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The Scenic Design of Steven Dietz's *Dracula* for the Royall Tyler Theatre

Stage

Rosalind Isquith

April 10, 2017

1. Introductory Note:

In the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, European poets, writers, and artists created works riddled with anxiety. The populace of fin-de-siècle Europe began a rapid divide in opinion, practice, and belief. This era marked the birth of a degenerate society lacking morality and motivation, while falling into a “decadent” lifestyle (Nordau 13). Bram Stoker published *Dracula* in 1897 amongst this cultural malaise. One of the “most obsessional texts of all time,” *Dracula* continually attracts readers with the depth of its imaginative qualities (Skal 5). Various turn of the century fears are addressed in Stoker’s work through deformed appearance, sexuality, and changes in belief—all threatening the security of the Victorian man (51).

This thesis involves the research of Bram Stoker’s original *Dracula* and past stage designs of the horror story, culminating in a scenic design of Steven Dietz’s 1996 adaptation of Bram Stoker’s novel. Considering how previous adaptations have differed from Stoker’s novel and how Dietz’s play is unique, this work will address the question “how will Royall Tyler Theatre’s 2016 production of *Dracula* create this world through direction and design?”

Robert Edmond Jones, a scenic, costuming, and lighting designer, incorporated a new stagecraft within the American drama at the start of the 20th century. Jones asserts that quality design work disappears from the audience’s consciousness once a performer enters the stage (Jones 115). Jones prompts young scene designers to create a physical space on stage to frame these moments. Jones writes, “[t]he world of the theatre is a world of sharper, clearer, swifter impressions than the world we live in. That is why we go to the theatre, to dwell for an hour in this unusual world and draw new life from it.”

(115) In this thesis, the creation of Dietz's melodramatic world, the creation of a space for both the actors and audience to experience genuine distress, is the challenge.

2. Director's Concept:

Director Sarah Carleton guided actors, designers, and audience members through her original world of *Dracula*. As director, Professor Carleton worked as both the "chief and arbiter of all aspects of the creative process" (Wainstein 3). At an initial design meeting in April 2016, Professor Carleton introduced her artistic vision, and then asked the design team to respond. At this meeting, Professor Carleton emphasized the importance of Steven Dietz's introductory note:

The play moves quickly amid numerous environments, the primary ones being: Lucy's bedroom, Renfield's cell, Dracula's castle, and the guest room at the asylum. A few specific pieces, generally called for within the scene, should suffice for each. Above all, nothing should hinder the constant, fluid motion from one scene to the next. (Dietz 6)

This sense of fluidity was key to Professor Carleton's visual concept. Professor Carleton expressed her intent to work with all designers to allow for the many changes of season, time, and place to be achieved without the interruption of bulky scenic changes, sudden silence, or frequent stage blackouts. Professor Carleton's practical scenic requests consisted of the inclusion of many different levels, space large enough for four to five actors to work at the same time, and the exclusion of walls from the design.

Professor Carleton's atmospheric requests included a sense of imbalance, authenticity, and continual surprise. In the show's program, Professor Carleton included a

director's note offering insight to her creative process. In this note, Professor Carleton quotes director Edward Albee writing, "a play is fully described (or explained) by the experience of seeing it." He urges audiences to "pretend you're at the first play you've never seen—have that experience—and I think 'what the play is about' will reveal itself quite readily" (Albee). In the same manner, Carleton expressed the importance of surprise—disallowing audience members to anticipate any upcoming moments.

At the end of our initial design meeting, I asked Carleton to put her visual concept into a string of single descriptive words. Carleton produced the following: "dark, anxious, anticipation, unknown, chilly, and stark. This meeting, and these six words prompted my design work on Steven Dietz's *Dracula*.

3. Vision Statement:

The scenic design realizes the world in which the action of a play takes place. Scenic designer and scholar Bruce Bergner captures the spirit of design in stating, "[t]he form gets to the essence of the story. The function tells the story and the fusion connects the story to the people" (Bergner 157). Whether fully developed or suggested, scenery adds visual drama to the stage.

In this design work, I intended on blurring the traditional boundaries between audience and performer, presenting this classic horror story through a new lens. In this adaptation of *Dracula*, much of the dialogue Dietz included was taken directly from Stoker's original novel. One of his direct quotes comes from Dr. Seward's journal, recalling the moment when Van Helsing proposed Lucy's descent into vampirism.

"... My thesis is this: I want you to believe."

“To believe what?”

“To believe in things that you cannot.” (Stoker 208)

To the Victorian readers of Stoker’s *Dracula*, the true horror of this novel was in the possibility that Dracula’s flaws were a real, existing internal threat (Skal 59). The fear of degeneration from the late 19th century has shifted from fears of physical deformity, gender roles, sexuality, and immigration to an overarching discomfort with change. Resistance to change, and some of these same fears remain in contemporary society. Using scenic design, I aimed to recreate the social upheavals at the end of the 19th century—disorganized and crazed—on the Royall Tyler Theatre stage. Using scenic design, I worked to immerse the audience in the horrors presented onstage, and the allow them to believe that their fear was in earnest.

4. *Dracula*: Spatiality as Presented in Stoker’s Novel and Dietz’s Adaptation:

Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* remains one of the most widely read works of the late nineteenth century—of such social value that the novel has never been out of print (Light 1). The psychological resonance of Stoker’s *Dracula* has prompted many theatrical, dance and film adaptations in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (Skal 10). While readers can follow Stoker’s text to imagine the world of the novel, audience members in a theatre are presented with a collaborative artwork. This single production is the result of actors, lighting, sound, costume, and scenic designers working under the artistic advisory of a director. This whole collaboration is inspired by, and works off of a single script. In the playwright’s text, a set of environmental and situational conditions establishes the world of the play. These given circumstances are the deciding factors in most production

debates, while the task of every member of the production team is to serve the script within the boundaries they create (Roznowski and Dumer 15). For a playwright to guarantee the inclusion of any specific character trait, of design attribute, they include it in the spoken dialogue of the script. Otherwise, technical and directorial suggestions can be included in italics or parentheses within the text.

