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Much Ado About a Design Process

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Much Ado About a Design Process

by

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A THESIS
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Abstract

The intention of this artist's statement is to showcase proficiency in scenic and lighting design for the theatre. The following paper outlines the design process through early conception, research, full realisation of the set and lighting designs for William Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*, directed by Cali Sproule and presented in the University Theatre at the University of Calgary from Nov 25th – Dec 5th, 2022.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This paper will document the process and results of the design for set, properties, and lighting for Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*. The production was directed by Cali Sproule and was presented in the Reeve Theatre at the University of Calgary from November 24 – December 3, 2022. Over the next six chapters this document will outline my process from my initial design concepts, through to the full realisation of the production through research, artistic exploration, and installation of the production. This process will include inspiration/research, detailed descriptions of the design choices that I made, technical drawings, photos and a showcase of the results of the work.

1.2 - Production background and synopsis

Much Ado About Nothing, a comedy in five acts, is one of Shakespeare's most-produced plays. The play is set at the manor house of Leonato, the governor of the Italian port city of Messina. The play starts with the arrival of a group of soldiers, led by Don Pedro, Prince of Aragon, as they return from war. The rest of the play revolves around the two romantic pairings of Leonato's daughter, Hero, and Claudio, a newly arrived soldier, and that of Hero's cousin, Beatrice and her long-time adversary in the game of wit, Benedick, right-hand man of Don Pedro. As per Shakespearean comedy convention, a sequence of hijinks, betrayal, mistaken identity, and hilarity ensue, with the play culminating in a large wedding.

1.3 - Early Discussions

My initial reaction to the news that I'd been tasked to design *Much Ado About Nothing* was one of excitement and anticipation. It is undoubtedly my favourite of Shakespeare's work and the one I am most familiar with. My family owned a copy of Kenneth Branagh's 1993 film version of the play that I would watch repeatedly in my youth. I give credit to that film for helping to ignite my interest in both Shakespeare and the performing arts in general.

(Branagh)

Outside of my interest in the play itself, I was also intrigued at the prospect of the artistic freedom that is usually permitted in designing a Shakespeare production. Having been written for a theatre that gave little to no opportunity for scenic support, Shakespearean plays usually give a range of opportunities to designers to experiment free of traditional practices and in-text limitations. (Brown) The only real limitations are those created by the artistic team themselves, and I was eager to be part of the process of building a creative world from the ground up.

To start the process, I joined an initial meeting with fellow M.F.A candidates, Cali Sproule, the director, and Bonnie Garland, the costume designer. As a starting point, Sproule expressed that she wanted to both modernize the story, as well as set it in a Canadian setting. To achieve this, she suggested setting the play in 1976 Canada. She chose the year 1976 as that was the height of the second wave of the feminist movement in Canada, a theme and subject she intended to focus the production around. She had yet to choose a specific location, having only decided on Canada in general. After some group brainstorming, we settled on Banff, Alberta as the setting for the play. This location solved two of the main issues Sproule was having with the play: familiarity with the location for the audience and a wartime context. Regarding location, Banff gave us the opportunity to create an extremely familiar location for the intended audience, as the town is both popular and near Calgary,

which ensured that the location's architecture, much of which is still original from the tourism boom in the '60s and '70s (Bradley), would be well known to the Calgary audience. As for the "war", Sproule had initially planned on representing it using a stock exchange debacle. However, the more specific setting of a Banff vacation after completing some business dealing in the oil sands of Alberta was interesting to Sproule. Banff is full of expensive vacation lodges of the wealthy, so the location seemed to fit perfectly as the home of Leonato and as a vacation location for Don Pedro and his associates.

The group also decided that the “emphatic element” is the text. The emphatic element is the central element of the play. That is to say, all other elements help emphasize, or support said element. In Shakespeare's plays, the text is often the emphatic element. Because of this, my job as the lighting and set designer was to make artistic choices that emphasize and create a context in which the text could shine.

I met with Sproule a few days later to discuss what we hoped to achieve with the set and lighting design. As a designer, I believe every design process is a chance to collaborate. While it is my job to produce the final design product, it's a combined effort between the designer and director to create the whole vision. I had worked with Sproule on multiple projects over the course of my degree; we were comfortable and familiar with each other's processes and skills.

First, we discussed the parameters of the design that were going to be forced on us by the budget, the schedule, and the Reeve Theatre itself. We were required to include at least a 200-seat layout within the theatre, which meant configuring the space into one of either a flat proscenium, an alley of some form, or a deep thrust. Sproule told me she was most interested in the thrust configuration, which was also my preferred choice. As for budget and schedule, I noted that we would be working with a small budget, and an extremely short install time, so we would have to be both creative and realistic with how we realize our dream design.

We then discussed our thoughts on the main requirements of the designs. For the set design we landed on five main elements the design had to achieve:

1. multiple levels,
2. enough performance space for sixteen actors to comfortably inhabit,
3. multiple hiding places,
4. a window of some form.
5. and indoor and outdoor locations

Multiple levels were a requirement because the text required extremely quick transitions between locations, and a need to isolate certain characters from one another within the scenes. I also noted that it would help with sightlines within a thrust configuration. The hiding places were a requirement for a few scenes, in particular the garden scenes in Act 2 Scene 3, and Act 3 Scene 1, scenes in which Benedick and Beatrice hide from their companions as they trick them into believing the other loves them. These hiding spaces would have to be both recognizable and practical as a hiding space on stage, and also allow a clear view of the hiding performers to the audience, as Benedick's and Beatrice's physical reactions are pivotal to the humour of the scenes.

Sproule required some form of a window to achieve the iconic window scene in which through Don John's schemes, Claudio and Don Pedro witness a woman, whom they assume to be Hero, fraternizing with a man.

Lastly, the set would also need to be able to represent both indoor and outdoor locations for multiple moments throughout the play. To achieve this requirement, I would need to include some form of representation of the indoors that was different from the outdoors whether that be scenically, or through lighting.

We also talked about the general tone and aesthetic of the design. Sproule was interested in the idea of bringing some feeling of the Canadian wilderness into the design. We

had discussed this concept briefly at our first meeting, as I happened to have the image of the Rocky Mountains and surrounding forest shown in Figure 1. as my background behind me on the Zoom call. I once again brought it out and used it as a launching point for a discussion about possible physical references to the trees and mountains in the set design, but also to the colours we could use throughout the design, both for set and lighting, but also for costumes. The cool greys and browns of this image turned out to be a pivotal colour inspiration both for myself, and Garland in her costume design.



Figure 1. Mountain roads (wallhere.com)

As for lighting, Sproule was interested in a more realistic lighting approach than anything overly stylized. Again, with the knowledge that the text was the emphatic element, I agreed that I would focus on highlighting the actors with a mixture of pictorial realism and naturalism in my design. Naturalism is a design style that tries to replicate the natural state of the light on stage. Some examples would be to use warm lighting to try and create an accurate representation of sunlight when the script calls for a daytime scene, or in contrast, a cool blue

light to represent the darkness of night (Palmer, 143). As for Pictorial realism, I think the best description I've found was by Richard H. Palmer in his 1967 article *Styles in Design*.

"Here the designer is concerned with a positive stimulation of the senses of the audience within the confines of realistic lighting. Beauty and interest become major justifications for lighting effects. Sunsets, firelight, light diffusing through trees or stained glass, shafts of light coming through windows or through broken fragments of a wall..." (Richard H. Palmer, 144).

I've always used pictorial realism as a description of the more textural lighting effects that add specificity to a realistic design. Examples of this would include lighting effects such as foliage textured Gobos wash to represent the presence of trees, an isolated beam of warm light to represent an open window, or practical lights such as a floor lamp. While I agreed to employ a more realistic route with the design, I did bring up a few caveats. The first being permission to break away from the realism if the scene permitted, such as the party scene in act 2, scene 1. We were planning to set that scene outside at night, so I noted it may require some unrealistic isolated specials to light the performers. I also expressed my interest in deploying a few bold and saturated colour choices in regard to some potential research regarding scenic paint and lighting. I'd been interested throughout my M.F.A. studies in having the chance to explore the relationship between highly pigmented scenic paint, a material that had been too expensive for me to explore thoroughly my past designs, and theatrical lighting. The best scenario for said exploration would be in a highly saturated lighting state, which could at times directly conflict with Sproule desired realistic lighting. We compromised with saturated looks for transitions, and particular character moments.

Initially, I was a little hesitant over the artistic direction that I was feeling steered towards with both the set and the lighting designs. I had my mind set on doing something bold, symbolic, and non-realistic, a style that I'd rarely tackled in my design practice. I'd

come into the process with the preconceived notion of creating a symbolic design.,. However, Sproule was far more interested in a more naturalistic, three-dimensional environmental design representation of the setting (Carnicke). While she was open to suggestions and collaboration, she was concerned that with the audience, already doing the mental labour to follow the text, would be distracted by a riskier, more symbolic set and that something more visually literal would be less intellectually taxing. I disagree slightly with that analysis, believing that the audiences are usually smarter than we give them credit for. However, I conceded to airing on the side of realism, rather than taking a riskier, fully symbolic swing on the design.

I realised that I was putting undue pressure onto the idea of doing something symbolic with the design. I decided that forcing a large, bold challenge for myself would only get in the way of the emphatic element. Instead, I decided to take this opportunity to more deeply examine the process of the design, and to use the experience as an opportunity for practice-based research exploration (Kershaw). I decided to focus my research on two particular elements of the design. The relationship between theatrical lighting and scenic paints, and the relationship between the scale of the theatrical space and the scale of the set. The Reeve theatre is a large space, with an exceptionally high lighting grid at over twenty-eight feet. Filling that space with a realistic set design, particularly with a small budget, was going to be a challenging artist feat. With these two elements to focus on, I felt like I'd have ample opportunity to push myself to try something new, to experiment, and stretch myself artistically.

