking the play, but I had a headache the size of Mount Everest. I considered canceling, but didn't out of fear of falling behind. The actors were so distracted, and Norman was in an exceptionally bad mood. He is the moodiest of all the actors I have, and he tends to over exaggerate everything. The best thing to do is to get him to take his mind off of it because he brings it into the rehearsal and it affects the entire cast. We got through the blocking so I was glad I toughed it out. However, I am unhappy with about 50% of what

we did. On top of that, Shannon suggested changing the set around. I told her I was happy to hear her ideas, but that I had completed the blocking so it better be good. Of course, deep inside, I'm thinking please change it and save me from myself. Eva's speeches are still bothering me, and I know they are bothering Ali, the actress playing her. I trust her, but I want to make sure I am giving her what she needs. This is a difficult part in ways and I know she is intimidated a lot by it. I plan to take some time this weekend to really look at just her speeches. Perhaps something will penetrate this cloud of unspecificity. However, I have to keep in mind that this is just the beginning, and we are still on track. I can't wait until they get off-book and begin to act. They will save me then. They always do.

November 3

We began to work on the first part with the actors off-book. Their idea for tonight's rehearsal was to make the connections between scenes and see how the transitions are going to work. It also was to get the actors out of their scripts. They weren't anywhere near off-book. Max is beginning to concern me because he doesn't seem quite all here. I have never worked with him so I am unaware of his work ethic, but I know he is a good student. We got through the rehearsal, but I hate that they are completely stuck in their scripts.

November 6

We tried Part 1 again, and to be honest, I was only hoping for them to know their lines. Went better, but still nowhere near where I need them. Norman seems very frustrated with himself, with others, with everyone. I am not sure if I should address it, or let it go since it could be issues from the outside. I will give it until tomorrow so he doesn't feel I am constantly coming down on him.

November 7

Ran Part 2 off-book. It went better, but it is a much shorter part. Halimah and Ali seem to get parts of their monologues confused and mixed up. I need to work on showing them the connections between their monologues, and how each thought leads to the next. It is a clue to me that they still see it as just words on a page. They need to begin owning it.

November 8

I was really looking forward to digging into each scene and I think these rehearsals will help Norman more. We began with some improvisations to really start them working off of each other. Rehearsal went well, but we didn't finish what we needed to. Norman did better than I expected, but still was very bad with lines. He is still refusing to do the process. This is a major concern for me. Molly is doing great but still is riding the surface. She needs to really dig deeper to find the internal conflict. Of all the characters, she goes through the most change. However, I feel more confident in things.

November 9

Norman didn't show up to rehearsal on time. In fact, after getting a hold of him an hour and a half later, I told him not to bother showing up since I was so angry and felt the rehearsal would be pointless. He felt his other project (Springfest), which he committed to just this week was more important. This is so frustrating considering I pushed the rehearsal back an hour to allow him to participate. In addition, Molly and Deepika had arranged an impromptu rehearsal to get off-book that Norman did not show up to. I am beginning to think that Norman is now beginning to hold back the others. They are frustrated and don't trust him. I need to talk to him. Now we are really behind. I decided to use the time to work with Molly one on one to help her with character development. After much discussion, I think she is well on her way.

November 10

Okay. Now I am really beginning to freak out. Max seems completely out to lunch and cannot remember a simple direction, or understand anything I seem to say without repeating three times. I thought Norman would be my only challenge. I am not sure how to handle it since he isn't doing anything belligerent. I still like him, but am losing confidence. I will stick by my decision and work harder with him. Molly is very generous in her work and I think she is going to be fine.

November 11

Paper Tech went well but Shannon decided that the set would work best in Ali. I saw her point quite clearly, but this would change a lot of the blocking. I have to see how it will work in the space. After shifting the risers back and forth to figure things out, we finally settled on a combination of ally and thrust. We all agreed that this has to be the final decision or we are all going to go nuts. If lights are going to play such an important role, we need more dimmers. I have been working on a grant to purchase them, but was still waiting to hear word of approval. We are going to have to rent them if necessary. Joseph's ideas for colors are very nice. Paper tech went well and I feel confident in the look, but now am worried that the set will not get done on time. I guess I just have to trust.

November 13

Halimah and Alex are great to work with. Both are very positive, but I am still not sure if Halimah has come to terms with the role. I don't think she sees the tremendous depth of the character, and how wonderful that role is. She still seems removed which I think is due to her lack of insight, and her own personal take on things. I told her I want to talk with her before the next rehearsal to discuss things. We made some progress on some of the scenes, and Alex is absolutely wonderful. We are trying to bring depth to Ger so she doesn't come across as one-dimensional. Alex is very good at pulling things out of the text and applying them. If I can just get Halimah to let everything go and lose herself in Old Magda, these scenes will be fantastic.

November 14

I met with Halimah during lunch, but it didn't go too well. She proceeded to tell me that casting her as an "old woman" was insulting and that I have treated the other African-American students the same by always casting them as minor characters that tend to be subservient to others. I didn't know what to say. Am I being accused of racism? I proceeded to tell her that I didn't believe it was true. Norman is basically a lead, and he is African-American. I have had others play leads such as in The Crucible, The Glass Menagerie, and Pippin. I got quite upset and told her she was wrong and that we needed to end the discussion because I was so upset and did not want to react out of anger. She proceeded to follow me out of the room telling me that we "better talk." I reassured her that I cast her in that role not because of color, but because she had the maturity to tackle the role, and that it was such a beautiful role. We left on shaky, but more positive terms, but this definitely will affect how I work with her. I will have to second-guess everything I say. Rehearsal was a little tense, to say the least. Ali seems to be having her own struggles. She doesn't trust herself, and tends to stop herself from following through with her choices. I am beginning to wonder if this whole thing is beginning to unravel. I am quite nervous. It doesn't help that I am losing trust in myself.

November 15

I was glad to get some one-on-one time with Ali. Of all the cast members, I think she feels the most neglected. We really began to tear down her monologues to find the thoughts. We spoke about using the audience as her other, whether it be her father, herself, or Miriam who she is speaking to. We did some improvisations to help her stop thinking so much about it and work from impulse. All in all, I think we made some good progress today, and she seemed more confident by the end.

November 16

Ran Part 1 tonight. Once again, Norman was late and unprepared. On top of that, he had an attitude. I see now that this will have drastic results on the show. I have to let him go. He refuses to follow the process, and now is dragging everyone else down with him. I hoped things would be different. I really care about him, but he has so many issues that he cannot help but bring them into his work. I told him I want to meet with him tomorrow. Meanwhile, I have no idea what to do. There is a new student, Colin, who just entered the Academy, but I am quite unsure of where he is at skill-wise or commitment. There is also Conner Nannini who could do the job with a lot of work. I need to schedule an audition. The run through went all right but still weak on lines. I got quite upset and told them they have to do their work or I can't do anything with it.

November 17

I met with Norman after school. I let him go. I told him that it was time that he began to fight for himself, that we could not keep saving him all the time. To my surprise, he

remained quite calm. I don't think he quite understood, but he didn't protest too much. I just can't work with him anymore, and I don't think anyone else can either. I immediately spoke with Conner and Colin to set up an audition for later that afternoon. I was quite surprised at Colin's audition, and not quite so impressed at Conner's. I am willing to take my chances on Colin, even though he is very green. Considering the fact that he is an underclassman, he has something to prove and I think it will light a fire under everyone else. He couldn't be at rehearsal tonight on such late notice, so we struggled through without him. Deepika did her best to stand in. Considering the circumstances, I think we are still okay. I called a Sunday rehearsal to catch up and to give Colin all his blocking. Everyone felt it was a good idea.

November 19

I am glad we called the extra rehearsal, although I hated to leave my family. We were able to go through all the blocking so Colin didn't feel so out of touch. He is already working very hard to get off-book, which is very encouraging. Everyone is being very generous to him, which is helping quite a bit. I am beginning to have questions about some of the choices we have made, but it may be because we added a new factor in the process. I am going to wait until he is ready to see if the choices need to change. Things are still very technical right now and I need to see ownership. I just see glimpses right now. I'll take them.

November 20

My suspicions have been confirmed. I received an email from Norman's mother about his dismissal. She pleaded that I give him a second chance, but to be honest, I have been doing that for the past three years. At some point, he has to fight for himself. Nevertheless, I began to doubt my decision. I have to stand by it. Personal feelings cannot cloud the issue. I then was called into Pam's office to discuss an issue involving Norman. My first thought was that Norman's mother called her to ask her to intervene. However, it was much more serious. Another Academy student was accusing Norman of rape. I am completely horrified that Norman is spiraling out of control. I feel completely sick to my stomach as I write this. I have no idea what the truth is, but what makes me so uncomfortable is that it didn't faze me that he would be capable of doing this. He is unstable. Pam asked me to inform the other staff, but to act as if nothing was wrong. To say the least, rehearsal tonight was a struggle to get through mentally and emotionally. However, Colin stepped in and did a good job considering. I know it is going to be a challenge in the intimate parts between him and Molly because I can tell he feels so awkward. Here is a brand new student, a sophomore, who is being plunged into a part opposite a beautiful senior with whom he has to be physical and kiss. I pulled Molly aside to ask her to be very nice to him. I know she will. To be honest, it is refreshing to see that kind of innocence in a male student. There is still hope in the world.

November 21

Tonight I just wanted to work with Colin and Molly, to build the trust so I gave the rest of the cast the night off. I am still sick about Norman and very worried. We did some

improvisational work, which seemed to loosen both of them up. I could tell Colin is very nervous about the whole thing, but is trying very hard. I have to keep in mind that it is about how far I can take him, and not about the final product. I have to keep the bar raised, but be patient. I can tell, however, the tone of the rehearsals has changed for the better and that Molly seems to be very optimistic. That gives me comfort that I made the right decision that was best for everyone involved. I am not sure how far I can take Colin in such a short amount of time. I just wish I made a decision about Norman earlier. Whatever the end result is, I think it is for the best. I really have to depend on Molly right now. Thank God for her. She really is trying to do her best to make him feel comfortable.