Across page, stage, and screen, readers and viewers alike come away from *Dracula* with a sense of discomfort and unease. Through each journal entry, diary page, and newspaper clipping, Stoker creates an atmosphere of suspense. This is achieved, in part, via his descriptions of location and space. Steven Dietz, in his theatrical adaptation of *Dracula*, uses both stage directions and dialogue to achieve an analogous mood. Stoker and Dietz's respective written works require specific spaces for this horror to take place—notably Lucy's estate, Renfield's cell, Hillingham Asylum, Lucy's tomb, Dracula's castle, travel from London to Transylvania, and Dracula's tomb. Included here is a review of primary locations called for in Steven Dietz's given circumstances and stage directions, and Bram Stoker's novel.

An ingénue of this horror story, Lucy Westenra, lives in an estate in the seaside town of Whitby in the English county of North Yorkshire. Through the action of *Dracula*, readers and viewers witness Lucy's descent into vampirism from the intimacy of her sleep—her initial infection, nightmares, sleepwalking, and search for a cure. In Stoker's text Mina Murray records her initial impression of Whitby when visiting Lucy:

This is a lovely place. The little river, the Esk, runs through a deep valley, which broadens out as it comes near the harbor...The houses of the old town—the side away from us—are all red-roofed, and seem piled up one

over the other anyhow, like the pictures we see of Nuremberg... (Stoker 70)

Aside from this depiction of the town, Stoker's text offers few descriptive details of the dressing of Lucy's bedroom. Dietz's script requires a window and a bed through dialogue. In a note to the reader, Dietz writes that, "*[a] bed and a large window are prominent. Long, thick black drapes frame the window*" (Dietz 10).

As Lucy undergoes her transformation, Dr. Seward and Professor Van Helsing move her to the Hillingham Asylum for greater security and access to medical resources. Dietz, within Seward's dialogue, sets forth a specific aesthetic by stating that, "[t]he room was built for dignitaries who, on occasion, would visit the asylum...Most quickly found they could not stomach the inmates—and thus spent their time safely locked away in here." (44) In the novel, Stoker includes a detailed passage on how Van Helsing carefully places garlic flowers throughout the asylum bedroom:

First he fastened up the windows and latched them securely; next, taking a handful of the flowers, he rubbed them all over the sashes, as though to ensure that every whiff of air that might get in would be laden with the garlic smell. Then with the wisp he rubbed all over the jamb of the door, above, below, and at each side, and round the fireplace in the same way (Stoker 145)

Dietz stays true to Stoker's work with both his dialogue, and suggested staging. Dietz describes Van Helsing and Seward "busily festooning" the asylum with garlic, giving it a sense of security including, "*bars on the window...a bed, the window, and a small table and chairs are essential. Black drapes—similar to those in Lucy's room in*

Act One—frame the window...” (Dietz 44). Further, Dietz calls for staging that is winding, and confusing—allowing Mina to become lost, and meet Renfield in a corridor of the asylum (51).

Stoker describes Renfield’s cell within the asylum in a plain manner. Stoker’s description of place here includes simple furniture, a window large enough for Renfield to escape through, an increasing number of restraints, and progressively more padded cell (Stoker 114). Dietz immediately follows Stoker’s novel in the sparse cell descriptions. The primary deviation occurs with the appearance of, “*a small, odd, ornate chair... seem[ingly] made of golden bones, bedecked with jewels*” (Dietz 48).

As the novel progresses, Lucy’s nightmares become more hellish, and her sleepwalking more frequent until she fully transforms into a vampire. Seemingly dead to her friends and family, a funeral is held and Lucy is laid to rest in the Westenra tomb. Following the funeral, Van Helsing and Seward revisit the tomb in the evening to discover Lucy’s absence. Both Stoker and Dietz portray this scene in very specific, and detailed manner. It is in this graveyard where readers and viewers alike witness Lucy’s transformation from living and beautiful ingénue, to the blood dripping undead “Bloofer Lady.” The stakes for what humanity has to lose if Dracula remains an active predator are set in this specific location. Stoker describes this graveyard as isolated, old, full of tombstones, and descending steeply over the harbor (Stoker 70). Lucy’s grave is fully described in Seward’s diary:

The tomb in the day-time, and when wreathed with fresh flowers, had looked grim and gruesome enough; but now, some days afterwards, when the flowers hung lank and dead, their whites turning to rust and their

greens to browns; when the spider and the beetle had resumed their accustomed dominance; when time-discoloured stone, and dust-encrusted mortar, and rusty, dank iron, and tarnished brass, and clouded silver-plating gave back the feeble glimmer of a candle, the effect was more miserable and sordid than could have been imagined. It conveyed irresistibly the idea that life—animal life—was not the only thing which could pass away. (212)

Stoker goes into illustrative detail when describing Lucy's tomb, giving readers a clear sense of place and atmosphere. Dietz uses dialogue, thus the given circumstances, to indicate the action and surprise surrounding Lucy's absence. This dialogue requires that Lucy's grave have the capacity to open and close (Dietz 59).