Chapter Two - Preliminary Design Concept

2.1 - Initial Research

After the first meeting, I went off to do some research. Regarding the setting and location, I discovered that the location of Banff and the timeline fit perfectly. During the mid-'70s, Alberta was amid an energy crisis and was rife with political struggles between the Federal and Provincial Governments over gas prices nationally and from the Middle East. (Longley)

I then started doing some general research on the 1970s architecture in Banff. I had an image in mind of the aesthetic I was looking for large log cabin-style resorts with massive post and beam framing and large floor-to-ceiling windows. Having been raised in Clearwater, BC, a small logging and ski town at the entrance to Wells Gray National Park, I grew up near many of these impressive homes and lodges. Two examples of buildings that immediately came to mind were the local Clearwater ski hill lodge, an iconic staple of the town built in 1965 (Figure 2) and a local bed and Breakfast, Tanglewood, built-in 1982. (Figure 3)



Figure 2. Clearwater Ski Lodge (www.clearwaterskihill.com)



Figure 3. Tanglewood Lodge (www.tnglwd.ca)

I struggled to find relevant information on similar buildings in Banff in that era. I found examples of more modern hotels, such as The Moose Hotel & Suites (Figure 4), and a few other houses and buildings from the '90s onwards that met my aesthetic interest, but nothing from the 70s and earlier. After more research, I discovered that, while there were some homes built in the Contemporary or Shed style that slightly fit the brief (Banff), for the most part, the prevalent architectural styles of Banff's older, larger homes and resorts were the more European chateau or Tudor style. (Figure 5/6)



Figure 4. Moose Hotel (www.moosehotellandsuites.com)



Figure 5. Tudor homes in Banff (www.Banff.ca)



Figure 6. Fairmont in Banff (www.fairmont.com)

While choosing one of those architectural styles as my visual inspiration would have been technically accurate for the time, they just did not read as “Canadian” enough. I briefly chatted with Sproule about it, showing her the different options. She agreed that the set might read more European if we took inspiration from the chateau or Tudor style. But, like me, She was far more interested in making it more recognizably Canadian, whether technically

accurate or not. She was interested in my idea of a timber frame or log cabin, so we chose to stick with my initial instinct and go in that direction.

I then started diving online to find some visual imagery to use as references and to inspire and drive the creation of the design. I decided not to limit myself to architectural resources that were time accurate to our 1970s setting, as the timber frame and log cabin style has been widespread and replicated for decades before and after the 70s. Sproule and I both agreed that replicating the familiar Canadian aesthetic of the style was more important than being 100% accurate to the period. When Bonnie Garland was brought into the conversation as the costume designer, she agreed that the costumes could do most of the heavy lifting regarding setting the time period. Through my research, I found many notable images of Timber frame houses, two of my favourites being the houses shown in Figure 7 and Figure 8.



Figure 7. Lakeside Retreat Home (www.loghome.com)



Figure 8. Dekota Home (www.adventurestudios.com)

This very symmetrical aesthetic, with the massive windowed walls, the deck overhanging a stone pad or fire pit, and two symmetrical staircases was surprisingly common among the houses I found. The setup inspired me immediately, as not only was it immediately recognizable in its architecture, but it would give me the required levels, large amounts of space, hiding places, windows, multiple entrances and exits, and an abundance of colours and texture with which to experiment with for my desired research into paint colour theory. Another boon of these locations was that the wood, the stone, the dirt, the grass and the trees of these locations all had the potential to draw on all the tones and colours from my initial inspiration in Figure 1. Lastly, these setups also immediately reminded me of the iconic Shakespearean thrust stages (Figure 9) created by Tanya Moiseiwitsch for the Stratford Festival and Guthrie Theatre (Moiseiwitsch). The Stratford Festival stage design is remarkably versatile in its layout. It creates four strong focus points for the director to use in their blocking: the top centre platform, the lower centre entrance, the two side platforms and

the thrust itself. It also created the four onstage entrances and three more provided through the vomitoriums. In practice, the design creates a ground plan that can be used in infinite ways to create movement and isolation with excellent sightlines. I thought borrowing from Moiseiwitsch's ground plan would lead to the creation of a playable space and a recognizable space, particularly for Shakespeare.

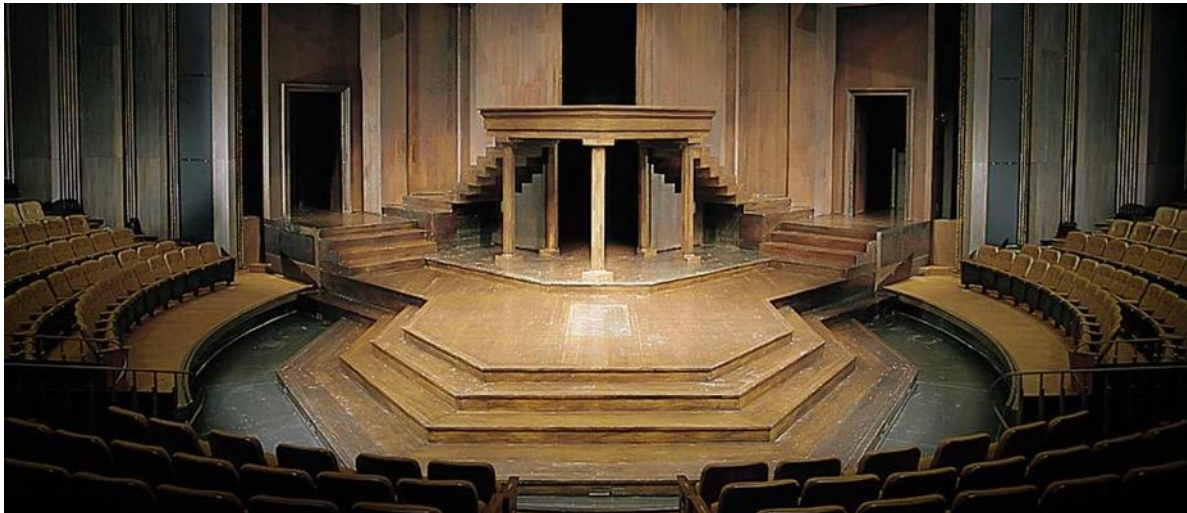


Figure 9. Stratford Festival Stage (www.stratfordfestival.ca)

Another recurring architectural feature that interested me was the stone fire pits in the backyards of these massive estates. Along with the fire pit shown in Figure 9, another image that I found inspiring was the communal Fire pit shown in Figure 10.



Figure 10. Firepit (www.houzz.com)

This image inspired me with the contrast between the stone texture of the fire pit and wall and the rustic wooden deck. I liked the idea of the fire pit on stage, as it functioned as an easily recognizable representation of the location I was trying to imply and as a strong landing point for many of the locations in the play.

The last inspiration image was the rocks cutting into the deck in Figure 11. I wanted to find a way to bring some of the wilderness of Banff into the design. Using some rough, wild-looking stones, along with some form of forest foliage, and through Gobos with my lighting design, I theorized that I could pull some of the raw roughness of the Canadian Rockies into the design. The image of the stone cutting organically through the deck in Figure 11 was super interesting. I loved the idea of having a stone break up on the straight machine-cut lines of the deck while acting as a hiding place and perhaps a performance space.



Figure 11. Banff stones (heartwoodhomesllc.com)

I had a quick meeting with Sproule and Garland to showcase my research and check in about where we were at with the designs. With Garland's backing, I proposed a Fall colour palette, as it would give us a wide range of options on the colour spectrum to play with in terms of paint, costumes, and lighting. Spoule was entirely on board with everything I was bringing to the table, and I was given the go-ahead to start on my preliminary designs

2.2 - Preliminary concept

With images as inspiration, the rough shape of my design concept was formed. I was going to create a set that represented a sizable rustic post and beam house with a windowed wall and a sprawling multi-level wooden deck, including a lower portion of the deck wrapping organically around a rough stone and supporting a firepit of some form. Using Vectorworks, I threw together a rough draft of what I envisioned (Figure 12). I created this drawing to get my idea out of my head and onto the page and to have a visual reference of all the elements for my subsequent discussion with Sproule.

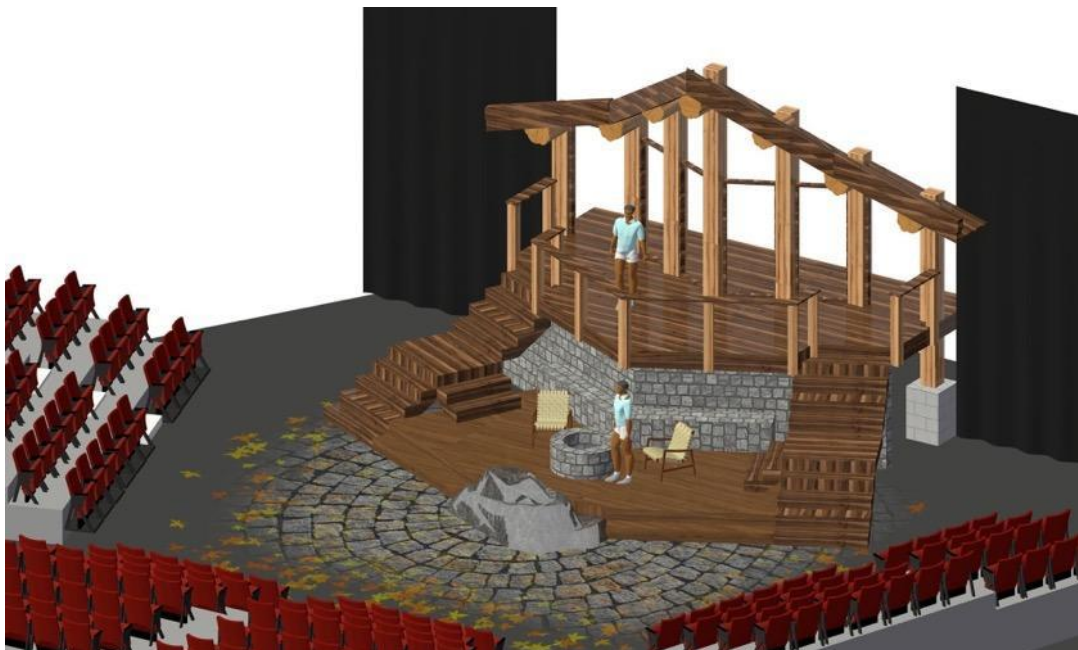


Figure 12. Rough Preliminary Drawing

I was happy with what I assembled as proof of concept. I included all the elements from my research and the five required elements from the director. I was particularly pleased by the floor paint treatment, as it would work perfectly to achieve my desired experimentation with scenic paint and coloured light. The planned floor paint treatment would include a warmed-toned base, painted to look like dirt and autumn-coloured fallen leaves. On top would be painted a flagstone texture using colder blue-gray colours. Lastly, I planned to add more fallen leaves over top of the stones. Finally, I planned to isolate the stones and the leaves independently, using cool blue lighting for the stones and warm lighting for the leaves.

The windowed wall was the element I struggled with the most during this preliminary design. To fill the ample space in the theatre, I wanted the structure to evoke the feeling of the massive scale of the home I was trying to represent. Unfortunately, I failed on this first pass at the design. It was not grand enough nor represented the scale I intended. Luckily, there was enough to get my vision across to Sproule, but I knew I needed to put much more thought into its execution.