November 22

We ran part 1 tonight, and it was a train wreck. Just when I feel we are moving forward, we seem to take huge steps back. LINES, LINES, LINES!!!! Ironically, Colin seemed to more off-book than anyone. Alex is all right as well. Ali and Halimah are driving me crazy. They can't seem to remember what goes where and were completely in their heads the entire night. All I could tell them is that they better spend the thanksgiving vacation buried in their scripts. It is hard to keep my patience because we will never move forward until they know the material. I am trying really hard not to lash out at them but still hold them accountable. I look at the past shows and wonder if every director has had this problem or just me. I think need a drink. They are supposed to begin work on the set over vacation so I am excited to see that start coming together.

November 27

To my surprise, not much was done on the set over vacation. I don't know what happened, but I am concerned since the schedule was tight to begin with. I can't get a hold of Shannon to find out. I left a message with Joseph as well. We ran part 2 tonight. Things went better, but I still am struggling with Ali and Halimah. Neither of them are near owning their work and I don't feel they have a clear idea of where to go with the character. Ali admitted that she feels so disconnected from everyone and doesn't quite see the essential need of her character. Neither of us wants the character to come off as whiny. I told her that I don't see her as complaining, but in search of the answers why. She wants to change. I am beginning to see more with Molly regarding Young Magda's internal struggle. Max still seems a bit out of it. I am not quite sure what to do there. I think if his level of concentration grows, he will be there. Tomorrow, I need to take him aside and express my concerns.

November 28

We worked the first 20 pages and much to my surprise, it is beginning to look like a story. Colin is working very hard and is beginning to look less and less awkward. It has been brought to my attention that he is developing a crush on Molly so I want to be careful. Again, I told Molly to be nice (it is now becoming a running joke, but one that I am serious about). Ali and Halimah were better tonight. I am encouraged. I finally

spoke with Shannon and she told me that she was in hell week of another show and felt that it would be better to concentrate on that and get it done so she could focus on this show, rather than trying to do both at the same time. I understand that thinking, but I don't know how she is going to accomplish it. Joseph is very concerned. This pushes his work back as well. He is out of town with family and is expecting to be able to hang and focus when he gets back. I have to remember to keep breathing.

November 29

We worked the next section, and I have a headache the size of Manhattan. It was incredibly hard to focus tonight and I fear I might be coming down with something. What rotten timing. To be honest, I am not sure how tonight went. I am in a fog. I need some sleep.

November 30

Pages 39-81 tonight. I am sick. I am running a fever and ache. I need to be here for everyone and am frustrated that I feel this way. It is the first night of hell week and we have a lot of work ahead of us. They made some progress on the set, but not enough. I fear that I am not going to get any time on it before we open. Shannon assured me we would be in by Monday. I don't see how, but I don't see what good it will do to come down on her. She has always done good work in the past so I need to trust her. I am not so sure Joseph agrees. The rehearsal was mixed. I am seeing moments of brilliance, together with moments of lapse of consciousness. Max was really surprising tonight. He found moments that have never been there. He is really trying hard to concentrate. I made sure to tell him I was happy with his work tonight. Alex is doing great and really finding depth. Halimah is finding her character. Ali is making excuses. Colin is still working hard, and Molly is doing a great job. I am not sure what to think. We open in less than a week. I am excited, and frightened at the same time. I feel completely incompetent as a director. I can't let it show.

December 1

We ran the entire show tonight. I needed to see where the holes in the boat were, which are many I fear. The scenes with Molly and Colin are actually in good shape. Colin is really beginning to impress me. He is really starting to let go and letting it take him for a ride. Alex and Halimah are really beginning to click, but I still don't feel confident that we have Old Magda's journey yet. I feel the whole thing still feels a bit fragmented. Lines are still being mixed up and I can't do anything with that. Ali seems rather angry and I am not sure if she is just frustrated with herself, or she is angry with me. We need to talk soon. She asked if she could leave early on Tuesday's rehearsal because it was her birthday, she was turning 18, and she wanted to get a tattoo. I told her I cannot guarantee anything at this point, and that it was two days before opening. I was disappointed that she would even ask.

December 2

Today was a very long day. I sent Bobbie, my stage manager, home with a 103-degree fever. I am still sick myself. We started with working on the rough spots before our scheduled run-through that afternoon. I now love Colin. Of all the actors, he is the hardest working. Max is also come a long way and is beginning to find more and more moments. Halimah struggled today, but I know is trying. The run through was okay, but only okay. We are still struggling to find the arc of the story and tying the stories together. I changed the blocking in the last scene, which seemed to work better. Kyle has been sitting in on rehearsals to get a feel for the play, but I have yet to get the music from my brother, which he has to learn. He promised I would have it by tomorrow. Ali and Halimah are still mixing up their lines. I don't know what else to do. I feel a bit disjointed as well, being pulled in to deal with set issues, while rehearsal was going on. Luckily, Deepika was able to keep things together.

December 3

I have no idea how the set is going to be finished by tomorrow. I am very concerned and I let Shannon and Joseph know it as nicely as I could. I don't want to lose it but I am quite worried. The Metamorphosis seemed to run so smoothly, and Shannon was set designer for that production. She is overextended. I wish I could help. I had to let my concerns go for a while I so I could focus on my work. Bobbie is still sick, but is going to try to tough it out. I told her if she needed to go, she could because I don't want to risk losing her for the run. I felt that today was critical and hopefully a turning point. I was right. Rehearsal went very well and felt that finally, we just might be performance ready by opening night. I hate when things come together so late, but I am so thankful they are. I still am concerned for Ali and feel she is getting in her own way. I know she doesn't want to look like a fool out there, but she doesn't seem at all confident in any of her choices. Funny thing is that I think her choices are good, but she just needs to commit to them. She asked me again about Tuesday night and I told her I wouldn't know until then. I am still waiting to hear from my brother regarding the music. The set is still far behind and now can see it will not be ready for tomorrow. Some of the design students of confided in me that they feel frustrated with Shannon. I didn't want to take sides, but it was nice to see students want more. They felt they have not put enough time into it and think it could be better. If they feel that way, then we have done our job right. That is the only thing helping me keep my sanity right now. I am not really happy with the tree house but fear it is far too late to say anything. For being such a central image of the show, it seems rather shabby to me. This doesn't match her renderings. At this point, I have to let it go. It pains me to no end. This is my thesis. I am not sure where she is at with this show. I have seen her work and know she is much better than this. She was my costume designer for Antigone and that went very smooth. At this point, I have no clue when my actors will be able to get on the set. I am just trying to stay positive and collected. Joseph began the light hang with the help of Vinnie, who comes in time to time to help out. We were able to get the extra dimmers, which was a lifesaver. I trust Joseph completely and am satisfied with his color choices. I can't wait to see it on a completed stage.

December 4

The light hang continued today, without any problems. Bobbie is a trooper and completely dedicated. She still feels lousy. I received the music files from my brother this morning. I burned a CD immediately to give to Kyle. He said he would have it learned by tomorrow, but would need to go home tonight to work on it. I agreed. The design students are still very frustrated but I try to keep their heads in the game. I figured the actors would be frustrated with not being able to get on the set, but they stayed positive which was good. Colin is awesome. I cannot believe the change he has made since he began. Although we have some more to go, I couldn't be any happier with him. Halimah was so much better tonight and really beginning to own it. I wish it happened earlier. Max has surprised me. He was wonderful tonight. Is this the same Max? It is amazing what they can accomplish when they stay focused. Ali still seemed a bit off. I told her that letting her go tomorrow night was not likely, and that we still have a lot of work ahead of us for the next two days. She left rehearsal very upset. She came back about an hour later to talk to me. The conversation, discussion, argument, or whatever it was, was intense. She proceeded to tell me that she feels I have left her out there to fail and that she was not enjoying it one bit. I told her if she wanted out, then I would give it to her, but would need an answer now. I also told her I cast her for a reason, and that I didn't want anyone else in the role. I also told her that she is getting in her own way and that she needs to let herself go and trust herself. She finally admitted that she felt incompetent and didn't trust herself. I finally calmed her down and told her that I trust her. It is now midnight. I told her she could take the hour she wanted tomorrow night but that she needed to just let go of her fears. We will see what happens tomorrow.

December 5

Kyle showed up with all the music ready to go. Wow! The set is still in progress so we had to work in the auditorium again. At this point, I just want them to do whatever it takes to finish it. The lights look good. The "dress rehearsal" went well considering it wasn't really a dress rehearsal. Ali seemed in a much better state of mind tonight, which helped. Everyone seemed to be very focused but I know that they are very anxious to get on the set. Surprisingly, they seem understanding. Me, not so much. But I don't want to show it. As of now, I am happy with the actors. I feel we have a story to tell. Will I have a set to tell it on?

December 6

Still no set to work on. I don't even know what to say anymore. I have to keep it together. The run through went well, but there are a couple of spots that I feel need cleaning up. Mainly blocking that is still bugging me. I am worried that everything is going to change once we get on the set. To be honest, I am completely terrified. We open tomorrow night. How is this all going to work? All I can do is pray.