In both the novel and the play, Dracula's castle remains a focal point of action—stemming from a long tradition of Gothic haunted dwellings (Williams 39). It is in this castle that Harker first meets Dracula, and where the count attempts to flee to in the end. Stoker describes Dracula's castle a grand piece of architecture, a prominent silhouette against the Transylvanian skyline—"rear[ing] high above a waste of desolation" (Stoker 399). A rough stone building, Dietz includes some Stoker's original wording in Harker's description of the castle's atmosphere: "I fear I am the only living soul within this place, and everywhere I turn: doors, doors, doors everywhere—all locked and bolted! I am a prisoner!" (Dietz 20) The interior of the castle is described as "well-appointed," decorated with extravagant fabrics, and without any mirrors (Stoker 24). While in the novel Stoker goes into detail describing the winding corridors, dusty furniture, and wall hangings, Dietz suggests specific action in revealing the castle to the audience:

...[Mina] slowly opens the journal, which simultaneously—opens a huge door U [for the sounds of a huge door opening his heard.] Music. Smoke swirls amid the lights, which reveals—Dracula...he descends [perhaps] a long winding staircase... Transylvania. This room is defined primarily by a few indeterminate objects which are shrouded in black cloth. An ancient, cob-webbed chandelier hangs above, unlit. (Dietz 35)

Whether revealed one shroud at a time or by following Harker's narrative description of the passageways, Dracula's castle carries an auspice of terror. As the novel and play draw to a close, Seward, Van Helsing, Harker, and Mina travel to the castle to kill the count. They find Dracula, deposited in a wooden crate sleeping in his coffin. Dietz, following Stoker's written work, makes very specific blocking and scenic suggestions in his annotation:

The storm abates, the music fades, as lights reveal—the wooden box. It sits on a pile of ancient stones near the entrance to the Castle. The huge sun is nearly gone from view... Before Dracula can recover: Seward has pushed him back down in the box—Van Helsing has readied the stake—Harker has raised the hammer, about to drive the stake...Harker drives the stake—once—with all his might, and—a stream of blood shoots into the air for a brief moment,]...the light inside the box vanishes. The music has faded away. The vixens have disappeared. Harker, Van Helsing and Seward stand—exhausted, relieved, stained with blood... ” (78)

One of the few differences in Stoker's description of this moment and Dietz's adaptation is the season in which it takes place. Stoker describes the murder of Dracula

occurring in a heavy snowstorm—allowing his death to occur without bloodstain, and Mina’s restoration to purity to appear immediate (Stoker 395). Dietz, in his stage directions, suggests blocking for Dracula’s death—occurring out of sight, and within his coffin (Dietz 82).

In *Dracula*, much of the story occurs when traveling. Stoker’s novel reveals this through letters, newspaper clippings, and journals. Dietz’s play reveals this same travel through small monologues presented, as suggested in his blocking notes, at opposite ends of the stage. Stoker guides his characters through small towns, along rivers, through the wild country, in the middle of the ocean during a storm, to Transylvania, and through England. Stoker describes these traveling scenes individually, describing each day on the river, wagon, or train. Dietz, however, introduces these traveling scenes with suggested shafts of light, and prop traveling gear (76).

Bram Stoker, throughout *Dracula*, describes the environment in which his characters exist. From Stoker’s original text, Dietz realized a world in which this melodrama could continue to thrive on the contemporary stage. In Dietz’s theatrical adaptation, he condenses Stoker’s 400-page work into an eighty-five-page script. Of Stoker’s fluid sense of place in the novel, Dietz includes Lucy’s estate, Renfield’s cell, Hillingham Asylum, Lucy’s tomb, Dracula’s castle, travel from London to Transylvania, and Dracula’s tomb. A review of how other designers have handled the spatial requirements of *Dracula* onstage follows this review.

5. Past Works:

Below I will discuss six theatrical production designs of *Dracula*. Critics rarely address the spatiality of the stage. The complexity of drama is primarily attributed to its language (Aronson 1). Due to this, the following literature review combines secondary materials of stage design with my primary research into more recent productions. I have been in contact with the Fulton Theatre, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Kansas City Coterie Theatre, Royal Winnipeg Ballet, Theatre Southwest and UC-Boulder's Theatre. Each of these organizations has provided me with an archive of production photos and credits, as well as contact information for designers. All but the Royal Winnipeg Ballet have granted me permission to include production photos in this thesis—RWB's images can be accessed upon request. This archival research establishes a body of scenic design work for *Dracula*, a requirement for submitting a thesis to the Honors College at the University of Vermont. Although the design process for Royall Tyler Theatre's 2016 production of *Dracula* was unique to Dietz's script, Professor Carleton's direction, and the collaboration between the design team, it is now a component of this field of research.

Whether reflective of the cultural identity of the audience (Oddey and White 13), or observing more symbolic design principles—such as those established in Vitruvius' 15 BC treatise on the design and building of theatres (Aveline 13)—the stage space is one of the critical determinants the final design concept. In the first authorized dramatization of *Dracula* in 1927, scenic designer Edward Gorey (fig. 1) included seven looming archways, creating portals for smooth transitions, entrances, and exits. Richard L Hay's 1983 design (fig. 2) for the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and Paul Diagle's 1998 design for the Royal Winnipeg Ballet's production of *Dracula* inhabited large, open stage spaces

encouraging free movement. Jordan Janota's 2013 design (fig. 3) for Kansas City's Coterie Theatre production of *Dracula: The Journal of Jonathan Harker* fully incorporated the architecture of the theatre: ladders and rings suspended above the audience invite circus-like physicality among the cast as they can use the set as a structure on which they can swing, dangle, and hang.

Robert Edmond Jones dedicates much of *The Dramatic Imagination* to the "atmosphere" of a play. Jones writes, "The artist should omit the details, the prose of nature and give us only the spirit and splendor" (Jones 82). The energy and emotional aura of a play can be physicalized on the stage—it is the designer's task to create this world of impressions. Fluidity of time and place is essential to the unstable atmosphere of *Dracula*. Both Daigle's 1998 production design, and Ananka Kohnitz's 2013 production design for Theatre Southwest (fig. 4) used dancers, or the Vixens to seamlessly move elements across the stage to change location without a pause in action.

Atmospherics, including fog and haze, are applied to all productions aforementioned. Daigle's design, and Richard Finkelstein's 1995 design for UC-Boulder's Theatre (fig. 5) include these effects to add dimension to otherwise open spaces. A key design choice within Daigle's ballet is the ability of dancers to lurk in shadow—unencumbered by traditional scenic elements. In Finkelstein's production, the lighting designer created a hardened, rock-like appearance when lit from the side, and a glowing effect when the translucent scenic features were illuminated—altering this new dimension.