As for a lighting concept, I let my ideas incubate while focusing on the set design. I was designing with lighting in mind with my colour choices, giving myself plenty of options for colour layering with the paint treatment. I knew the headache I would most likely give myself regarding the structure's roof, mainly if I made it more prominent and taller than I had hoped. However, I did not want to limit my choices by taking lighting into account that early in the process.

After thoroughly examining the design with Sproule, she was immediately on board with almost everything I was bringing to the table. The one thing she was not overly keen on was the firepit, as she felt that, with the permanent reminder of the outdoors constantly onstage, it would not allow her to represent the indoor locations as cleanly as she hoped. We

tossed around the idea of possibly having the fire pit be moveable, but she was concerned about adding any transition time to the play as she was struggling to get the script into the permitted time limit. I decided to remove the firepit entirely, but I knew I needed to come up with other ideas for adding seating on the stage, as the set needed some place for the characters to land on the decks, a landing place of power, and something to break up the simple flat plains of the deck. Spoule also strongly desired to physically represent some form of greenery on the stage, both as a reference to the forest location and as the stipulated hiding place. She was hoping for something relatively large in terms of the foliage. I let her know that I would add the foliage in the next round of the design. I was hesitant to go down the path of realist foliage, as I was already aware that the school did not have anything of the like in stock. I proposed that I would design something large, and we would see what the response was from the production team when it came to procuring something. If the answer came back as an outright no or too expensive, I noted that we could pair back the design while still keeping the feeling of the outdoors.

We also discussed the windows and some possible strategies to mask the performers before they entered but also can light behind the windows for specific moments, particularly the iconic mistaken identity window scene. To make the windows work, I designed a large platform behind the windows as a landing and playing space behind the windows or "inside" the house. I wanted to give Sproule multiple options for staging her scenes, with the options jumping between inside and outside the house at will. I also planned to use the windows as silhouette screens. By backlighting the performers, I could silhouette the actors themselves and cast a shadow onto the screens themselves. I planned to use this both for the dance partying in Act 1, showcasing the dancing forms of the performers, and for the window mistaken identity scene in Act 3, showcasing just the form of the lovers and highlighting the ease of the misidentification. Finally, I planned to see if we could use some stock scrim

material, which a recent graduate had told me may be available from a past show. A scrim, which is a woven fabric, will appear almost entirely opaque if everything behind it is unlit but will appear nearly transparent if a scene behind it is lit. I knew that theatrical scrim material might be out of our price point if it was not already available. However, I surmised that if scrim was not possible, I could use a different sheer fabric, such as linen or chiffon, to do a similar effect.

The last crucial scenic element we touched on was the deck and the overall layout of the ground plan. Regarding the deck itself, I told Sproule I wanted to go big and build it like an actual 2 by 12 lumbered deck. Not only would it look the most realistic and three-dimensional, but it would make the organic build of the deck around the stones more believable.

In terms of the ground plan, while Sproule was a big fan of the symmetry of the design, and I thought it paid homage nicely to the Moiseiwitsch stage (Moiseiwitsch), I also felt like I was playing it safe and not challenging myself enough in my interruption of the Moiseiwitsch design structure. Furthermore, while I had been trying to remove my practical production manager brain from the process, I was aware that the two sets of stairs would have to be custom-made and would easily consume the majority of our budget. To solve the budget problem, along with the symmetry issue, I suggested that by lowering the deck a few feet and offsetting the two deck levels, we would not only remove a lot of material and cost and create a more dynamic set, but it would also give us more room to make the window wall larger and grander. With a promise to Sproule that I would maintain the ground plan's functionality, I started experimenting with new layout options.

So with Spoules' seal of approval on the design concept, I started working on my preliminary designs.

Chapter Three: Preliminary Designs

3.1 - Preliminary Set design

After more research, I pulled a bunch of helpful deck examples, but the two that drew my attention were the decks in Figures 13 and 14.



Figure 13. Wooden Deck (crosbycedarproducts.com)



Figure 14. Red Wooden Deck (deck.ca)

I used these images as a reference point for many of the scenic elements. In particular, you will see the influence from both images of the multi-levelled decks, the bench, the railings, the facing, the stairs, and opposite angles of the flooring. You can also see that I pulled some major inspiration for my deck colour from Figure 14. Lastly, you can easily see where I pulled the planter box idea from, although I only added those in the final design. I added the bench because I wanted some form of permanent seating for my lower deck, even if it was not around a fireplace. I wanted something to add character to the deck and give Sproule a strong tool to use for her blocking, both as a hiding place and as a landing destination for her actors. The long angled benches in the images were constant in my research images, and a similar bench would work perfectly for my set.

The deck layout, with a back door leading out to an initial landing, then stepping down onto a larger deck area, was also a constant in my research. While it did not have the same flow as the more symmetrical, Stratford-inspired layout, I still gave us multiple strong and large playing spaces. I also had the benefit of allowing the window wall and the platform behind it to be an isolated location on stage that could be lit independently from the two decks and the floor.

Regarding the window wall, I had the good fortune to come across a building in person, which heavily inspired my preliminary design of the wall.

In August 2022, I had the opportunity to work on a puppet performance, *Iniskim*, for the World Stage Design conference in Calgary. The team I was part of built and performed the show at the Barrier Lake Field Station in Kananaskis, Alberta. At the Field station, I came across the building shown in Figure 15. It was constructed in the '70s, situated just outside Banff, and had the massive scale I was trying to emulate. I pulled heavily from this building when designing my windows and the roof line.



Figure 15. Barrier Lake Field Station



Figure 16. Front View, Preliminary design version 1

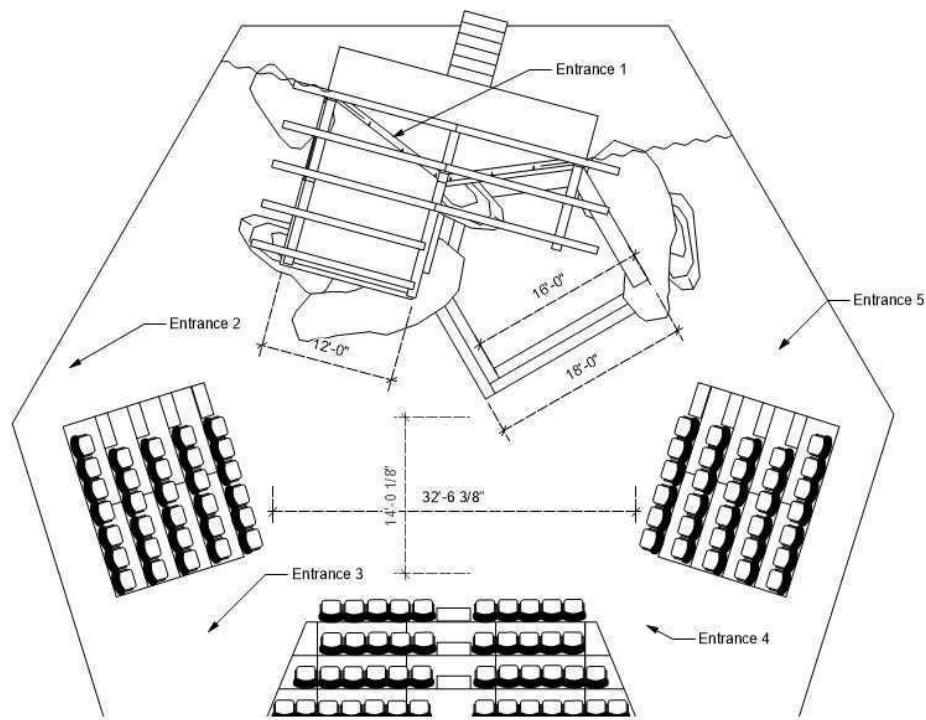


Figure 17. Ground Plan, Preliminary design version 1

With the new deck and window concept taking shape, I started getting another rendition of my design drawn up (Figures 16 and 17). I was thrilled with how the design was turning out. It had the illusion of the scale and grandeur of the home I was trying to represent while also including the wild nature elements of the stones and the foliage. I had an extremely playable ground plan with multiple levels, playing spaces, and entrances and exits. Most importantly, it met all the scenic requirements of the show. The number of stones had multiplied dramatically. That central stone, in particular, the one cutting into both decks as centre stage, I had planned as a playable space for the actors.

The drawing was a rough version of what I hoped to present, with some features, such as the stones, being stand-ins for their final manifestation. However, it was enough to present to Spoule and show her my progress. It should be noted that the image I presented to Spoule

also included foliage, which can be seen in Figure 18. Unfortunately, the drawing which included them has since been deleted or saved.

To put it bluntly, Sproule loved it. Therefore, I had her blessing to finalize the drawing and prepare it for submission for costing. However, before I finalized the drawing, I met with one of my advisors, Scott Reid, to get his opinion before moving forward. He noted a few elements that he suggested I take another look at. One was the black fabric masking on stage left and stage right, which I had been using to mask the performers behind the wall. He suggested that if I wanted the set to be an isolated structure within the space, which I did, then I should look into removing the drape entirely and instead add solid masking to the walls. It was a brilliant suggestion that I agreed with entirely. He also had some suggestions about the materials to use in the windows, such as plexiglass or vinyl sheets, to make them seem more glass-like. Before his suggestion, I had just been planning on having just the scrim material in the windows, but he noted that with just the fabric in the frames, they might read more like a window screen than windows with glass; I agreed. Other than that, he thought I was in a good place, and I proceeded to finalize my preliminary drawings.