December 7

The set is finally finished, or at least workable. The design students don't feel satisfied with the final product. There are a lot of little things left unfinished, but I have to take what I can get. At least they can see it. We started a dress rehearsal at 3:30 and barely had enough time to get ready for the show. This was the only chance I had to tape. The lights look fantastic. Things are a bit chaotic but I tried to hold it together. That seems to be a running theme. We tried to fix some blocking issues that seemed to be okay in the run-throughs but just didn't work on the set. We didn't really have enough time. I usually am one to let go once the show opens, but there still are things I need to fix knowing there is more at stake. Deepika gave me a present. I asked why before the show. "I think you need it." I opened it up and it was a flask. In an earlier rehearsal, I turned to her and told her I just needed to start drinking heavily, obviously joking. She picked it up without a beat. I laughed. The show went fairly well considering. The audience was light, which is typical for a Thursday, but not for an opening. I was afraid the actors would be so tired from doing a run-through prior but they seemed to hold up fairly well. I would give it a B. Not bad considering the circumstances. But I think there can be more give and take with each other. Colin seems to be having a problem with rushing lines when he gets upset. I don't know if it is nerves but I brought it to his attention. All in all, I am happy with their work, but know we still can push it to the next level. The main thing is that I want them to get rest.

December 8

Lackluster performance. After repeated warnings that each night has to stand on its own, they let their guard down. Low energy all around. Cues were slow and sluggish. I gave them a C-. They know. Some of the blocking seemed to get mixed up as well. Overall, it came across as muddy. I felt like calling them in for another rehearsal but think it would be counterproductive. I have to learn to let go. Good news is that Ali was accepted to NYU in theatre. She was ecstatic and her level of confidence improved. She still is not where I want her to be. I feel it is my fault for not getting her there.

December 9

I can't seem to kick this flu. I felt lousy all night. I want to be there for everyone but have little energy. Despite it all, the show went better tonight. It is melding together and will probably be where I want it to be by closing night. Why do things have to come together so late? Colin made some new choices, which I liked. He is finding nuances that weren't there before. He and Molly are working off of each other nicely. Halimah gave a good performance tonight. Some tears in the audience. One gentleman came up to me after the show to tell me that he was impressed with the chosen material, and that he was extremely moved by the story. They did their job tonight! I am concerned about some blocking that seems to have shifted. They needed more time on the set. Perhaps I can address them during the next couple of days. I need to get some sleep.

December 11

I gathered the cast together to discuss a pick-up rehearsal, but due to too many conflicts, I found it impossible to do. Plus, others are coming down with the flu and don't want to lose them. I think it better that they take care of things they have neglected and try to get rest, than to push them. I expressed my concern on blocking issues and can only hope they internalize the notes.

December 13

I'm still sick!!!!!! I really hope I am not passing it on. The cast was nervous a bit due to the days off, but I am glad they are. Better nervous than not, I tell them. Bobbie seemed to still be battling a relapse. Small audience tonight. Their performance was a B. Although I felt the story was told, it was lacking urgency. Ali came across as unusually whiny tonight and was extremely upset at intermission. Bobbie told me that I needed to check on her. It turned out, her father came late and was stuck behind the tree house for the first couple of scenes. When she approached the tree house in one of her monologues, he kept waving at her. I told her that in didn't show, that she kept her focus well, and to let it go. She held it together for the second act. Parents! Blocking is still weird at spots. I don't know what changed but this is not how it looked in rehearsals. I feel a little frustrated because I gave them the notes, but they seem to not understand. They have done a lot of work in arena and thrust so I am not sure why they are having trouble. I gave them the notes again. Due to Academy classes after school, there is absolutely no time to work things out and I tell them that I trust them. Scott is coming in two more days. I am nervous.

December 14

Once again, a very small audience. I can't help but feel a bit disappointed and I know it is beginning to affect the actors. Pam (principal) was supposed to come, didn't. She has come to every other production so far. Figured she would miss mine. I really don't think she likes me. I still feel lousy. Molly came to me to tell me she was not feeling well, and was wondering if she should kiss Colin out of fear of getting him sick. He told me he didn't want to change anything and that it would definitely affect the story. We all agreed to keep things as is. I think Colin felt that it was a small price to pay for kissing Molly. Puppy love! I am nervous that Scott is going to be here tomorrow. I don't feel satisfied with my work. It has nothing to do with my students, or staff, although I don't like the set, to be completely honest. I feel like there are so many holes that were never fixed. It's my fault. I can't help but feel that Scott is going to think I suck as a director. All in all, tonight's performance went better than I expected considering all the illness going around. The blocking shift is still bugging me but feel that it is a lost cause. How many times can I give the note? The only one I would accept an excuse from is Colin, since this is his first show. However, there were moments of brilliance tonight, as well and I cannot fixate on the negative. Halimah and Ali were stronger than they have ever been, and I am very proud of Colin and Max. They have come a long way! I love Alex to death and am so glad to be working with her. We did have some lighting issues

tonight. The board crashed in the middle of the scene. We couldn't figure out what happened. They got the board back up and we continued. Some of the timings and levels for the crossfades seem to have changed. I told Joseph and Bobbie that we should take a look at them directly after school to fix them. I can't believe, after six years, Scott will be here tomorrow night and the lights decide to protest!

December 16

I came in to fix the lighting cues and found a major problem. There were certain channels that would not shut off. I couldn't believe it. Of course it would be my just my luck that I would have lighting issues on the day my advisor is coming. I called Joseph to get his advice. I tried everything but could not seem to figure it out. Bobbie and I cleared the board and reloaded the show, but still it didn't work. I called David (former student who works for ETC) and he gave me some stuff to try. NOTHING! I am completely screwed. These lights cannot remain on for the entire show, and I cannot cut them off. At the last minute, David came in to go through the entire system and readdress the dimmers. MAGIC! Thank you David! He tells me it was just a glitch. We finally figured out what happened last night. The main power strip the board was plugged into came loose, so the board lost power. I was relieved that it wasn't an internal malfunction. We were able to fix the cues. I am a nervous wreck. I am still sick. Bobbie is very sick. Molly is very sick. They were all nervous because they knew my advisor was coming. I stepped outside the theatre right before the house opened to greet Scott and Autumn Brown. It was nice to see both of them. I sat on across from Scott. My head is completely a mess and I didn't want to be constantly sniffing next to him. I tried to avoid watching him all night for his reaction because that only would make me more nervous. The show went well for the most part and the lights all worked. I found out that Molly was throwing up between scenes. She never let it show. Bobbie was almost dead but was going to hit that cue if it was the last thing she did. I admire their dedication. I spoke with Amber afterwards, and she gave me a boost of confidence. Afterwards, I assembled the cast together to meet Scott. He proceeded to give them his honest opinion. They ask him how he liked it, and he responds with, "It was alright." I agree. It was just all right. He pointed out the blocking issues, and that there was too much "back." It seems the blocking shifted to favor one side over the other because from where I was sitting, it was quite open. I didn't direct it this way but had to accept the criticism because he was right. Alex came up to me afterwards to express that she was sorry he hated it. I asked her why she thought so. "It was alright means he didn't like it." I told her that his job was to come in and critique. If he was just there to enjoy the show, he might have had a different experience. I also said that there were a lot of little things that never got addressed due to time, and that it could have been a stronger production. However, I am very proud of her, of the rest of the cast and crew, and that I am in no way disappointed in them. Quite the contrary. I appreciate the honesty and don't need any sugarcoating. It never got to the level of my expectations, but it was, in no means, a failure. We are all taking something away from this.

December 16


Closing night. My wife came tonight. This is the first show in a while she was able to make and I am glad she was there. There was a bigger audience, but still no sell out. I cannot believe it is over. Tomorrow we will begin the cathartic "strike." Closing night is always bittersweet. I have come to love this material and have to say goodbye. The performance was perhaps their strongest. I feel a mixture of pride for my students, and disappointment in myself. I didn't meet my own expectations. I love my kids and wouldn't trade them for the world. But why did they wait to learn their lines so late? What could I have done to help them? And the blocking. How could that have changed so drastically since getting in the space? I can't help but think it is my entire fault. But tonight I must put myself aside and celebrate my students. There is plenty of time later to deal with my own neurosis.

December 17

Strike. On one hand, it is sad to say goodbye to something that has consumed you for so long. On the other, it is nice to be able to begin all over again. After only 5 hours, the set is gone and there is no trace of the show except for leftover programs and posters. Amazing how quickly it all comes down when it took so long to put it up. It is scary in a way. I said a momentary goodbye to everyone at the end of the day, and goodbye forever to the show. Then I went home.

**CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
THEATRE ARTS GRADUATE PROGRAM**

THESIS PROJECT/ PRODUCTION PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

STUDENT- Darryl Hovis **ID#-** 
UNDER CONSIDERATION IS DIRECTION OF: Treehouses
EVALUATOR'S NAME: Scott Robinson
PLACE OF PERFORMANCE: Culver City High School Black Box
DATE OF VIEWING: December 14, 2006
DESCRIPTION OF PERFORMANCE VENUE:
Small black box theatre space.

**DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTUAL PRODUCTION DIRECTION AND/OR REALIZED
DESIGN OF SETS, PROPS, COSTUMES, LIGHTING, SOUND:**

The proximity of the lighting units make the effect difficult. Often they were simply too close to be effective and were almost a distraction e.i. the tree house

The paint treatment of the floor was very nicely done.

The lattice work behind the audience was used in a very effective way to set mood, time of day, and place.

The lighting effects for the bright sunshine was very nicely done and created very nice sculpting of the actors.

Transitions were called early but happened very often. The transitions need to follow the actor whether the actor is early or late we can not have the light shift early just because the actor does not move.

The live violin player was really lovely. Nice moments with that.

The strobe did not work for me. Very out of place in what seemed to be established.

The placement of the music box speaker was awkward.

**APPROPRIATENESS OF CHOICE OF SCRIPT FOR ABILITIES OF PERFORMERS,
AUDIENCE, VENUE, AND/OR ACADEMIC SETTING?**

The show was possibly more difficult than expected. The performers did a fine job with the material and were overall excellent. They lacked some of the live depth that is needed for this piece.