Through color choice, these scenic designers have respectively created uniformly stark environments with select highlights of color. Gorey's densely crosshatched black and white scenes each include select moments of red. Kohnitz's black walls are accented

with white and red paint. In Hay, Diagle, Janota, and Finkelstein's works, this addition of color is primarily achieved through lighting design.

Theatre goes beyond the presentation of literature, reproducing moments of life at, "various levels of distortion and diffusion" (Bergner 10). Gorey—through his cobblestones and archways— Hay and Finkelstein—through columns—and Janota—through ladders and bars—achieve this sense of distortion through their use of repetition in their respective designs. In a review of a reproduction of Gorey's original 1977 design at the Alley Theatre, director Gregory Boyd notes the impact that repetition has on a viewer:

...the more closely you look, the more you realize that it's totally infected with whatever Dracula brought to this play: namely, bats. *Everywhere* in the room are bats, hidden in the architecture, hidden in the pattern of the carpet, hidden everywhere. Dracula's already taken over the world—that's what the designer is conveying as soon as the curtain goes up (Boyd 36).

6. Scenic Design and Production Process:

Playwright Steven Dietz, throughout his adaptation of *Dracula*, includes detailed descriptions of the scenery and effects he imagined being used. In his introductory notes, Dietz wrote one passage that determined the approach I took in my first reading of his script:

... [N]early ALL the effects called for in the text can be either *simplified* or, in some instances, *deleted*. Some alternate suggestions appear in the stage directions throughout. Others are, obviously, left to the discretion of

the production. In the end, if the characters—and thus, the audience—take the power and terror of *Dracula* seriously, the effects (be they large or small) will simply lend credence to this terror. It's important, in fact, that no effect ever take us "out of the play," for, ultimately, the motion and clarity of the story is paramount. (Dietz 7)

In my first reading, I familiarized myself with the storyline. In my second reading, I focused on the atmosphere of the text, while in the third I focused on the given circumstances. In recording the given circumstances, I followed Dietz's suggestion for simplification, only taking note of what was required by character dialogue. After recording the required scenery and prop furniture, I made a list mapping out the various changes in location in an attempt to understand how to allow for smooth physical transitions. In a second reading of the play, I recorded any lines or descriptive language that I thought best captured the atmosphere of *Dracula*. Then, I made a series of thumbnail sketches (fig. 6-10). In scenic design, verbal communication is used to express broad concepts. This visual component—whether thumbnail sketches or completed plans and elevations—offer focus and clarity regarding the final product. In these sketches, I was able to experiment with different ways of including the required elements from the script in Royall Tyler Theatre's specific theatre space, and have a visual tool for my director. After a series of meetings with Professor Carleton, we decided upon a thumbnail sketch that would best serve this script (fig. 10).

Before the end of the 2016 spring semester, I delivered a design presentation to my thesis advisor Professor Jeff Modereger, director Professor Sarah Carleton, and chair of the theatre department Professor Gregory Ramos. In this design presentation, I

proposed the construction of three large multi-level platforms that each pivot from one point to indicate a change in location with the physical movement of the stage (fig. 10-12). Soon thereafter, I attended a meeting with Professor Modereger and our technical director, Forest Orr. As technical director, Orr is responsible for the technical operations, and safety of the theatre. Of these responsibilities, within the scene shop Orr regulates the build schedule of any given production. Orr determined that within the build time allotted for this show—between Friday September 30th and Thursday November 3rd—it was not manageable to build three independently pivoting platforms. To maintain the spectacle of a moving set, the design was revised so that lighting and atmospherics would primarily denote shifts in location. At the end of the performance, with the final descent into Dracula's tomb, the now five multilevel platforms would slide upstage to reveal an elevator coffin rising from the open trap.

Upon finalizing the ground plan, platform view, and front elevation (fig. 13-17) with the director, technical director, my thesis advisor, and the department chair, I created a final model of the scenery in 3/8" scale (fig 18). The model was then left with the stage manager and director to give them full time access to a miniature of the set. While the stage space was under construction, rehearsals for *Dracula* took place in the Craftsbury room. During the rehearsal process, it is important for the actors to become used to the physical space they will move through during performance weeks. Prior to the first week of rehearsals Hannah Klugman—the stage-manager for *Dracula*—and I used spike tape to denote the sizes and elevations of each platform. The Craftsbury room is smaller than the theatre. Klugman and I worked to indicate the size of each platform, as it would be

built, overlapping them on the rehearsal space floor in different colors of spike tape and labeling them with their appropriate heights.

Before construction in the shop began, I compiled a scenic work list. This work list included every scenic element that I was asking Orr to make, the tasks that I expected Professor Modereger—acting as charge artist—to take on, any interdepartmental pieces, and work that I wanted to complete. For every piece of scenery built in the shop, Orr and his Fundamentals of Scenery lab worked from the various scenic plans. When building specialty platforms, I was called into the shop during lab hours to map out specific shapes—cartooning, or drawing my organic rock shape in sharpie before the carpenters cut into the wood (fig. 19).

While Orr was responsible for all construction of scenery and some large prop furniture, Modereger and I took on scenic art tasks. After the platforms had been cut into the appropriate shapes and legged, Orr and his lab glued white Styrofoam at the edge of the surface. Professor Modereger and I then carved the foam—using butcher knives and small handsaws—to look like a rough rock surface (fig. 20-21). The carved foam then received a series of paint treatments—a primer coat of red landscape paint, a thick glue-like paint to harden the foam and reduce the likelihood of it breaking off, and a coat of black house paint (fig. 23-26).