Figure 18. Isometric View, Preliminary design version 2

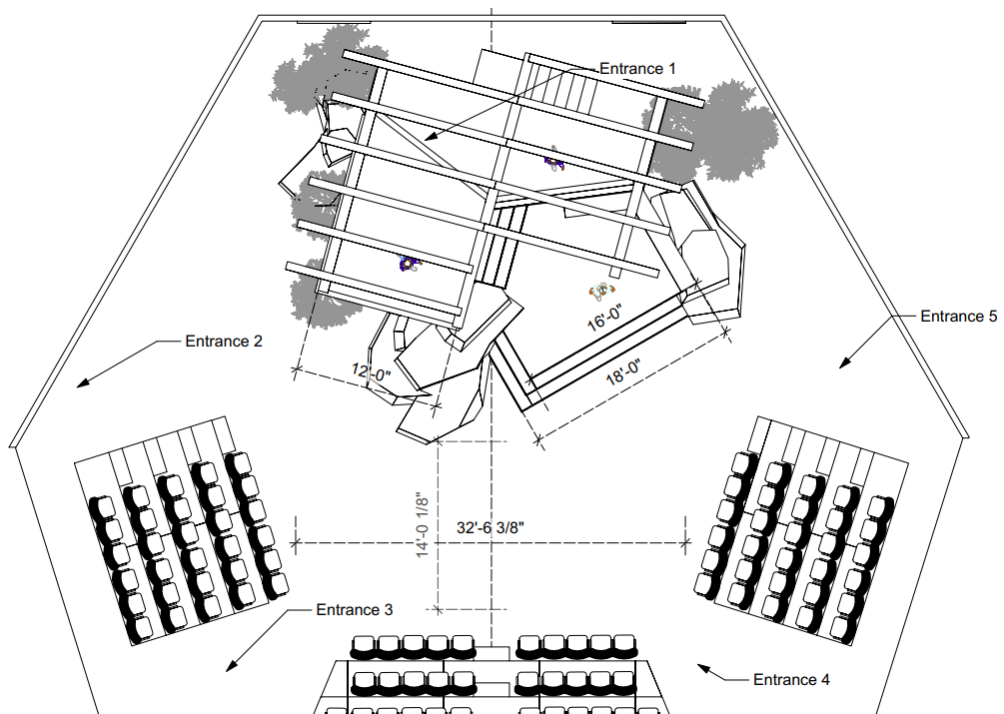


Figure 19. Ground Plan, Preliminary design version 2

For my final set design, I made all the little changes that Reid and I had discussed and finalized some of the elements that had been shifting around. I removed the fabric masking and replaced them with wall segments, as seen in Figure 18. This change worked to isolate the set within the theatre space like I wanted and provide the necessary masking while creating a more powerful 3D ascetic to the house wall.

I also created a final, more detailed version of the stones. I simplified the layout and lowered the number of stones in the design to three. However, as I was designing them, I was also aware of how much my dream stones would cost if they needed to be custom-made by our scenic carpenter. I was anxious to hear from the production team what strategies we could employ to make them a reality, as they were a large part of Sproule and my dream design. Prior to the preliminary design presentation, I also had the chance to do some exploration with the scenic paint and test out some potential floor treatments. While I have had a decent amount of experience with scenic painting, most companies I worked for have used standard house latex paints, which involve a slightly different application process than scenic paints. Proper scenic paints, such as the Rosco Off Broadway brand that the university uses, have a higher pigment count, are bolder and more saturated in colour, and interact better with coloured stage lights than standard latex house paint (Rosco).

After some trial and error, I landed on a four-step process, creating a paint texture that I was happy with for my wooden floor treatment. The process included a base layer, two colours of wood grain, multiple coloured washes, then adding in black lines to separate the boards. You can see a few examples of my experimentations in Figure 20.

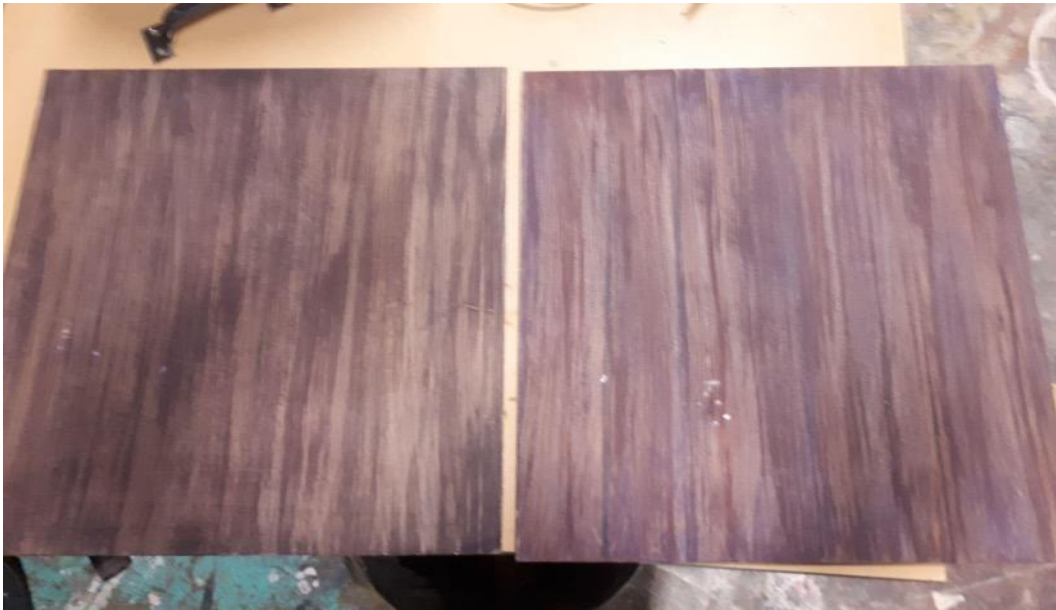


Figure 20. Floor samples (Deck)

I also did some testing for the Stones and Leaves. Knowing that my painting time would be limited and the scale of my desired floor treatment was substantial, I created a relatively streamlined system for the floor. For the dirt of the ground, I sponged on a mixture of browns using a variety of burnt and raw umber and sienna colours. Next, I mixed four different greys to create the layers for the stones: one light and one dark of a cooler blue tinted grey and a warmer brown tinted grey. I scumbled them with chip brushes and a sponge, using darker and lighter colours to create highlights and lowlights. I then took the three colour washes I used for the floor and gave each stone a colour wash, trying to create some variety by varying the amount of each colour on each stone. Once again, I was hoping this would assist me with my lighting in the future.

Lastly, I created a few stamps using some pieces of foam cut into the shape of leaves. I created three specific leaf shapes, replicating the shapes of the Aspen, Lark and Douglas maple leaves, as through my research, I found they fit our colour scheme the best and were local to Banff. Using a mix of Orange, Fire Red, Yellow Ochre and Raw Sienna, I made a

pallet of fall colours and used the stamps to scatter the leaves on the rocks. You can see the final product of my experimentation in Figure 21.



Figure 21. Floor samples (Stones)

3.3 - Preliminary Costing

After the preliminary costing, the production team determined that between the set, properties, and scenic paint my preliminary costing was coming in at \$37,565.82, so almost double the allotted budget, and roughly 200 labour hours over, not including the Scenic painter.

	MATERIALS BUDGET	MATERIALS COSTING	LABOUR HOURS BUDGET	LABOUR HOURS COSTING
Set	\$2,500	\$19,138.42	72 Scott	259 Scott
Props	\$3,000	\$6,159.29	64 Celina	85 Celina 70 students
Painter		\$3,000.00		70 Head 140 Students
Costumes (including Hair & Makeup)	\$4,000 \$5,000	\$3,868.11 \$4,900.00	68 Robert 245 external	68 Robert 245 external 44 students
Lighting	\$300	\$250		
Sound	\$200	\$250		
TOTAL	\$15,000	\$37,565.82		

Figure 22. Preliminary Costing

Before I started changing everything, I met with my advisor, Professor Reid, to go over the design and see what I could salvage. His advice was to avoid a complete redesign but try and simplify while keeping the initial design concept and scale intact where possible. We both agreed that, with some slight alterations, more cost-effective options were available for many of the scene elements. The scrim and any form of glass on the windows were eliminated as an element. Instead, I decided to research a more cost-effective, preferably free fabric to use as a replacement. The stones were the one larger element that we both agreed needed to be removed entirely. They cost roughly \$5,000 and 100 labour hours. I was sceptical that I could scale them down effectively to the point where they would become financially viable while still retaining my ascetic vision. I conceded the need to replace them with a more cost-effective element.

I arranged a meeting with the Head Scenic Carpenter, Scott Freeman, to discuss his recommendations for saving money within the set. He suggested that I remove the wall and

roof entirely or, at the very least, simplify it immensely. He also suggested that I build the deck out of stock risers, as that would save another \$3,000 in lumber. I was unrelenting in opposition to eliminating any of the large components of the set because the visual balance of the more prominent elements was critical to my vision of the design. Ultimately, I did not want to lose the sense of scale that the design held. I completely agree that building the deck out of stock risers was an excellent solution. I also agreed that a redesign of the wall and roof would have to be attempted. Lastly, it was proposed that I take on the head scenic painter role, eliminating the need for a painter.

I met with Sproule to reassure her that the entire scenic concept would not have to change drastically. We both knew we were likely to come in over budget, so we had already had preliminary discussions about different options. I received her blessing to reimagine the rocks, with the caveat that there needed to be something in the place to be utilized as a hiding place.

Chapter Four: Final Designs

4.1: Final Set and Props Design

As I have noted before, I went into the preliminary design costing with strong expectations that I would be over budget. However, without the need to build the deck organically around the stones, I changed the deck's construction from a realistic, 2" by 12" lumbered construction to being entirely built out of stock risers. Scott Freeman gave me a list of the risers available from the theatre's stock. With some slight shifting, I could replicate my original deck layout with only one custom riser needing to be built (Figure 23).