The space was well used and was an excellent venue for the intimacy required of the play.

ADDRESS THE FOLLOWING IF APPLICABLE: CLEAR DELINEATION OF UNITS OF ACTION, MOTIVATED BLOCKING, VISUALLY INTERESTING COMPOSITION, VISUAL EXPRESSION OF METAPHOR, USE OF PICTURIZATION IN STORYTELLING, CLEAR AND BELIEVABLE CHARACTERIZATION, ADEQUATE USE OF BODY AND VOICE, UNITY OF PRODUCTION ELEMENTS, CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING.

Very much enjoyed the blind casting and it worked quite well for me in this play

Actors seemed often pinned in corners/vom's with no where to go. Old Magda needs additional movement to help keep us focused toward her.

Blocked for a thrust stage but in reality were in the round was left with backs very often.

Old Magda and the boy had some very nice moments with great pacing and nicely paced.

The dialect work in the play was difficult and hard to capture for these actors the English/Irish accent of the attendant seems almost Jamaican at times.

The boys struggle with sleep was very nice and read well.

Young Madga nice save with the egg. Very nice follow up and picked up cues very well She could truly be in the moment.

Young Madga looks for thoughts in the barn and need to show us she found them the reaction moment was not there.

Picturization in the this configuration was to static. Again seems blocked in thrust yet was truly and in the round audience configuration.

The boy's recoil with the salt water on the wound was wonderful. But what reaction should we get from Young Madga.

If you are going o waltz you must waltz, was very awkward.

Old Madga standing and not in the wheel chair works better for action, sightlines and overall blocking

Very nice build with the rising action toward the end of the show especially at the swing.

WITHIN THE CONFINES OF THIS PARTICULAR PERFORMANCE VENUE, WAS THIS PRODUCTION SATISFACTORY OR UNSATISFACTORY?

Very Satisfactory

Final Self Evaluation

I have mixed feelings about my direction of Treehouses. On one hand, it was an incredible experience to watch my students tackle such potent material and see them make the connections to their own lives. Each of them, in their own way, found growth not only in their craft, but also as individuals. I also believe that this production helped the actors, designers, and technicians reach new plateaus, which was inspiring. On the other hand, the production had its share of issues ranging from unachieved expectations to technical issues. Each of these presented opportunities to grow as artists, whether they were resolved or not. Each issue became a learning experience that will serve us in each future production. In that sense, directing Treehouses was very cathartic for me. Most of the goals I had set for students, as well as the creative team, and myself were accomplished. Those that weren't gave rise to constructive discussion. In the end, none of these weaknesses diminished the positive accomplishments of everyone involved.

One of the goals I had set for my students was a greater understanding of the Holocaust and its impact on the individual psyche. So much of their exposure has been focused on the horrific deaths of the Jewish people, but few learn about what some non-Jews went through to help save them from death. For this reason, I think that Treehouses served as a great vehicle to spark dialogue. Through historical research and discussion, the students were able to heighten their awareness of these issues and, as a result, had a better grasp on the psychological impulses and the identity shifts these people went through due to the extreme circumstances they were living under. What fascinated me even more was that this conversation was not just limited to production members, but

included parents and community members as well. For a month after the production, I received phone calls and emails from people who wanted to speak to me about the content of the show. As a director, I feel elated that the story had a longer lasting effect than I originally expected. It is this that I worked so hard for, and it allowed me to overlook my shortcomings.

Another goal was to work together to create a cohesive, professional level theatrical production. I feel we did achieve this on many levels, but fell short on a few. Technically, the lighting played a major role in the storytelling, and I was very satisfied with the work Joseph and his crew of design students did. With the extra purchased equipment, we were able to accomplish what I had hoped, which was to create a different feel for the world of each of the characters. Lighting the tree house as well as the barn presented a challenge due to the short throw in the theatre. Again, I felt that Joseph handled that well. The major area that we fell short in was in the design and execution of the set. Right from the beginning, there were questions as to who the actual designer was going to be. Looking back, I should have made an earlier decision on whether Resa should or should not design the set. This may have given Shannon enough time to work out her schedule conflicts. In addition, the constant evolution of the set from thrust, to arena, to alley, to the final configuration presented limitations. Again, a commitment to a decision should have been made at the first or second design meeting. I will have to admit that one of my weaknesses as a director is making an absolute decision. Sometimes I begin to second-guess myself, rather than trusting my impulse. Another reason the set never really saw full completion was the fact that Shannon's schedule was impacted. There were a lot of elements left undone and little things not taken care of.

For example, there are certain parts of the room, such as vents and brick walls, that tend to make the space look more like a classroom rather than a theatre. These were not completely masked. This distracted from the overall look of the set, thus making it more difficult for audience members to forget they are in a “classroom” and enter the world of the play. Many of the design students were not satisfied completely with the end result, which, at the very least, is an indication that they know the attention is in the details. In addition, the complications with the build allowed very little time for the actors to adapt to the set. As much as we tried to recreate the set in the rehearsal space, there is always a learning curve once the actors get on the stage. Blocking was most effected as I saw a shift occur through the run of the show. This resulted in a favoring of one side of the audience over another. I feel that given the proper time on the set, a lot of this could have been avoided. However, after much discussion with Joseph after the show, I realize that insetting the upstage audience risers worked against me in that it became difficult to block the show in a true thrust, which would have served the production best.

I have always pushed for truth and honesty in acting. It was important to me that the students were able to identify with each character on a personal level. Through much character development and analysis, every actor had moments of brilliance. The character of Old Magda presented a major challenge in that we did not want to fall into the trap of playing age which no one would believe, as opposed to bringing the spine of the character to life. In spite of my early complications with Halimah, I felt good about her final performance. However, I do believe she could have taken it to the next level, however, had she not been so discouraged in the beginning. Another major hurdle was the replacing of Norman with Colin, as Stephen. Considering

that the pool of male actors was small due to the other production, I felt I had to take a chance and follow my hunch. It paid off. In the short amount of time Colin had to prepare the role, he was able to grow the most. I was constantly impressed with his professionalism, dedication, and work ethic. Max surprised me quite a bit in the end as well. In earlier rehearsals, I had my doubts, but he was able to come to the place he needed to portray the vulnerability and courage of the character. Molly was the anchor of the cast. Her enthusiasm, dedication, and generosity held everyone together. I depended the most on her to get us through the recasting challenge, and she did so with flying colors. There was some discussion in the casting session, as well as postproduction, as to whether casting Young and Old Magda with both Caucasian and African-American actors would interfere with the clarity of the story. Being a strong believer in racially blind casting, I feel comfortable and standby the decision that was made. I love watching Alexandria on the stage because she makes it look easy. I was very impressed with her ability to take what many would consider a minor character, and bring depth and profound emotion to it. The actor that I was most frustrated by was Ali. I have no idea why she fought herself, and my direction, throughout the rehearsal process. She is a much better actress than this and I feel that she was not able to find the spine of the character. Eva is what drew me in upon my first reading of Treehouses, but when watching the final performances, her character seemed so detached from the story as a whole, often coming across as whiny or self-indulgent. This, I feel, is a great shame. I can't help but think that there is something more I could have done to break her out of the pit she dug herself into because I know what she is capable of.

Another obstacle was the procrastination of actors in learning their lines on time. This was a hindrance in that it did not give us enough time to adequately play with the material. Each of the characters has so much depth, and there is danger in only playing the surface. The students fought me tooth and nail over spending so much time on table readings and discussions, but by doing that, we were able to pull so much more out of the script to use as a foundation for our work. Unfortunately, some of that never made it to the stage. I will admit, however, that some of that was due to a shortened rehearsal schedule due to the other show. In addition, the limitations of rehearsing show after students have been through seven hours of traditional classes, in addition to two hours of Academy classes, takes its toll on the efficiency of the work. Many times, the students were tired from going nonstop, with little time to eat. Unfortunately, there was little flexibility in the scheduling of rehearsals.

As I look back on Treehouses, I can definitely say that I have learned quite a bit about myself as a director, as a teacher, and as a person. When I first decided on the play, I was attracted to the subject, having a degree in history, and the language. What pulled me in was the individual story of each character, and how they ultimately became intertwined. The challenges that each character had to face became a reflection of our own lives. How were we going to bring that to life for the audience? Despite the tragic events that occur in the play, how are we going to show that it is full of hope? It is unfortunate that many, like Magda, may never know the tremendous impact they have on others. I consider myself extremely blessed. Not only do I see it everyday in my students, I see the impact they have on me.

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***THEATRE
REVIEW***

NEVILLE DEAN

**Wartime
drama a
certain hit**

*Treehouses, Northcott
Theatre, Exeter*

EVENING HERALD
March 2001

Play explores love

Treehouses,
Northcott Theatre,
Exeter

BILL STONE



incubation

VOL 24.08 APRIL 20 - MAY 3 2000

TREEHOUSES
at the Peacock Theatre

Play brought vividly to life by fine cast

Review: Treehouses by
Elizabeth Kuti, Northcott
Theatre, Exeter

John Clamp

March 22, 2001

THE STAGE

INCORPORATING TELEVISION TODAY

Exeter

Treehouses

Allen Saddler

THE STAGE, MARCH 22, 2001.

Treehouses must
not be missed

Tamsin Evans

PLYMOUTH EXTRA

22nd March 2001

A flawless performance tells tale of what could have been

JANE ROWE

A PASSIONATE PLAY ABOUT THE CHOICES WE MAKE

Treehouses

By Elizabeth Kutl

Peacock Theatre

Reviewed by Olivia Kelly

THE IRISH TIMES, THURSDAY, APRIL 13, 2000

Treehouses
Peacock Theatre

come together only at the end
of the second act in a cleverly
worked arrangement. It is

Gerry Colgan

● *Runs until May 13th. To
book phone 01-8787222*

Sunday Independent ♦ Sunday, April 23, 2000

Linked in web of Jewish identity

theatre

Emer O'Kelly

Review

**Sombre sprint down
memory lane**

TREEHOUSES
The Peacock

- Luke Clancy

THE STAGE, APRIL 20, 2000

Dublin

Treehouses

Deirdre Green

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PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG GIRL FROM THE WARSAW GHETTO
by Gania (Gela) Sekszstajn-Lichtensztajn

TREE TRUNKS by John Constable

Please note: Content on this page was redacted due to copyright concerns.