A simple, cool color palette was selected to further unify the stage space. In this unit set, select features were visible throughout the performance. The stage floor was one of these features. Consistent with her request for fluidity, and in keeping with the contemporary body of scenic design research, Professor Carleton and I agreed that all surfaces would receive a dark green-grey marble paint treatment—the only accent of

color being red blood running downstage, and spraying from Dracula's grave. After creating paint samples and receiving approval from Professor Carleton, this marble look was achieved with a large wet-blend—applying a dark, medium, and light grey-green paint to the surface, and blending the colors before they dry. Two layers of semi-gloss sealer brought forward more of the rich green tones, also giving the platforms and carved foam a wet look.

This scenic design of *Dracula* included a series of different fabrics. The aged green swag and sheers that hung stage right on the first and second hems were pulled from RTT's selection of stock soft goods. The fabric used to create Lucy's bed dressing, and the tracking fabric hung downstage of the cyclorama were purchased. All purchased fabric was swatched, approved by Professor Carleton and Professor Modereger, purchased from Rags and Riches or Rosebrand, and constructed by Modereger as a quilt, bolster, two pillowcases, and four panels of tracking fabric.

Just as the foam carving and paint treatment were uniform on all platform surfaces, the background selected for this performance would be visible at all times. In designing the background for *Dracula*, Professor Carleton requested the ability to have both moments of pure romance and pure chaos. To achieve the romantic look, we agreed that the cyclorama should remain clear—with only a moon box hung behind the cyc. The moon box was collaboratively built and hung by the electrics and scenic departments, while I painted the muslin face of the moon with a wash of black to allude to its craters (fig. 36).

As the show progressed, and Dracula began to infect the lives of Stoker's protagonists, Professor Carleton and I aimed to evoke a feeling of intrusion, and panic.

The backdrop used was a specialty Rosebrand fabric, named “Kaos.” This Kaos consisted of random, repetitive strands of black, plastic fabric (fig. 27-28). Crafted with large negative spaces, the cyclorama could still be seen, broken through the Kaos drop. This material, as a major component of the scenic design, exceeded the budget allotted for the second production of the season. The Honors College awarded this thesis a Mini Grant, and admittance to the Student Research Conference, to defray some of the cost.

The hanging of the tracking units and Kaos fabric was scheduled later in the production calendar, following the installation of the platforms. The Kaos was hung on the second day of technical rehearsal. As with all design work, challenges arise that require problem solving while pieces are hanging in the air or are already in place. In designing the size of the Kaos tracking fabrics, I determined their width by what would allow for the fullest coverage of the back wall and still be able to be stored out of sight and in the wings. In this planning, I did not account for the flats currently stored in the upstage left wings. Professor Carleton, Professor Modereger, and I were presented with the fact that the Kaos could no longer be fully removed from sight without removing several feet of material.

In response to budgetary and time constraints, the Kaos was left at its original width. Rather than having a fully clear and romantic cyclorama through Act I, this fabric framed the proscenium throughout the play (fig 31, 35). In preliminary design conversations Professor Carleton, Professor Modereger and I had determined that the Kaos fabric would track onstage as the play advanced—slowly amounting to a fully covered cyclorama. In response to time restrictions—no longer able choreograph the movements of the Kaos—I proposed the gradual appearance of Kaos in other stage

elements. While always framing the cyclorama, the Kaos was also introduced in the chandelier of Dracula's castle (fig. 40), the edge of Lucy's tomb (fig 42), and the base of Dracula's grave (fig 46). With Dr. Seward, Professor Van Helsing, and Mina's travel to Transylvania, we realized Professor Carleton's for a moment of pure chaos, fully covering the cyclorama with Rosebrand's Kaos fabric (fig 45, fig. 47).

Prior to technical and dress rehearsals, I compiled a list of atmospherics to be used throughout the show. Each machine offers a different effect—haze lofting in the air, smoke slowly rising from the machine, and fog moving along the stage floor. The use of smoke and fog throughout this production—whether preceding the arrival of the ships wheel, through the billowing sheers in Lucy's bedroom (fig. 34), Renfield's dinner plate, or Dracula's tomb (fig. 46)—was indicative of Dracula's infectious presence. The attached list, "FOG AND SMOKE: Preliminary cues," reviews what effect I asked for, on what line, and from what direction. During technical rehearsal, I coordinated who would operate which machine, and when with the three person crew and stage management team.

Stoker's novel, Dietz's script and Professor Carleton's blocking each required specific pieces of furniture on set. In keeping with the minimalistic approach to set decoration and furniture, stock platforms were furnished as various beds, while tables and chairs were collected from RTT's properties barn. The +30" platform served as both Lucy's bedroom and the Hillingham Asylum. To distinguish the Lucy's bedroom from the asylum, ornate floral fabrics were used to dress an antique, full-sized bed while a medium green swag hung in front of silvery-green sheers in Act I (fig 32-33). The use of a variety of fabrics was intended alluded to a sense of intimacy and dreaminess. In Act II,

the swag was removed, the sheers were retied to indicate three windows, and larger bed was exchanged for a twin sized hospital bed—dressed with a simple grey blanket.

Furniture in this asylum room was painted to look worn, and uncomfortable (fig 41).

The +22” platform was used throughout this performance as a spare room—whether the hallway leading to Lucy’s bedroom, a room adjoining the asylum, or a corridor leading to Renfield’s cell. With the use of furniture, this space was transformed into Dracula’s castle at the end of Act I. Dracula’s castle is a place of terror in both Stoker’s novel and Dietz’s script. Through surprise and confusion, I intended to instill that same, genuine fear in the Burlington audience—leading them through Stoker’s original rough stone castle. As Mina and Van Helsing opened Harker’s journal, a trundle bed—previously hidden in the facing of the +60” platform—was rotated into the play space as other ornate gothic furniture—shrouded in black fabric—was set onstage (fig. 37-40). The fabrics used to dress Dracula’s bed were black and gold, thus distancing this space from Lucy’s grey and silver bedroom, and the grey asylum.