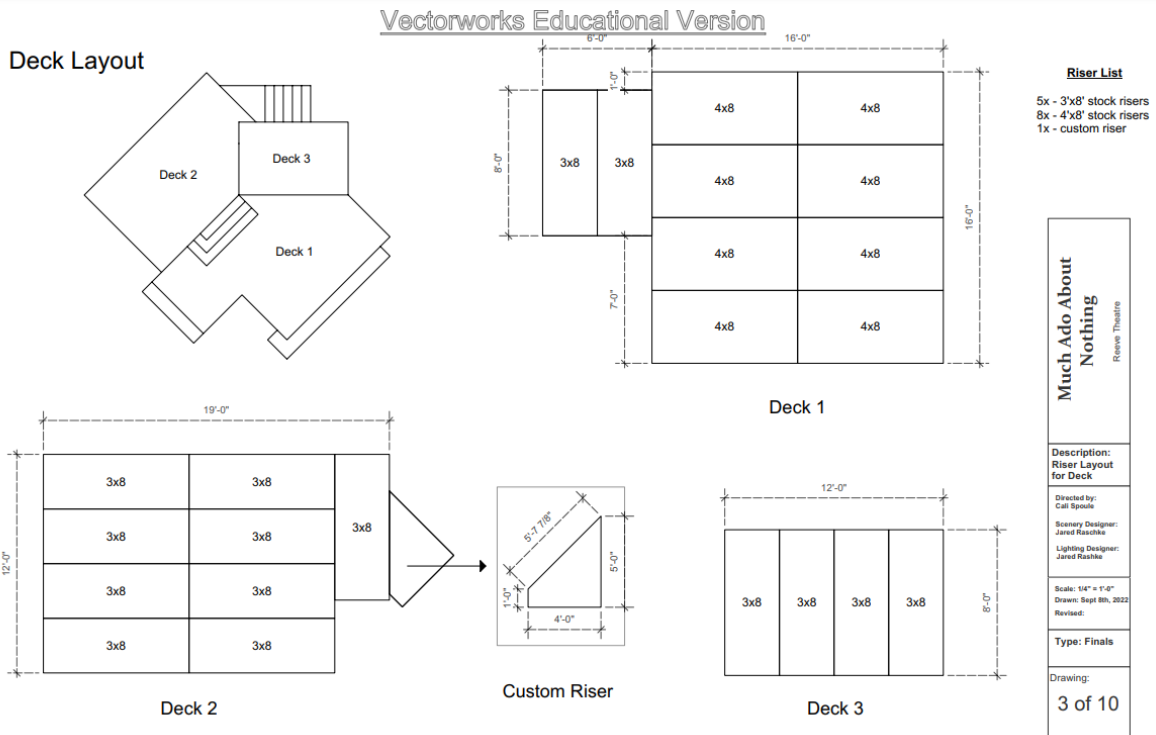


Figure 23. Final Deck Layout

The next element that I tackled was the roof. I decided to disconnect the roof from the wall fully and have it be a floating feature above the stage. I completely removed all the support beams connecting to the deck and the horizontal beams that the rafter beams were resting on. As for the rafter beams, I cut the amount from eleven to a much more manageable five beams. In the end, I preferred this rendition of the roof to my preliminary design. Even with fewer beams, and less visible structure, the design conveyed the sense of grandeur and scale I hope to achieve. The break-away effect I created on the stage-left portion of the roof better achieved the illusion that the roof continued past the manifested elements of the home. (Figure 24)

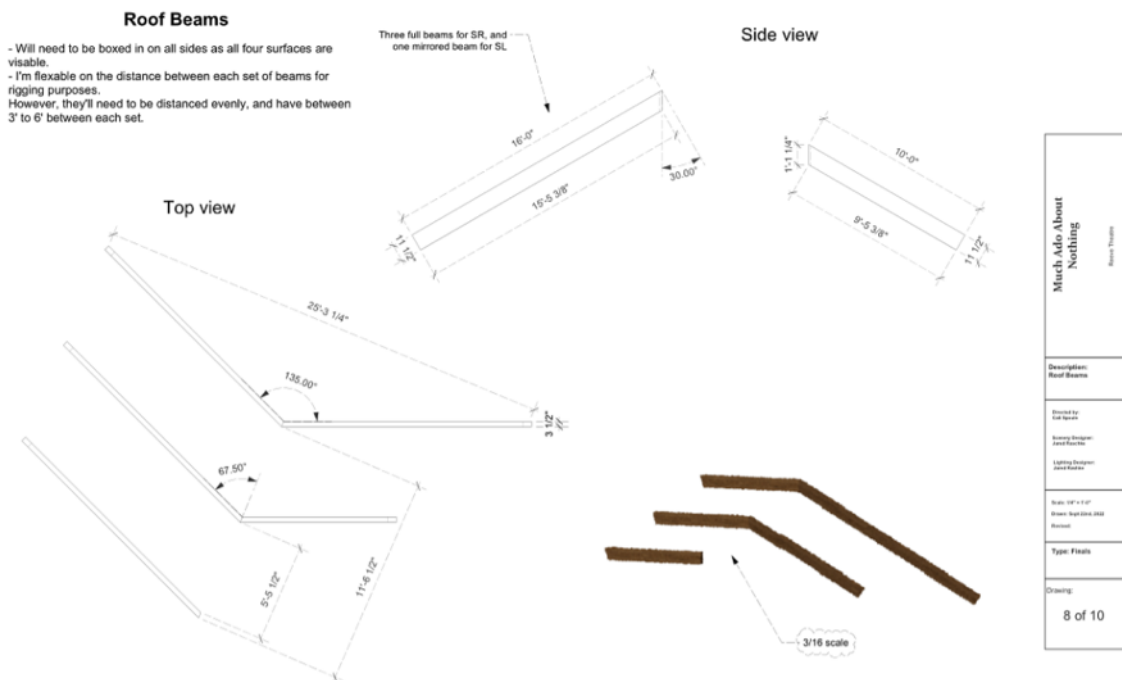


Figure 24. Roof Beams

The window wall got the most extensive overhaul of any element in the design. With the inability to use actual scrim fabric or glass-like substance, and the need to scale down the wall in terms of material, I redirected the design towards a breakaway aesthetic. This breakaway look helped give the illusion that the wall continued up to the roof and around the house, requiring far less build (Figure 25). The new design removed the door entirely and shrunk the windows, again lowering cost. For the wall construction itself, I found some packs of tongue and groove moulding at Home Depot that would work beautifully as the siding of the walls. They worked well with my breakaway design. They were also a more interesting texture to paint and light than the alternatives of painted plywood. They also had the benefit of being cheap, both in price and labour hours, once again helping to lower my budget. I purposefully designed the windows at four feet wide so that a standard sixty-inch fabric could be safely stretched along the back of the window for the new scrim. Luckily, regarding the scrim fabric, I found a large bolt of black fabric in the costume stock that I was permitted to try out. Fortunately, I was taking a lighting design class with Professor Reid at the time, so I

brought some fabric samples to class to experiment with the lighting equipment with my fellow students, including Sproule. We found a few options that could work, but the best was cotton and spandex mixed fabric. Our Head of Costume, Robert Laflamme, permitted me to use the fabric, so another piece of the budget was resolved

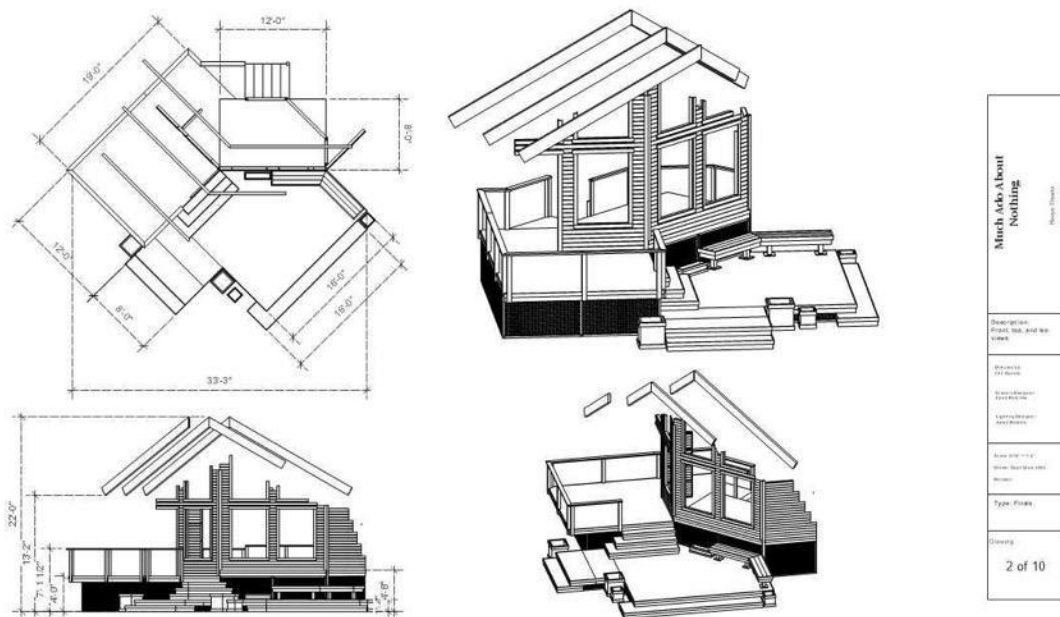


Figure 25. Set Elevations

To replace the stones, I came up with the idea of the planter boxes. Looking back at Figures 13 and 14, you can clearly see where I got my inspiration. Luckily, I found exactly what we were looking for at Home Depot, and due to it being the end of the gardening season, they were on a pretty good sale (Figure 26).



Figure 26. Planter Boxes (HomeDepot.ca)

Fortunately, their addition solved a few of our problems. They worked as the hiding place that the stones were intended for but also had the added benefit of adding to the greenery that Sproule and I were looking for. They also removed the need for the potted plant props, as the box downstage centre was given casters so that the actor could roll it around for the intended comedic scene. In addition, the foliage and flowers needed to fill out the boxes were already available in the theatre props storage, so no extra cost was needed to fill the boxes. In terms of the extra foliage I wanted, I was informed that I would have the option to peruse the stock of the local theatre company Theatre Calgary but that I should be aware that their stock was limited. I discussed it with Sproule, and we both agreed that it would be preferable to find something, but if not, the new planter boxes would be adequate.

In terms of the paint plan, I received some bad news. The two first shows of the season, *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Hookman*, had been scheduled back-to-back. As such, there would only be a week to strike *Hookman*, hang the lighting plot, then install and paint the set. Due to the tight schedule, I would only have around sixteen hours to paint the stone floor, the wooden deck and seal the entire stage with at least two coats of glaze. Due to this tighter timeline, and the need to use students to complete the paint treatment, I was forced to

simplify my paint design. I pared down to only one-grain colour for the wood treatment and planned to create the grain with the less precise but faster and easier mop-drag technique. I still planned to have at least three coloured washes to get my wood some texture and give myself some creative options regarding the relationship between the scenic paint and the lights.

I also had to simplify the floor treatment. We would not have the time to add as much texture to the stone and leaves as I would have liked; however, just as with the wood, I intended to get as many layers of texture and colour onto the stones as I could in the time allotted. I also chose to add a few colours to the floor using a spatter technique, as it is a fast and dirty way to add depth, texture, and colour to a floor treatment. A floor layout plan for my stones can be seen below in Figure 27.