Cast of Treehouses



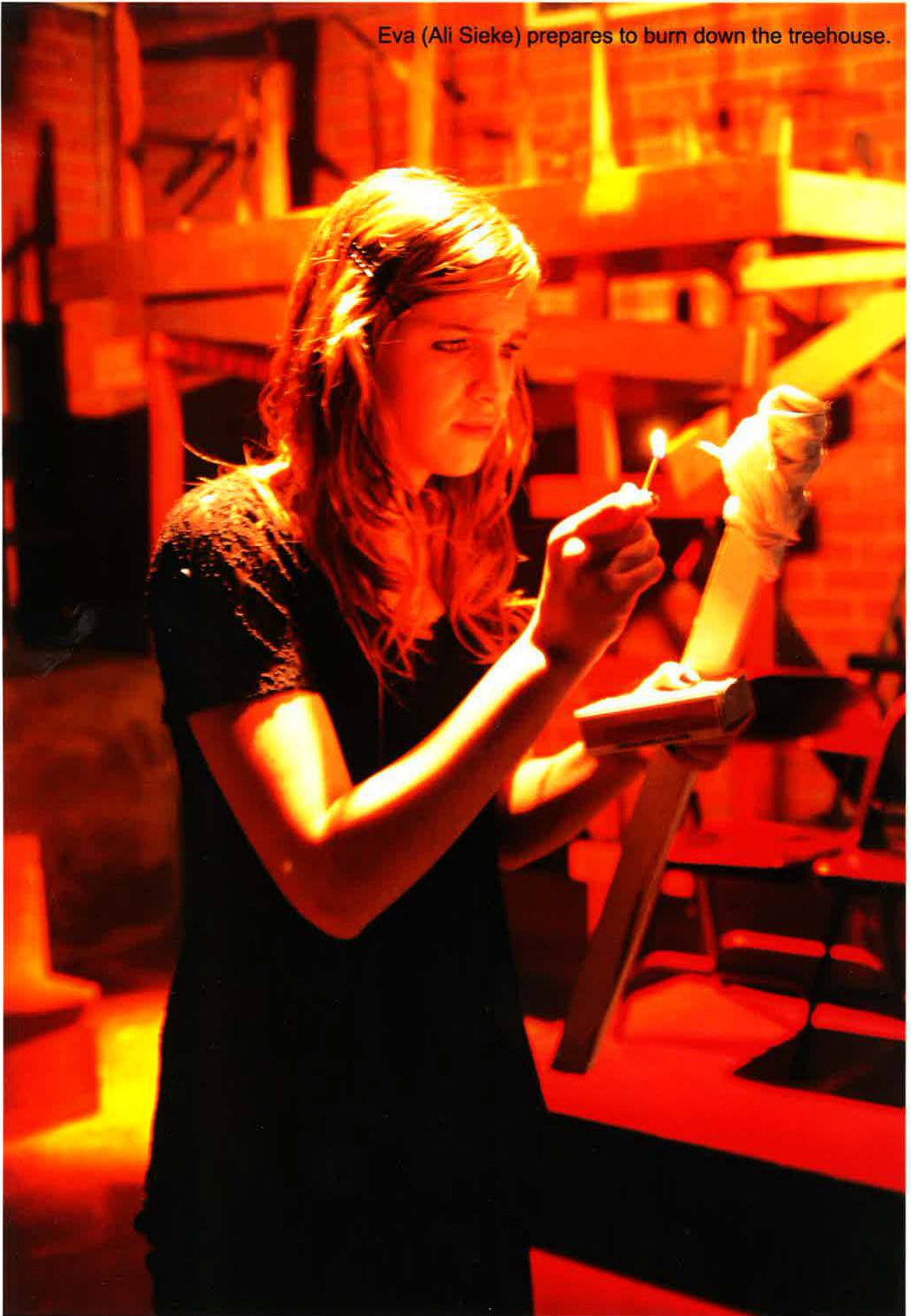
Eva (Ali Sieke) discovers the music box



Young Magda (Molly Clancy) and Stephen (Colin Stanley)



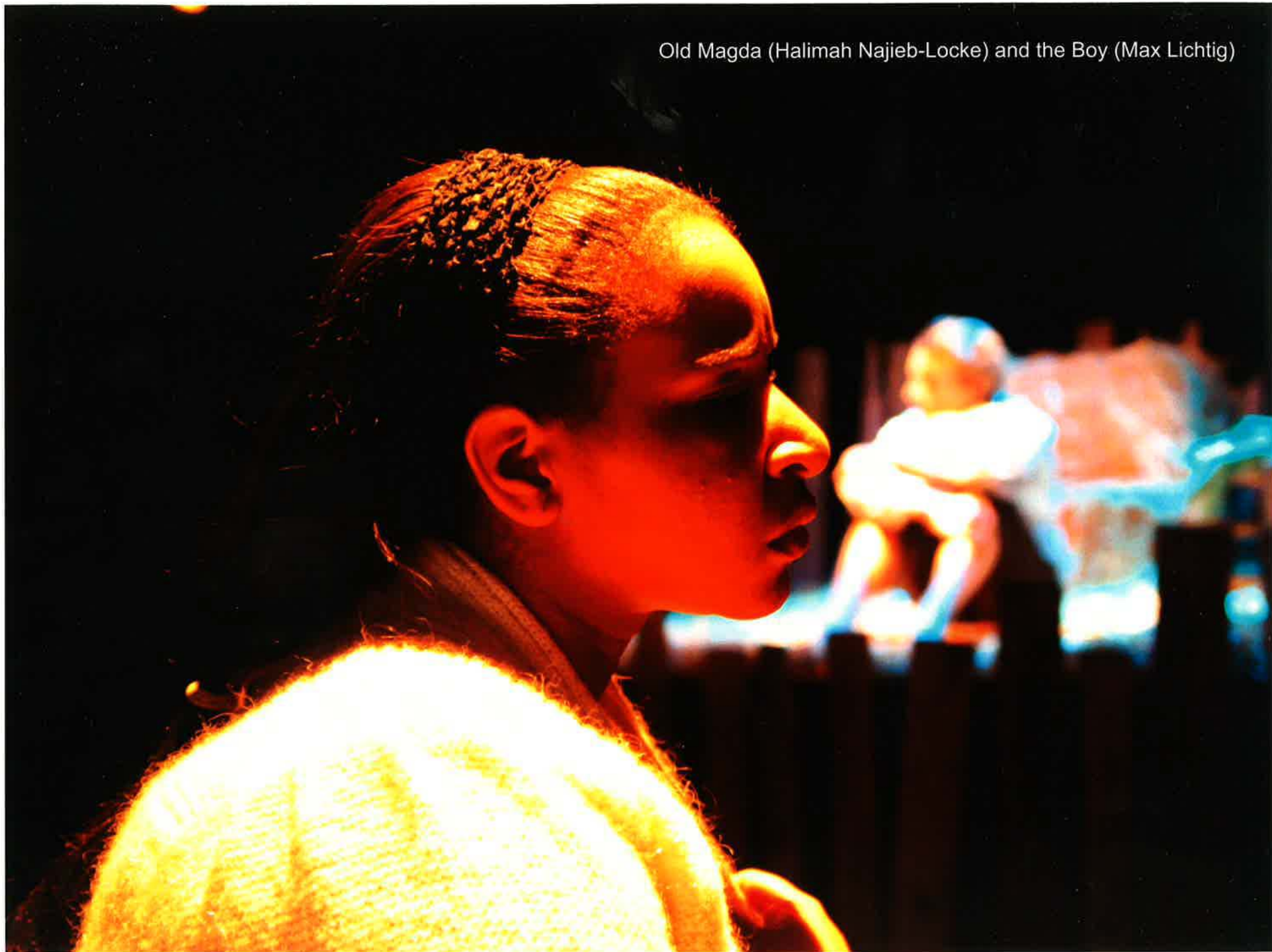
Eva (Ali Sieke) prepares to burn down the treehouse.