There are several locations in both the novel and the play that were intended to be dressed with specific furniture pieces. Of these, Professor Carleton and I decided to pursue a bare and unfurnished look in Renfield’s cell, the traveling scenes, and the Westenra tomb. Stoker and Dietz suggest asylum architecture and furniture for Renfield’s cell, including a window for Renfield’s escape, and an increasingly more secured and padded cell. Professor Carleton and I agreed to leave the cell empty save for the shackles that lock Renfield to the +60” platform, and the appearance of the ornate required by Dietz’s given circumstances (fig. 35-36).

The Westenra tomb, as acutely described by Stoker and Dietz, is a “grim and gruesome.” sight (Stoker 212) Again, maintaining an unfurnished and simple aesthetic, I chose not to observe Stoker’s physical description of the graveyard filled with tombstones and decaying flowers. Rather, I addressed Dietz’s one requirement that Lucy’s tomb have the capacity to open and close. In the downstage right vom, I designed a trap in the +24” platform to serve as the Westenra tomb (fig. 42). In keeping with past scenic designs of *Dracula*, I incorporated the architecture of the theatre in this design—using the voms specific to Royall Tyler Theatre’s three-quarter thrust stage space—while Professor Carleton used the theatre space in her blocking of Lucy’s entrance through the house left aisle.

To indicate the travel scenes in this production, all furniture onstage was shrouded in black fabric. In removing these pieces from view, audience attention could be guided to Dr. Seward, Van Helsing, Harker, and Mina’s dialogue describing their journey to Transylvania (fig 43). With the final decent into Dracula’s tomb, the unit set moved upstage to reveal an open trap (fig. 44-45). While both Stoker and Dietz conclude their works with the discovery of Dracula in a wooden shipping crate, this production revealed the vampire in his grave. In an early design meeting, Professor Carleton requested that Dracula could be raised from his tomb in an effortless manner—consistent with the concept of fluidity. To create this sense of ease, I requested the use of an elevator leading from the scene shop to the stage space. This elevator had three positions—storage height (fig. 45), +2’ above stage for the discovery of Dracula’s tomb (fig. 46-47), and below the stage floor for his death (fig. 48). One of the only moments of contrasting color observed on the stage floor, the final burst of red blood from the trap and its resulting pools

indicated the demise of the notorious predator, and the impending conclusion of this performance.

Throughout the fall 2016 semester, the collaborative nature of this work was fully realized. I attended production meetings in which the director, stage manager, and designers discuss the progress of the show through its closing on November 20th. At these meetings designers and the director have an opportunity to address revisions, and new production requirements. During the week of October 31st, the production of *Dracula* entered a week of technical rehearsals. I attended a run of the show without technical effect to ensure that Professor Carleton and her cast had all scenery they needed to execute their staging. Later in the week, I attended dry tech, the two full days of technical rehearsal, and two dress rehearsals. After each of these technical rehearsals, I reviewed my list of revisions, and addressed problems in design and movement as they arose.

7. Significance:

From when the audience first arrives in a performance space to when they leave following final bows, they are provided with a series of visual clues that heighten the story told onstage. Each element presented onstage—whether the shadow of a window cast by a lighting designer, a lace nightgown crafted by a costume designer, a series of wolf howls mixed by the sound designer, or a sheer curtain pulled by the scenic designer—is intentional. While this intention varies from play to director to design team, it has a profound impact on what the audience sees, understands, feels, and how they leave a performance.

The literature, past production designs, and other period research reviewed in the discussion of previous works allowed space for movement and fluid scene changes, invited the use of atmospheric and lighting effects, selectively used color, and created distortion through the use of repetition. Professor Carleton's directorial vision required fluidity and surprise. This scenic design worked to marry the research with the current production demands—enhancing each of the previously applied design elements, while responding to the director's prompt. *Dracula* required the practical application of various production skills learned within the Theatre Department at the University of Vermont. Of these drafting, painting, and time management were practiced, while foam carving, collaboration, and budgeting were newly acquired.

This design for *Dracula* is the first attempted Honors College thesis in scenic design at the University of Vermont. Previous design theses have considered sound, lighting, and costume design for various productions, scenic design has yet to be attempted. *Dracula* must produce a professional product that encourages audience members to return to the theatre. Reviews and ticket sales determine much of the reputation and funding of a theatre. This thesis project plays an important role in the continued reputation of the theatre program. It is my responsibility to produce designs that merit display on the main stage at a professional level. The following documents and images record my design process through paperwork, research, preliminary sketches, finished designs, process shots, and production photos.

PRELIMINARY SCENIC WORK LIST: (10/6/2016)

- Kaos Tracking
- Cyclorama
- Scrim
- Swag
- Sheers
- Masking
- Buy dry Ice
- Test fog machine
- Construct trundle bed (see orthographic projection)
- Moon box
- Elevator
- Staircase /Platforms:
 - Cartoon edges
 - Cut
 - Glue Foam
 - Carve
 - Prime/Paint
- Ship wheel
- Modesty rail

PROPS WORK LIST: Furniture

- +60" Platform
 - Renfield's ornate chair
 - Renfield's crate
- +36" Platform
 - Lucy's bed
 - Reupholster bolster and bedroom pillows
 - Lucy's table
 - Two chairs
 - Asylum bed
 - Asylum table
 - Two asylum chairs
- +24" Platform
 - Trundle bed
 - Shaving table
- +0" Deck
 - Dracula's dining table
 - 2 Dracula's castle chairs
 - Renfield's dinner table top
 - Renfield's dinner chair
 - Ships wheel
 - Attach and dress skeleton
 - Attach netting

FOG AND SMOKE: Preliminary cues

- ACT I
 - **Pg. 22** SEWARD: “It’s just as they said.” Smoke follows entrance of ships wheel **SL Vom**.
 - **Pg. 28** DRACULA. “Good evening. Don’t be frightened.” Smoke precedes Dracula’s entrance **USR**
 - **Pg. 34** MINA. “Will you help me, Professor?” Smoke follows the action of setting up Dracula’s castle through **SL Vom**