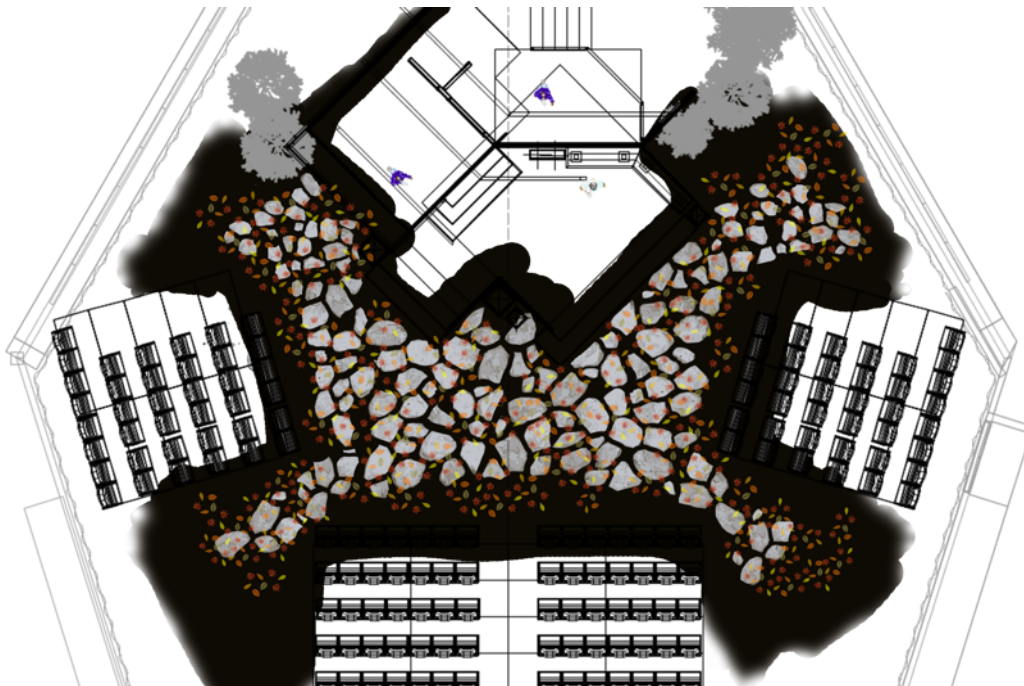


Figure 27. Stone Floor Paint Treatment

In general, the props for this show, as with many Shakespeare productions, were relatively light regarding workload. In addition, Spoule wanted the actor's hands-free as much

as possible, so she had little desire to have props onstage. While we did purchase some plastic wine and whiskey glasses for the party scene in Act 1, they never made it to the stage.

I am always happier with a design that has had the opportunity to go through a thorough revision design process. The final product is usually a far more refined, precise, and compelling interpretation of the concept. This design process was no different, and both Sproule and I were ecstatic with the final results. So, with everything revised to the best of my abilities and Sproule happy with the changes, I submitted my work for final costing (Figure 28).



Figure 28. Final Design Isometric

4.2: Final Costing

A few days after submitting my finals, I quickly met with Andrew North, Scott Freeman, and the Technical Director, Trevor Macdonald. With some creative use of stock materials and the discovery of a stash of leftover plywood from the World Stage Design

conference, we just managed to sneak the complete design within budget. I am incredibly grateful to all three gentlemen for their skill and creativity in getting my vision on the stage.

4.3: Final Scale model

The moment my designs were approved, I got to work on my final scale model. One of the most significant bonuses I experienced through my degree was access to multiple 3D printers! I have always designed predominantly through 3D software, even for my initial drawing. As such, the transition to using the 3D print to realize my 3D rendering was smooth and exhilarating. I am unsure if I can return to building my models by hand. At least not entirely. Because I was working with a 3D printer, which is not the best at printing tiny details, I decided to create my model in $\frac{3}{8}$ " scale instead of one of the more common $\frac{1}{4}$ " or $\frac{1}{2}$ " scales. Once again, this is a build choice I do not think I can ever return from. The model is small enough to be transportable but big enough to help visualize and represent your vision.

Painting the model also gave me a chance to finalize my painting plan. Luckily, I even had access to the actual scenic paint that I would use to realize the painting design in a few weeks. It also allowed me to continue experimenting with how my lighting colours interacted with my scenic painting. I was delighted with the different colour elements being drawn out, isolated, or even rendered invisible with different lighting looks. However, with the smaller scale, it was not easy to know just how successful my choices would be, and I was excited to test out my paint choices at full scale and under proper theatrical lighting. You can see an image of the finished model in Figure 29.



Figure 29. Scale Model - Photo by Jared Raschke

4.4: Preliminary and Final Lighting Design

With the set design finalized, I could finally get started on my lighting plot. This would be my first opportunity to design a plot for such a deep thrust stage. It quickly became apparent that the deep thrust and the problems I had created with the roof beams had created a unique set of challenges for me to overcome. The roof beams made hanging and focusing both my back and tip lights difficult. I had to make strategic hang and focus decisions to ensure that the light could pass through the openings between the beams while not casting shadows or spilling light over the roof beams themselves. I used the 3D lighting features with Vectorworks, a CAD (Computer-aided design) software to realize both my set and lighting designs, to help me visualize and plan out my hanging positions for my lighting instruments to light around the beams successfully. (Vectorworks). An example image of me planning out my lighting angles with Vectorworks can be seen in Figure 30.

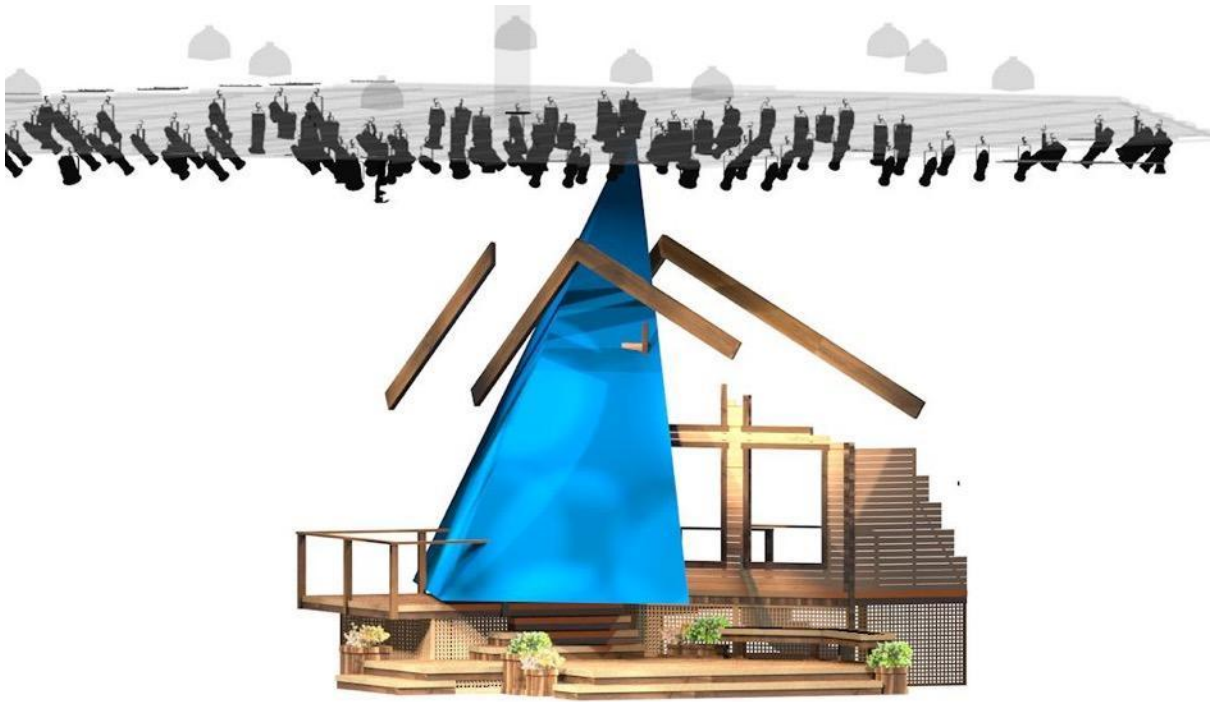


Figure 30. Vectorworks 3D Lighting Rendering

The second challenge I had to solve was the limited and diverse lighting inventory I received. The Reeve Theatre's inventory included a mix of both LED and conventional lighting instruments. Unfortunately, I did not have enough of either type of instrument to create a complete 180° front light scheme, so I had to make some creative concessions to make the plot work. Rarely do you have precisely the instrument inventory of your dreams, and part of the joy of lighting design is problem-solving and making creative choices within the limitations of the space. As a result, the plot I created was a take on a relatively conventional five-point lighting scheme, with a few alterations regarding my tips lighting to account for the thrust seating (Figure 31)

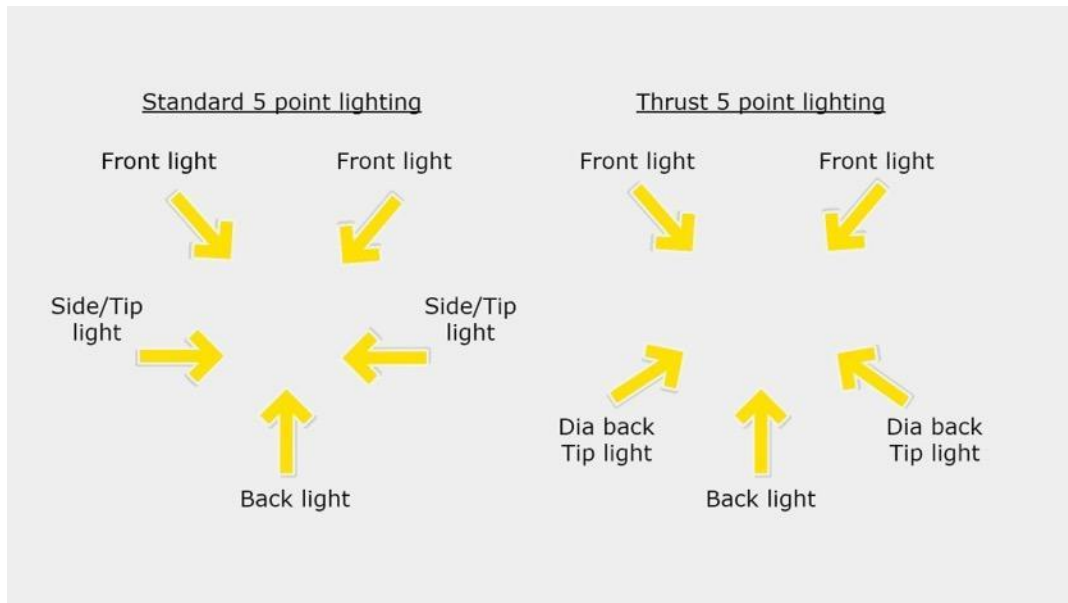


Figure 31. Standard 5 Point Lighting vs Thrust 5 Point Lighting.

The only real difference between the standard layout and the thrust configuration I used is that the tip lights were pulled back and focused more on the playing space as a diagonal backlight (Dia back) (figure 32). This allows the performers to face either off-stage bank of seating without the dia back's lights being converted into front lights, and instead acting as tips lights from the side bank's audience's point of view.