Old Magda (Halimah Najieb-Locke)



Old Magda (Halimah Najieb-Locke) and the Boy (Max Lichtig)



Kyle Murphy



Stephen (Colin Stanley) and Young Magda (Molly Clancy)



Old Magda (Halimah Najieb-Locke) remembers the Boy



Young Magda (Molly Clancy) reflects on the Boy (Max Lichtig)



Stephen (Colin Stanley) confronts the Boy (Max Lichtig)



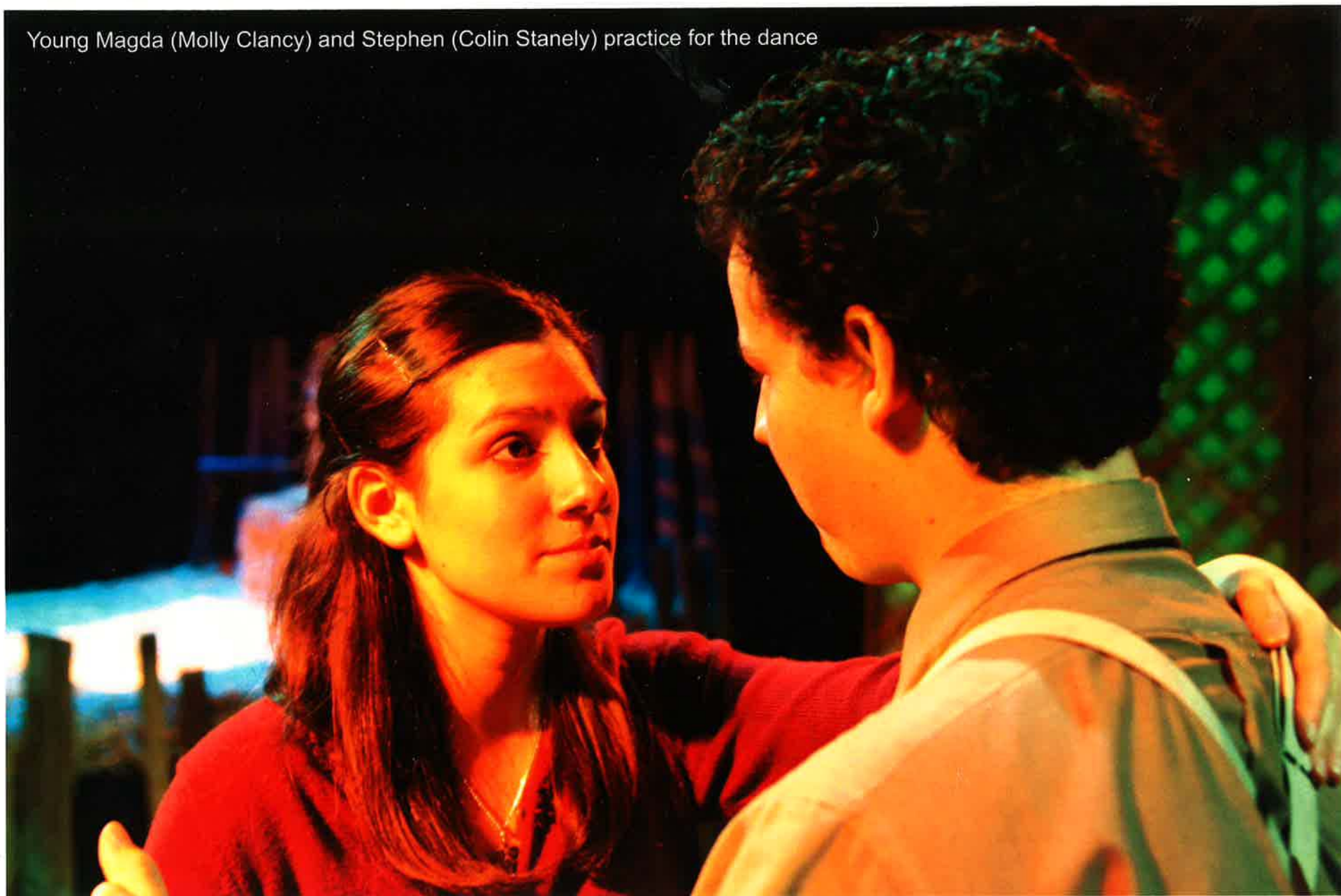
The Boy (Max Lichtig) stands up to Stephen (Colin Stanley)



Ger (Alexandria Richardson) tries to comfort Old Magda (Halimah Najieb-Locke)



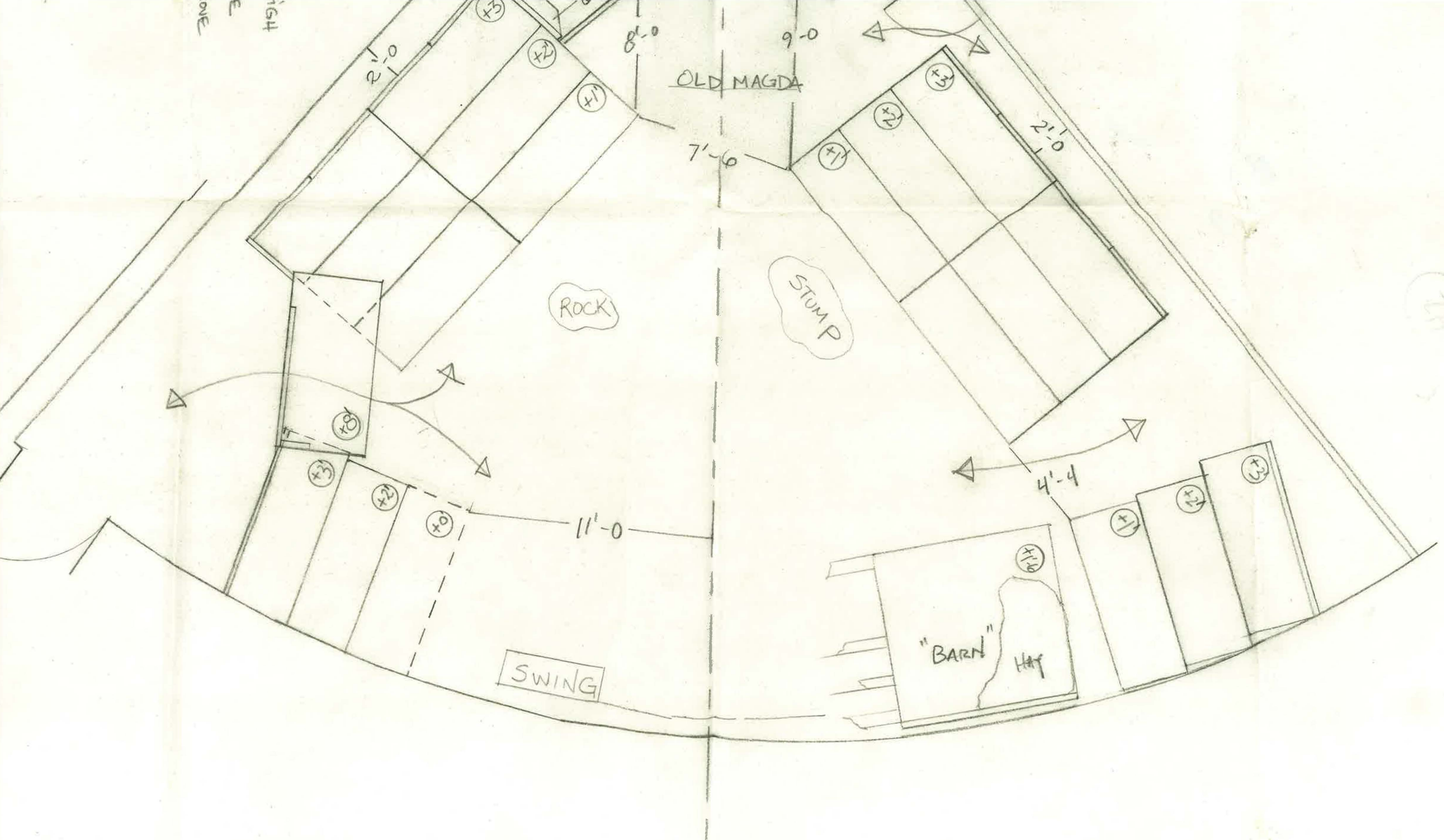
Young Magda (Molly Clancy) and Stephen (Colin Stanely) practice for the dance





RIGHT
E
ONE

OLD MAGDA



17
17

the culver city academy of visual & performing arts
presents
a blurred vision theatre co. production



treehouses
by elizabeth kuti

december 7-16, 2006

the CULVER CITY ACADEMY of
VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS
presents
a BLURRED VISION THEATRE CO.
production

treehouses

by elizabeth kuti

directed by D.B. HOVIS
assistant directed by DEEPIKA SINGAMSETTY
staged managed by BOBBIE WELCH
set design by SHANNON A. KENNEDY sound design by SAMANTHA SILBERMAN
technical direction and lighting design by JOSEPH HORN
asst. technical direction by HANNAH MATZNER
produced by STACEY WILSON, KAROL MORA, & D.B. HOVIS

featuring
MOLLY CLANCY, MAX LICHTIG, HALIMAH NAJIEB-LOCKE,
ALEXANDRIA RICHARDSON, ALI SIEKE, and COLIN STANLEY

December 7, 8, 9, 13, 14, 15, 16 at 7pm
December 16 at 2pm

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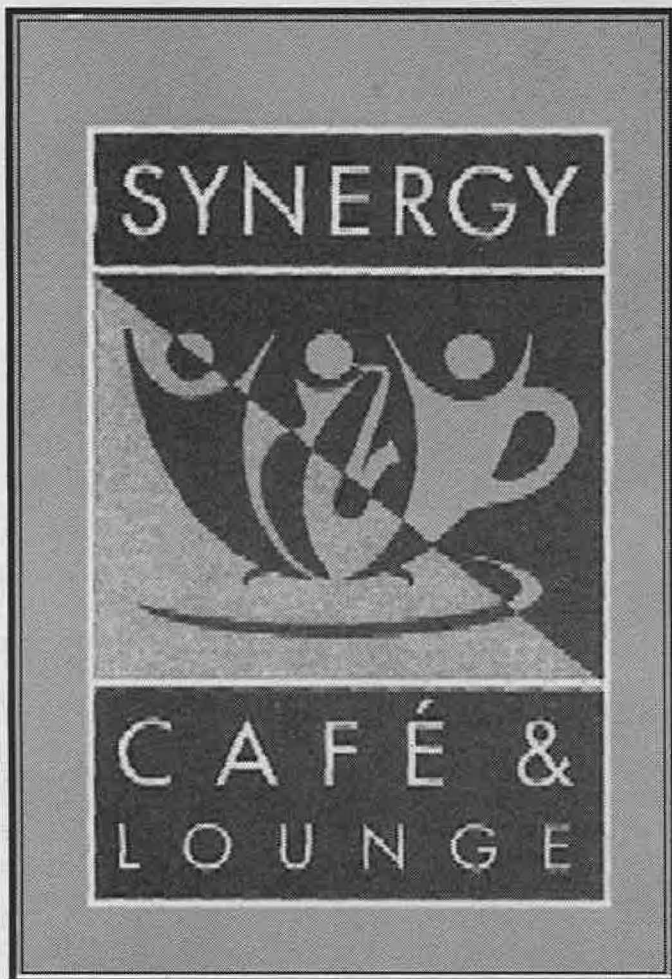