- ACT II
 - **Pg. 56** RENFIELD. “I’ve told you before—“ Fog (dry ice) flows from Renfield’s cup. **Renfield’s Cell (+60”)**
 - **Pg. 57** RENFIELD. “Enter, my Lord and Master. *ENTER!*” Smoke precedes Dracula’s entrance **USL**
 - **Pg. 57** DRACULA. “And great shall be your reward.” Smoke precedes Dracula’s exit **USL**
 - **Pg. 70** Smoke precedes Dracula’s entrance around RENFIELD.
“...MORE TRULY, MORE DEEPLY THAN SHE!”
 - **Pg. 79** Fog flows US of Dracula’s elevator once it reaches its full extension (**+18” above deck**); with HARKER “The SUN IS GONE.”

Visual Literature Review: *Figures 1-5 show production photos of Dracula from the Fulton Theatre, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Kansas City Coterie Theatre, Royal Winnipeg Ballet, Theatre Southwest, and UC-Boulder's Theatre*



Figure 1: *Dracula*. Designer Edward Gorey. Dir. Ira Hards. Fulton Theatre. 1927. Performance. New York City.



Figure 2: *Dracula*. Designer Richard L Hay. Dir. Philip Hanson. Oregon Shakespeare Festival. 1983. Performance. Ashland.



Figure 3: *Dracula: The Journal of Jonathan Harker*. Designer. Janota, Jordan. Dir. Jeff Church. The Coterie Theatre. 2013. Performance. Kansas City.



Figure 4: *Dracula*. Designer. Ananka Kohnitz. Dir. Ananka Kohnitz. Theatre Southwest. 2013. Performance. Houston.



Figure 5: *Dracula*. Designer. Richard Finkelstein. Dir. Sean Ryan Kelley. 1995.
Performance. University of Colorado at Boulder. Boulder.

Preliminary Sketches: figures 6-9 showing different scenic design proposals for RTT's production of *Dracula*.

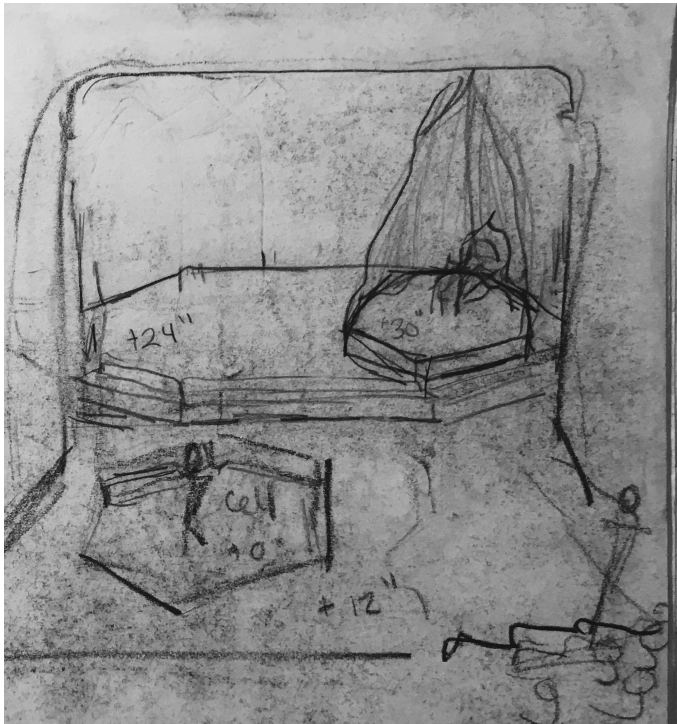


Figure 6: Renfield's cell CSR, a +12" platform filling DS and CS, a +24" platform, and a +30" platform for Lucy's bedroom

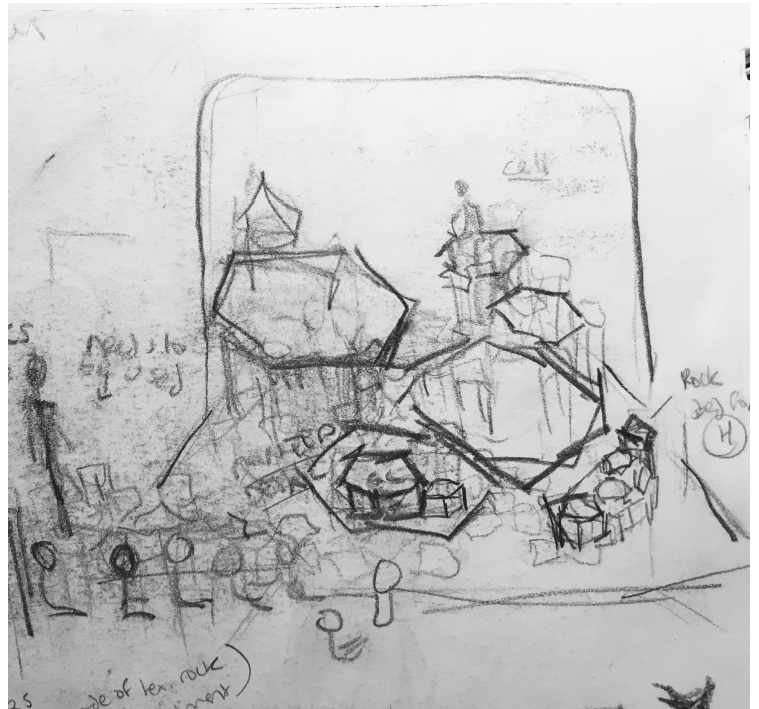


Figure 7: A series of hexagonal rocks indicative of different locations in the play—notably a rock stairway through House Left, plugging the SR vom