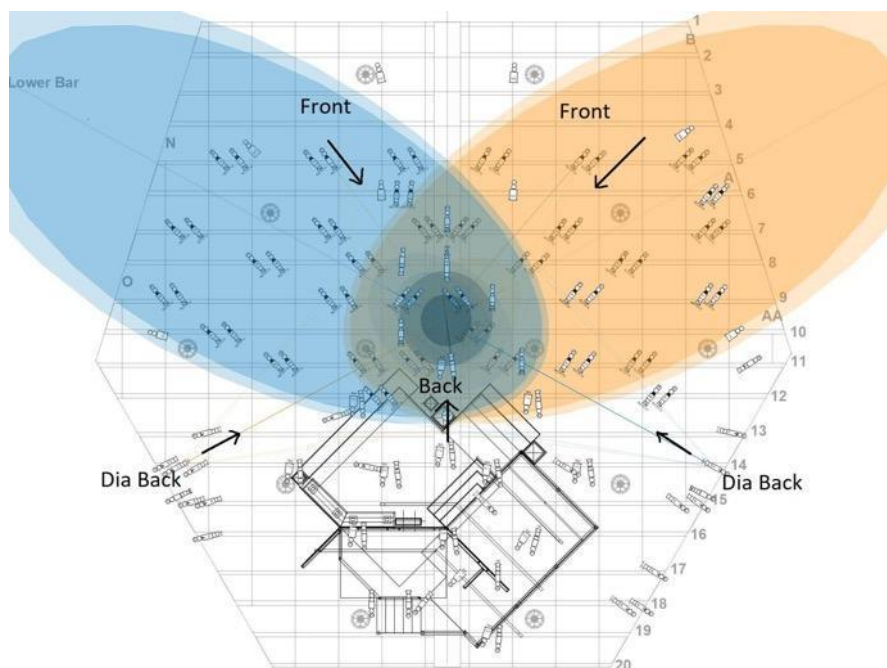


Figure 32. Thrust Lighting Scheme.

Because I was going for more realistic lighting looks, I chose to go with less saturated colours in my front lights. So I chose a warm bastard Amber Gel (R 02) and a cool No Colour Blue (R 60). (Figure 33) Both of these colours read beautifully on most skin tones, a challenge I knew I would have to face with the diverse cast, but they also give the flexibility to add both warmth and cool colour temperature to the scenes, with the option of a full cool wash, a full warm wash, or any mixer thereof.



Figure 33. Gel Choices (Rosco)

I had the opportunity to use LED instruments for the other two lighting positions in my five-point lighting, the tips lights and the second group of backlights. This gave me almost unlimited freedom in colour choices to explore while building the final design in the space.

I hung a few LED flood lights in the FOH to specifically illuminate the walls and the beams so that I could isolate and colour them independently. I hung a disco light on centre stage, with two LEDs pointed at it for the dance scene. I situated three LED Fresnel lights behind the three windows to create a silhouette effect for the dance party and the mistaken identity scene. Lastly, I hung three separate gobo washes as diagonal backlights across the entire stage, both as textural breakups and as a tool to identify the location. My three Gobo

choices were Pebble Dash, Leaf Breakup (Medium), and Dense Leaves 2, as seen in Figure 29.

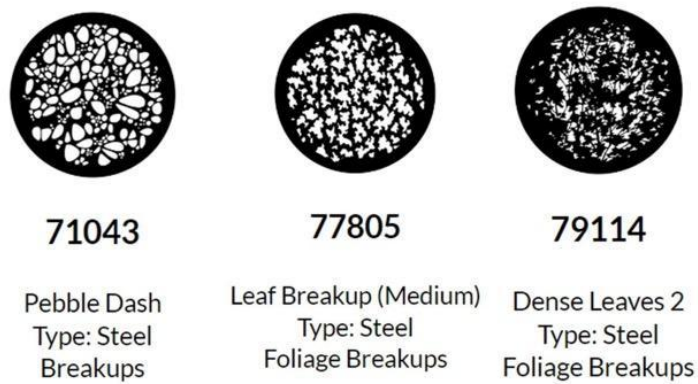


Figure 34 Gobo Choices (Rosco.com)

I also took the time to experiment with some colour choices on my scale model. Because I took the time to paint the model as I planned to paint the set, I was able to get a fairly accurate representation of how my colour choices would react with my fully realised set. You can see a few examples of my experimentation in the images in figure 35.



Figure 35. Scale Model Lighting Exploration - Photo by Jared Raschke

4.5: Rehearsal Process

I had made it a priority to attend rehearsal whenever I got the chance, so I had the opportunity to witness how Sproule was exploring and utilizing our set beautifully. However, when I attended the first production run on October 26th, the day after my final set design was due, I noticed Sproule had made an unexpected change to the use of the set. She had removed the mistaken identity window scene from the show entirely. In her defence, the moment is not actually in the script; it is just inferred and commonly added by directors for comedic effect and to propel the story. While it had been Sproule's original intent to include the moment, and I had seen they had explored it thoroughly during previous rehearsals, she had decided to remove it due to time restraints. After the run, I spoke to her about the decision and asked if we could add it back into the show in some form, even if it were just a short transition moment. That window scene was one of the driving forces behind the design and was the main reason for the window wall. Without the scene or some form of interaction behind the windows, I felt that the wall would feel both out of place and underutilised. Sproule promised to do some more exploration to see if there was another moment to use the wall, and at the very least, promised to allow us to look at a transitional lighting look in the theatre space.

Unfortunately, no other moments were discovered in the rehearsal hall. We planned a transition to try in the Theatre, but the moment had to be removed, as the actors we planned to utilize were unavailable due to placement or quick changes.

Admittedly I was frustrated that the moment was not given the attention I believed it deserved, mainly as it was such a prominent feature of the design that she was adamant about from the beginning. Nevertheless, in the end, I felt I had to let the moment go. There just was not enough time to figure out a solution. Although it was a harsh blow to my design, I could

tell Sproule was both highly stressed by the situation and had entirely given up on the moment, and I did not want to force my vision onto the director.

Chapter Five: Design Execution

5.1: Scenic Execution

The building process began as a slow production line between the scenic shop and our painting space. As Scott Freeman finished scenic elements in the shop, some production students would haul them to the props shop and begin the paint treatment. Fortunately, those first few days were slow enough that I had the opportunity to continue experimenting with different colours and techniques for my wood grain treatment. I moved over to a simplified wood graining technique to speed up the painting process. Instead of creating the grain with a controlled drag of a chip brush with multiple colours, I used a lightly dampened mop dragged over one colour of a wet, half glaze-half paint mixture. This process added significantly less depth to the paint treatment but was markedly faster and easier to master and replicate by the students. I also added three different colour washes on top, a warm orange wash, a blue-grey, and a purple. The walls and the flower boxes received similar treatments as the other wooden elements, with the only difference being that they did not get a base coat so that the natural wood colour would bleed through. Unfortunately, with both venues occupied, I did not have the opportunity to experiment with my samples under the proper scenic lights. However, I had access to a few LED lights in the prop shop to experiment with and settled on a treatment I was relatively happy with.

Due to time constraints, I brought in quite a few students to help with painting. However, this turned out to be both a help and a hindrance. It differently sped up the process, but I was both frustrated and unsatisfied with some of the students' work. They would do great initially while learning the processes and under direct supervision. However, the moment I moved on to help other students, there were multiple instances where they made some pretty frustrating and sometimes irreversible mistakes. I had to keep reminding myself

that this process was as much about the students learning as my own and that this was excellent training for me in teaching and supervising students and emerging artists in the future. Nevertheless, seeing my techniques and research mangled on multiple parts of the set was heartbreaking and frustrating. My experience in mentoring and supervising the students, while a fantastic learning experience, was also one of the most challenging elements of this entire process.

As I noted before, the installation schedule was extremely tight. My lighting plot was installed on Monday and Tuesday, the set installed on Wednesday through Friday, and I allotted the weekend for painting the floor and the deck with the need for a dry, sealed floor for Tuesday morning.

The installation of the set was smooth sailing, with the only real trouble coming from the angle and placement of the roof beams while rigging them. They needed a slight adjustment after hanging, but other than that, Freeman, McDonald, and the student team did a fantastic job on the installation, as seen in the progress photo in Figure 36.



Figure 36: Set Install in Progress - Photo by Jared Raschke

With only a few days to paint the floor, the paint team started as soon as Freeman gave us the go-ahead. Luckily, he finished half a day ahead of schedule, allowing me to start painting on Friday evening. Unfortunately, I had no time to tape out or project my stone layout on the floor. To speed up the process, I had myself rough in the general outline of the stones organically, then had the students follow along behind filling them in. It went surprisingly fast, and we finished getting the base of the stones coated on that first night, along with a part of the wood grain done on the top of the deck. An image of our progress on that first evening can be seen in Figure 37.



Figure 37: First Day of Paint - Photo by Jared Raschke

The following two days were a frantic rush to finish the stone and the deck. For the stone, we sponged on four colours, two tones each of a cool grey and a warm grey, to give them depth. We then added the three coloured washes on top. This is another moment where I ran out of time. I had initially hoped to individualize and diversify the stones more. The plan had been for each stone to receive a unique colour layering and saturation to create a more diverse and realistic texture. Unfortunately, we ran out of time and had to add the layers one

at a time over the whole floor. We added texture and colour depth by changing how much paint we added to each stone, which was relatively successful.

Once all the stone layers had dried, we added all the leaves. I wanted the leaves to be a sharp contrast to the stones, so I created an extremely warm mix of Scenic colours, including the Deep Red, Orange, and Yellow Ochre. While I would have loved to have the time to have created the leaves in finer detail, I was relatively happy with how they turned out. For the last element on the floor, we added a few different layers of spatter, a mixture of greys and warm browns, to add texture and depth to the paint.

In the last few hours of the weekend, we gave the deck and the floor two coats of low lustre Glaze as a sealant. Luckily, the theatre had a few Hudson's sprayers, A air pressurized paint applicator, which allowed us to spray the glaze on the floor exceptionally quickly. An image of the final floor treatment, including the final stones, leaves, and splatter can be seen in Figure 38.



Figure 38: Finished Floor Treatment- Photo by Jared Raschke

During the mornings of the next week, Freeman got the rest of the set installed, including the deck trim and the railings, and I had the chance to come in and do the final treatments on the new elements. An image of the set in its final state before the start of the cue build can be seen in Figure 39.