treehouses

by elizabeth kuti

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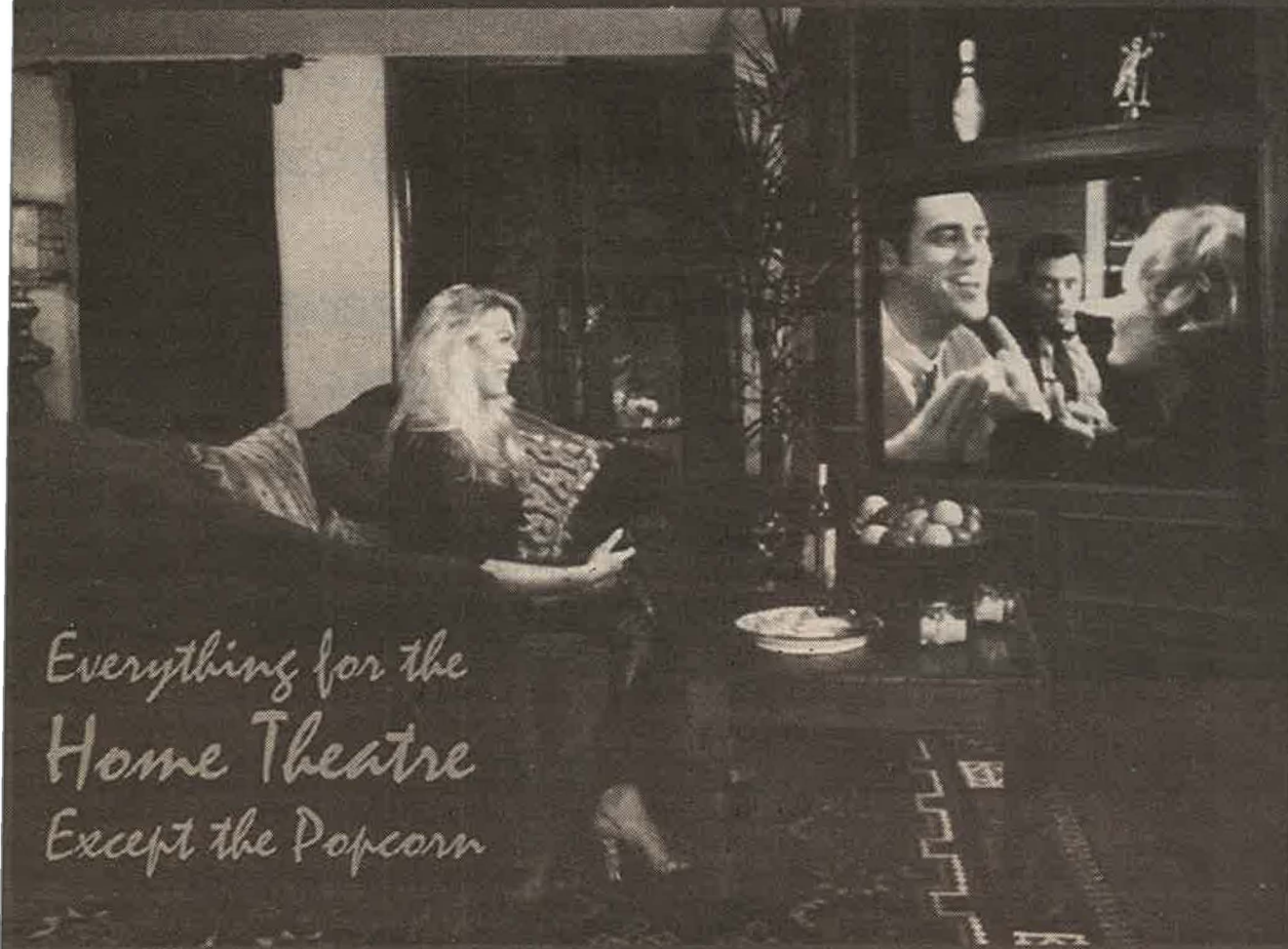
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Treehouses

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AVPA UPCOMING EVENTS

Los Angeles Philharmonic
Free Neighborhood Concert
(Sponsored by Culver City Redevelopment Agency and CCUSD)
Tuesday, Dec. 12, 8 pm, Frost

"Club Evil" - Fall Film Premiere
December (TBD)

Winter Music Concert
Directed by Tony Spano and Lisa Michel
December 20, 7 pm, Frost

Cabaret Night
**"The Great American Songbook, Volume II:
A Night with Judy and Frank"**
Directed by Tony Spano and Lisa Michel
January 18-20, Frost Stage

Scholastic Art and Writing Award
Competition Exhibition at OTIS College
January

The Museum of Contemporary Art
"Skin & Bones" program and exhibition
Nov. 21 through Feb. 13
Opening of SPF: architects - February 4
MOCA

Frost Film Festival
Directed by James Bentley
February 2-3, Frost

Pink Elephant Music Showcase (MY Generation)
Directed by Tony Spano
February 9-10, Frost

Spring Musical Production
"The Cradle Will Rock" by Marc Blitzstein
Directed by Joseph Horn
March 14-17, 21-24, 7 pm, SPoT

Spring Dance Concert
Directed by Cari Ann Shim Sham
April 26-28, Frost

The California African American Museum
Ryman Program
May

Music in the Parks Festival
Saturday, May 12 (Anaheim/Disneyland)

Artworks - Hayden Tract
May

Java Drama Baker's Dozen
May 23-26, Ivy Substation

Spring Music Concert
Directed by Tony Spano and Lisa Michel
May 30, 7 pm, Frost

Spring Film Premiere (16 mm)
June, Sony Pictures Entertainment

Academy Awards
June 9



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the cast and crew of
*Treehouses***

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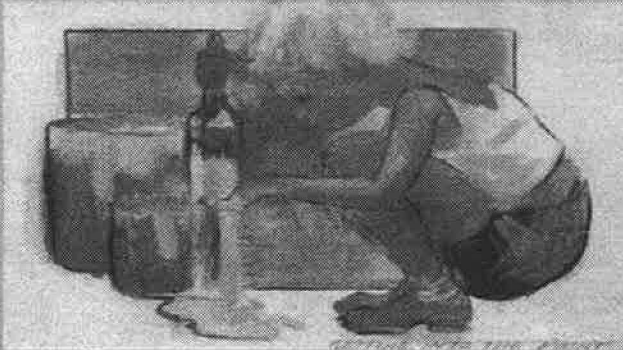
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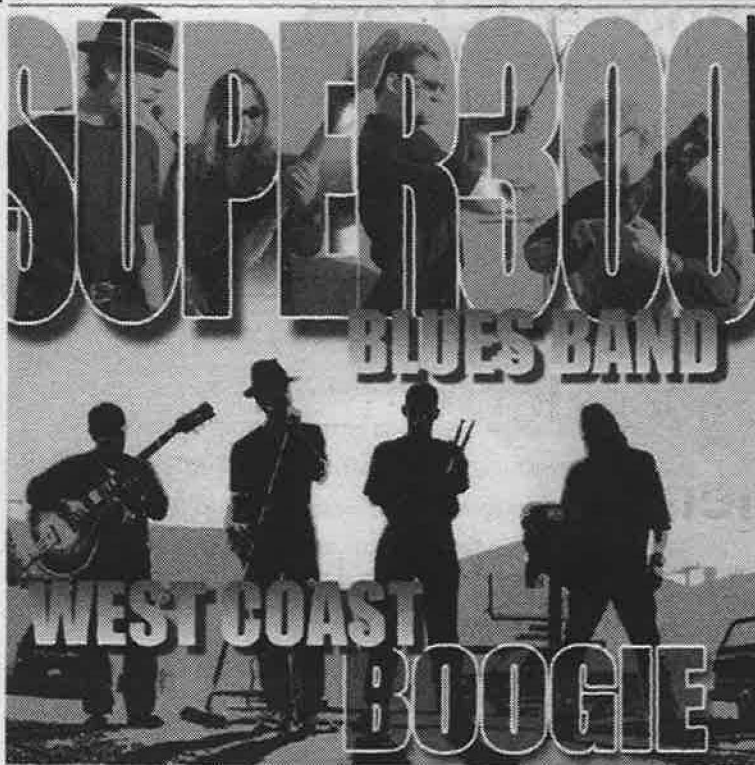
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Mark Sieke
Susan Storm/Jean Lisle
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Brenda Wallace
Henry Welsh

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the CULVER CITY ACADEMY OF VISUAL
& PERFORMING ARTS
presents
a BLURRED VISION THEATRE CO. production

TREEHOUSES

Elizabeth Kuti
Author of the Play

adapted & directed by
D.B. HOVIS

technical direction and lighting design by
JOSEPH HORN
stage manager
BOBBIE WELCH

assistant director
DEEPIKA SINGAMSETTY
assistant technical director
HANNAH MATZNER

produced by
STACEY WILSON, D.B. HOVIS & KAROL MORA

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CAST

Young Magda.....Molly Clancy
Stephen.....Colin Stanley
Boy.....Max Lichtig
Old Magda.....Halimah Najieb-Locke
Ger.....Alexandria Richardson
Eva.....Ali Sieke