Figure 39: Finished Install and Paint Treatment - Photo by Jared Raschke

5.2: Lighting Execution

There were only two alterations to my lighting design throughout the focus. First, at Trevor McDonald's suggestion, we moved my two instruments focused on the disco ball from directly adjacent to the Ball to the wall hanging positions, a group of Unistrut on the walls of the theatre. This would remove the necessity to add lighting pipes dropping a few feet down from the grid, a choice I had made to get the lights lower than the disco ball for the correct shot. While moving the light to the wall did get the light hung lower than the disco ball; this was probably a mistake. While it saved a few hours and looked a little cleaner from the audience, I lost much of the punch from the lights focused on the Ball. The instruments were throwing their light over 40 feet instead of my planned 5 feet, so we were significantly

dimmer. The other change also included using the Unistruts, although they turned out for the better in that case. Once McDonald made me aware of their existence, I also chose to utilize them for my Silhouette lights behind the windows. With the ability to lower them to 12 feet from the grid, I got a more direct silhouette effect on the performers and the ability to hide the lights from the audience behind the wall. You can see an example of the silhouette effect in Figure 40.



Figure 40: Dance Lighting with Silhouette - archive photo by Tim Nguyen

For the majority of the design, I stuck to the more realistic design style, using relevant colours, such as warm colours for sunlight, and cooler colours for moonlight, to illuminate the outdoor scenes. However, I discovered some specific moments in the play where I could play with more saturated and unnatural colours. The most obvious example of this was the dance party scene, where I replicated the colour-dancing lighting of the seventies through my LED washes, including the silhouette lighting in the windows. Again, an example of that more saturated lighting look can be seen in Figure 40.

I also included specific colour schemes for both the romantic pairings and Don John. The Don John moments were the one moment Sproule permitted me to push with the colour saturation with a realism scene. Don John's character is a strong personification of jealousy, hunger for power, and for this particular production, lust. As such, I took the opportunity to give him an intense, deep, and creepy red lighting look throughout all his scenes (Figure 41). As planned, the red colour worked beautifully with the colour washes both on the deck and on the stone treatment.



Figure 41: Red and Purple Lighting on the Stage - archive photo by Tim Nguyen

Similarly, I gave both sets of lovers a colour scheme that worked beautifully with my scenic painting and also helped set the "romantic mood" of their scenes. Both the lovers' colour schemes lived in purple tones, with Hero and Claudio being more of a lighthearted pink and Beatrice and Benedict a cooler purple. By the end of the first technical rehearsal, I had cemented a preliminary colour choice for each scene. However, since I had yet to see any

of the costumes in their entirety, I was waiting for their appearance the next day, the first dress rehearsal, to make a final decision on those choices.

5.3: Covid

Unfortunately, I never got the chance to make those finalized lighting decisions. I had started feeling a lot of head fog from the beginning of the cue-building process. I believed it was due to being tired and overworked for the first few days, but by the morning of the first dress rehearsal, I was feeling horrible and tested positive for Covid-19. Unfortunately, I had to stay away from the theatre for several days. Scott Ried was very supportive and took care of the notes from rehearsal. He maintained the spirit and origins of my design while ensuring the show could continue.

Initially, I was hopeful that I could fight through the illness fast and get a chance to view the show at least one more time before it opened. I desperately wanted the chance to make any necessary colour alterations and, in general, feel like I had completed my design, but unfortunately, I never got the chance.

Before testing positive, I had also planned to do a small amount of touch-up paint on the wall and the stones. Unfortunately, the colours I chose to paint the set walls were too close to the skin tone of some of the performers. So I wanted to add a few light colour wash on the walls to see if I could get more contrast between the performers and the set. For the stones, I was also hoping to add some contrasting colours. However, I was uncomfortable having anyone else do it while I was out sick, so I let that dream die.

I was also hoping to get another opportunity to utilize the window wall, having discovered a moment or two when I may have been able to showcase the inside of the house before the character's entrances. However, once again, I was hesitant to have the team attempt it without me present.

Unfortunately, I tested positive for almost two weeks. Ultimately, I did not see the show until the second weekend of its run.

Chapter Six: Reflections

6.1: Final Thoughts on the design

Despite the complications and challenges I faced throughout these designs, I am still incredibly proud of the show I was able to help create. Overall, the team did a phenomenal job of supporting one another, fostering a sense of collaboration and creativity, and fighting through the hardships as a united team.

Admittedly, my first viewing of the show after returning from Covid was rough for me. To put it bluntly, my lighting design was incomplete. The broad strokes were there, the actors were in light, the cues were functional, and the set, with its purposeful scenic painting, was being adequately highlighted. However, everything was rough around the edges. Some of my colour choices, either purposeful in their roughed-in state or made in a state of covid brain, were slightly off now that I saw them with the costumes. One choice in particular that I disliked was a green Gobo wash I added to a few of the outdoor scenes. It was one of the choices I had hoped to look at with the complete costumes, and unfortunately, it clashed horribly with many of them, particularly at the end wedding scene.

Sproule had also changed the blocking slightly within a few scenes, and there were moments where I definitely would have either made some collaborative suggestions or altered my cues to help emphasize or fix the moments. I also noticed a few areas on the stage with glaring focus problems, particularly on the upper deck. With the new blocking, actors were constantly hanging out on or over the railing and falling out of their lights.

I saw the show a second time on the run's final show. Luckily, I could get out of my head for the second watch and start appreciating what had worked well in the production. My research and experimentation into the relationship between my scenic paint treatment and lighting paid off. While I may not have been completely satisfied with the final state of either

the lighting or the paint treatments, even in their incomplete state, I could see so much more depth and texture in my design than I have ever achieved before. I see massive growth in my learning in using scenic paint and the potential to build on that artist's toolset. I also believe I successfully achieved the sense of scale and grandeur I was trying to evoke with the set. My goal was to fill the space, and I definitely succeeded. I received a significant amount of feedback from viewers about the wonder and awe of the size, scale and presence I achieved.

The window scene was noticeable in its absence, but my use of the windows for the dance party was successful, so even if it did not serve its initial purpose, I utilized it as best I could.

As for the lighting, even though it was incomplete, my early and hard work at creating a versatile, practical, and strong plot saved me in the end. The small details may have suffered, but the overarching design was strong enough to allow the beauty and the art to push through.

While not exactly what I was expecting, this process successfully pushed me to better my ability to mesh the practical and artistic sides of my approach to design. My set and lighting were grounded in terms of their simplicity and functionality. They spoke in harmony with the visions of my director, fellow designers and all my other collaborators.

I wanted this thesis design process to be an opportunity to take a closer, introspective look at my existing artistic practice. I'd hoped to discover what was working well in my current design process, what areas I needed to improve, and what new methods I could bring to further strengthen my artistic practices as a whole. Upon reflection, I definitely succeeded on these points. This design was the most organized, fluid, and complete design process I've ever achieved. With the addition of all the skills and tools I acquired throughout my degree, and in particular, the methods I discovered to create a clearer relationship between lighting

colour and scenic paint, I believe I came out as a far more flexible, competent and confident designer.

The last thing I'd like to reflect on is how this process has further solidified my desire to continue to work and practice within a post-secondary artistic space. I entered the MFA program at The University of Calgary intending to receive, then utilize my degree to become an instructor at a university theatre program in the future. My experience of working with the mixture of students, emerging artists, and working professionals on this thesis project has only strengthened that dream. I loved having the opportunity to work as an instructor, mentor, and collaborator all that the same time, and it's a working environment I hope to be able to pursue in the future

At the end of the day, I could not have asked for a better team or production to work on as a thesis assignment. It truly pushed the limits of my knowledge base, creativity, collaboration skills, and ability to fight through and succeed through even the most difficult moments of design and live theatre. Becoming a master of the design process will be a lifelong adventure, but I think this process was beautiful and a gratifying next step on that journey.

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Appendix



Figure 42: Blue Lighting on the Stage - archive photo by Tim Nguyen



Figure 43: Dance Lighting on the Stage - archive photo by Tim Nguyen



Figure 44: Warm Lighting on the Stage - archive photo by Tim Nguyen



Figure 45: Pinks/Lavenders Lighting on the Stage - archive photo by Tim Nguyen



Figure 46: Funeral scene Lighting on the Stage - archive photo by Tim Nguyen

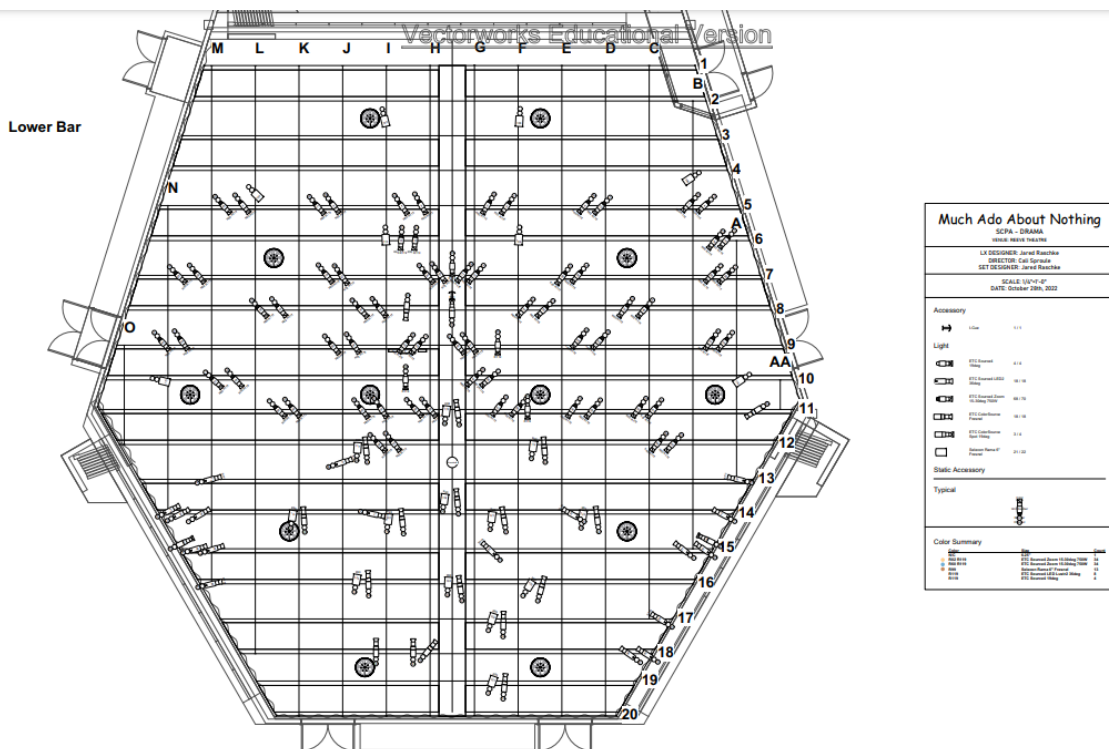


Figure 47: Final Lighting plot