PRODUCTION CREW

Technical Director.....Joseph Horn
Assistant Technical Director.....Hannah Matzner
Stage Manager.....Bobbie Welch
Assistant Director.....Deepika Singamsetty
Scenic Designer.....Shannon Kennedy
Scenic Design Assistant.....Lali Ramirez
Scenic Team.....Melanie Amarasekara
Pauline Carino
Sarah Hatterm
Raaid Hossain
David Johnson
Corrie Johnston-Grier
Celsa Martin
Christian Sampen
Nathan Vasseggi
Miles Williams
Lighting Designer.....Joseph Horn
Lighting Design Assistant.....Anais Moore-Jaccard
Lighting Crew.....Lexa Grace
Joey Guthman
Brittni Rubin
Divakar Singamsetty
Sound Designer.....Samantha "Addie" Silberman
Sound Crew.....Libby Goldstein
Rachel Nannini
Costume Designer.....Ashley Pelico
Costume & Prop Crew.....Michelle Cahn
Sky Ferraira
Samantha Kestin
Lora Myers
Sable Sampen
House Manager.....Ashley Guerrero
Producers.....Stacey Wilson
D.B. Hovis
Karol Mora

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

I first came across *Treehouses* when a current student of mine, Andrea Santos, performed a cutting from it for a presentation we were doing for some state visitation. It was the language that first grabbed me. Why hadn't I heard of this play before? I asked to borrow the script, read it, and ran to the nearest bookstore to purchase my own. I couldn't find it, and began to research, only to find that it has rarely been produced. I fell in love with the characters that inhabit this play and the story that brings them together. Upon first reading, I was saddened, and could identify with

CAST BIOGRAPHIES

MOLLY CLANCY (Young Magda)



Molly is a senior at CCHS and is thrilled to be a part of *Treehouses*. A theatre major with the AVPA, Molly has been a part of several Academy shows, including: *Footloose*, *Dracula* (u/s Abigail), *Once On This Island*, *Company* (u/s Sarah), *Chess* (Svetlana), *Antigone*, and *Java Drama* (X, XI, and XII). Also a music minor, Molly is currently the president of Chamber Choir with the Music department. With acting as a long time passion, she has also spent several summers at CSUN's Teen Age Drama Workshop, where she has been seen in productions such as *The Hobbit*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Flute/ Thisby), *Once Upon A Mattress* (Minstrel), and *Beauty and the Beast* (Silly Girl). Molly is extremely grateful for her opportunity in *Treehouses*, which she owes a lot to Hovis and Joseph, and her friends and family for their support, and to everyone who worked on this production.

COLIN STANLEY (Stephen)



Colin Stanley is a 16 year old sophomore and a new member of the AVPA. This is Colin's first show with the company. He has been in local stage productions such as: *The Music Man*, *A Christmas Carol*, and *Annie*. Colin is happy that he has found a home with the AVPA where he can hone his acting skills. He has met dedicated actors, passionate teachers, and an amazing crew. Colin would like to thank Daryl Hovis for giving him this great opportunity to act along side these wonderful people. A heartfelt thanks to everyone!

MAX LICHTIG (Boy)



This will be the first and final year in the Academy for Max Lichtig. His acting career began in the sixth grade upon playing the Scarecrow in *The Wizard of Oz*. Since then Max has been in such shows as *Get Smart*, and *Joseph and the Technicolor Dreamcoat*. In high school, Max has been an active member of the Youth and Government program, and ASB. He currently is the co-president of the Jewish Student Havara, and plays varsity tennis. The Academy is an entirely new experience for Max, and he is very eager for the journey to commence. He would like to thank the faculty, the cast, and the crew. Max is also exceptionally grateful for the support given to him by his family, friends, and the parrot.

HALIMAH NAJIEB-LOCKE (Old Magda)



Halimah Najieb-Locke is a senior at Culver City High School. She has been a part of the Academy since her sophomore year and absolutely loves it. She has been in numerous productions including *Once On This Island*, *Fuddy Meers*, *Woyzeck*, *Java Drama XI*, and *Java Drama XII*. She was also part of a summer intensive production with The Actors' Gang. Halimah wants to thank everyone involved in this show, especially Hovis because he has given her opportunities that she appreciates very much. She would also give special thanks to her parents for being so supporting and understanding.

ALEXANDRIA RICHARDSON (Ger)



Alexandria Richardson has been a Theatre Major in the AVPA for four years and is loving every minute of it. Being a senior only makes things better! Throughout her years she has worked both behind the scenes and on stage on numerous occasions. Her past productions include *Bat Boy The Musical*, *Onhelia Project*, *Gint*, *The Breakfast Club*

ALI SIEKE (Eva)



Drama X-XII, as well as so excited to have her. She'd like to thank her parents for their support and her parents for their productions...and the coolest men st

CREW

D.B. HOVIS (Director)



Daryl Hovis is a Theatre Director and until his last production, *Treehouses*, he was a project manager at the University. He served as a Repertory under Kelli acting conservatory with AVPA include 2006 Fringe Festival *Breakfast Club*, *The Crimes of the Heart*, *Man-in-the-Moon*, *Night's Dream*. He is International in Leys *The Importance of Durang*, and *The Theater* he directed *Project*, and *A History* also served as light *Rain*, *Pippin*, and *the Chance*, as well as *the Getty*. He would along for the journey themselves for awe story; to Deepika, E greatest production Shannon for her inc couldn't survive with Kristine for making driving on the 405 f believed in him whe is an incredible s Robinson for dealing project, in all its va out; To Elizabeth beautiful play, but a Most of all, he wor Andrew, and Julia fo

DEEPIKA SINGAMSETTY



Deepika Singamsetty is a Theatre Major in the AVPA. She has been a part of the Academy since her sophomore year and absolutely loves it. She has been in numerous productions including *Once On This Island*, *Fuddy Meers*, *Woyzeck*, *Java Drama XI*, and *Java Drama XII*. She was also part of a summer intensive production with The Actors' Gang. Deepika wants to thank everyone involved in this show, especially Hovis because he has given her opportunities that she appreciates very much. She would also give special thanks to her parents for being so supporting and understanding.

HANNAH MATZNER

Hannah Matzner is a Theatre Major in the AVPA. She has been a part of the Academy since her sophomore year and absolutely loves it. She has been in numerous productions including *Once On This Island*, *Fuddy Meers*, *Woyzeck*, *Java Drama XI*, and *Java Drama XII*. She was also part of a summer intensive production with The Actors' Gang. Hannah wants to thank everyone involved in this show, especially Hovis because he has given her opportunities that she appreciates very much. She would also give special thanks to her parents for being so supporting and understanding.

BOBBIE WELCH (Stage Manager)

Bobbie Welch is a senior at Culver High, and in her second year with the Academy. A Theatre Design Major, this is her eleventh production and fourth time Stage Managing with Blurred Vision. Bobbie is very excited to be working with Hovis, Deepacka, and the cast, the process has been an amazing and a fun one to watch and participate in, thank you. It has also been a colossal pleasure working with her bestest pal, HanHan as the dynamic team that connects the Actors and Designers, thus creating one big, fat family of Theatre kids, and their mentors. Bobbie would like to share her gratitude to everyone who worked on a crew, especially Captain Gimpy, Addie, and the Jolly Green Giants, (you too Deepacka, AKA Ethel) all of you guys rock. Bobbie would also like to thank the faculty. Hovis, have some fun. Lots of thanks to Joseph for never asking her what she wants to do, and just making her do whatever task his mind plots against her, especially, she wants to point out, when she isn't even on Light Crew. Bobbie furthermore thanks her family and friends for their support.

JOSEPH HORN (Technical Director/ Lighting Designer)

Joseph, the artistic director of theatre design and tech, is once again manning the position of technical director as well as lighting designer. He teaches set design, sound design, stage combat, as well as various acting classes for the Academy. He directed last season's production of *Chess* and will be at the helm for the upcoming production of *The Cradle Will Rock*. He is also an accomplished actor as well, best known for his critically acclaimed turns as Walker and Ned Janeway in *Three Days of Rain*, Orlando in *As You Like It*, and the Young Man in *Bash*, all at the Chance Theater. Directing credits include *Oedipus at Colonus*, *I Henry IV*, and the feature film *On Oak Island* which is making a splash in the independent film festival circuit. Joseph holds a BFA in Acting from Catawba College, is a two-time Irene Ryan nominee, a two-time Sydney Blackmer nominee, and was recognized as one of the Best Performers of 2002 by the Orange County Register. He would like to thank Jenny and Ben for proving the theory that brothers and sisters make the best of friends. He owes much gratitude and love to Elizabeth.

SHANNON KENNEDY (Scenic Designer)

Shannon Kennedy has been the resident set and costume designer of 3 Chairs Theater company for nearly two years. She recently designed sets for the Moving Arts production *Crumble* and the Actors Gang production *Westward Ho Ho Ho*. She earned her MFA at UCLA in Scenic Design

STACEY WILSON (Producer)

Stacey has been producing events for the AVPA since October 2002 and has proudly worked alongside an amazing faculty. She relished the opportunity to travel to Scotland with these talented students and will always cherish those memories. Her previous experience includes producing for cable television and dabbling in independent film productions and music videos. Stacey has been heavily involved in theatre projects both as an actress and producer since 1988. (Amazing seeing how she is only 22 years old.) Stacey is currently pursuing happiness onstage as a comic and hopes to someday be cast on a sitcom. In the meantime, she runs her own QuickBooks business and is a proud MOM to about 200 Academy kids.

KAROL HEINECKEN MORA (Producer)

Karol has been an artist all her life, working in the graphic & fine arts for many years. For the last seven years she has worked in publishing specifically related to the film industry, currently at MGM. She has also taught an after school art class at Culver Middle School for eight years and has recently started teaching collage and design workshops in AVPA. This is her second year working in an administrative capacity for the Academy. She is the proud parent of Eon and Thea who are both Academy/Film Program graduates

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