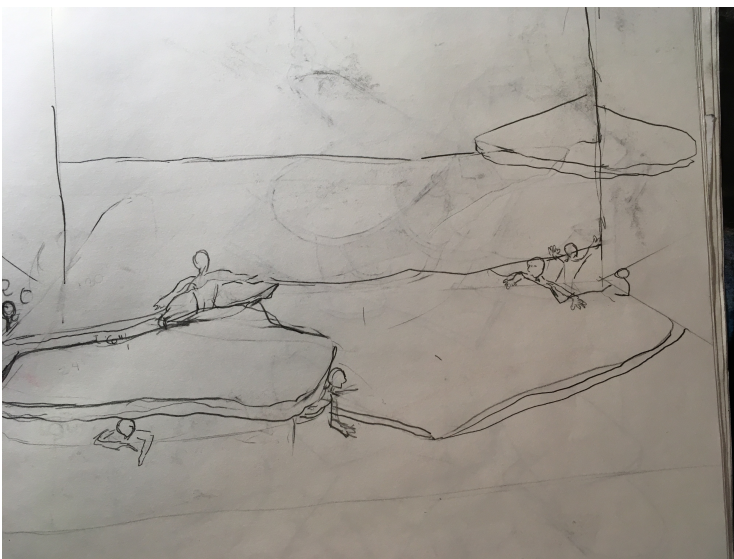


Figure 8: Four platforms with clear space beneath for Vixens to crawl out of during scene changes, and time spent in Dracula's castle. One platform suspended +60" for Renfield's cell

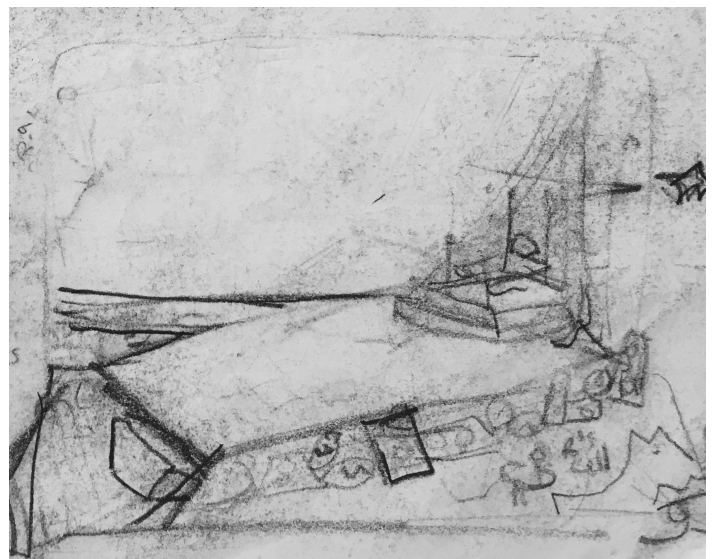


Figure 9: USL platform for Lucy's bedroom, CS platform for other action, faced with broken mirrors and frames.



Figure 10: *The first complete design proposed to the director, technical director, and thesis supervisor. Eight platforms stacked to form Lucy's bedroom, Lucy's tomb, Dracula's castle, the asylum, and a rake platform leading to Renfield's cell. With the final decent into Dracula's tomb, these platforms were to pivot upstage to reveal an open trap.*

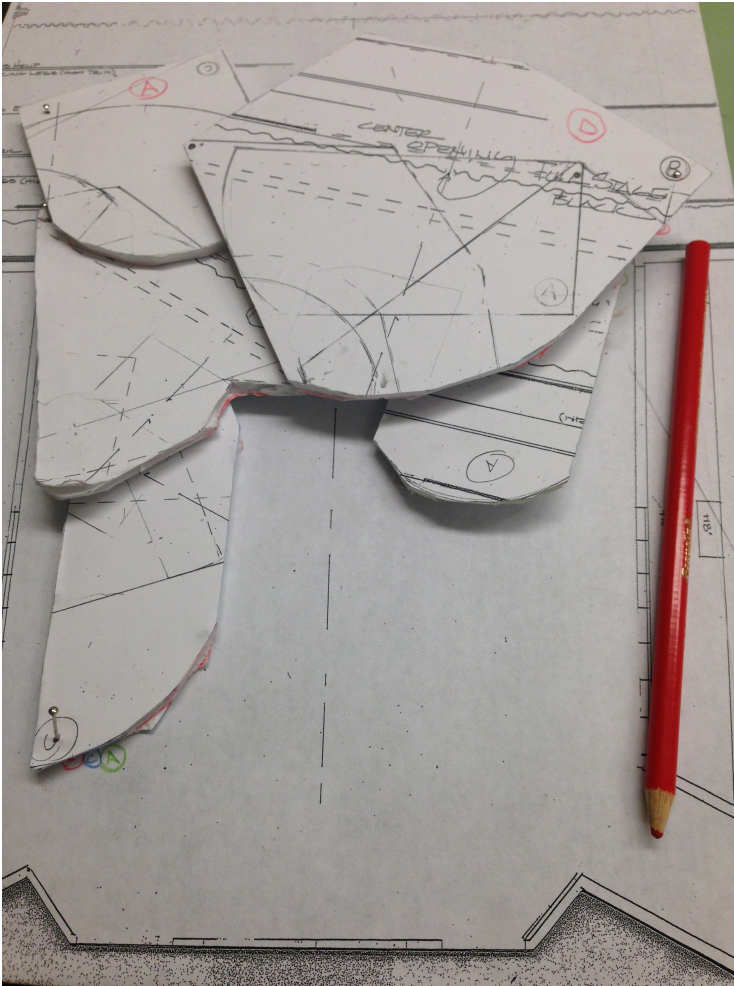


Figure 11: *The first complete scale model of the scenic design proposed to the director, technical director, and thesis supervisor. This model shows the proposed platform position before the characters find Dracula in his coffin.*

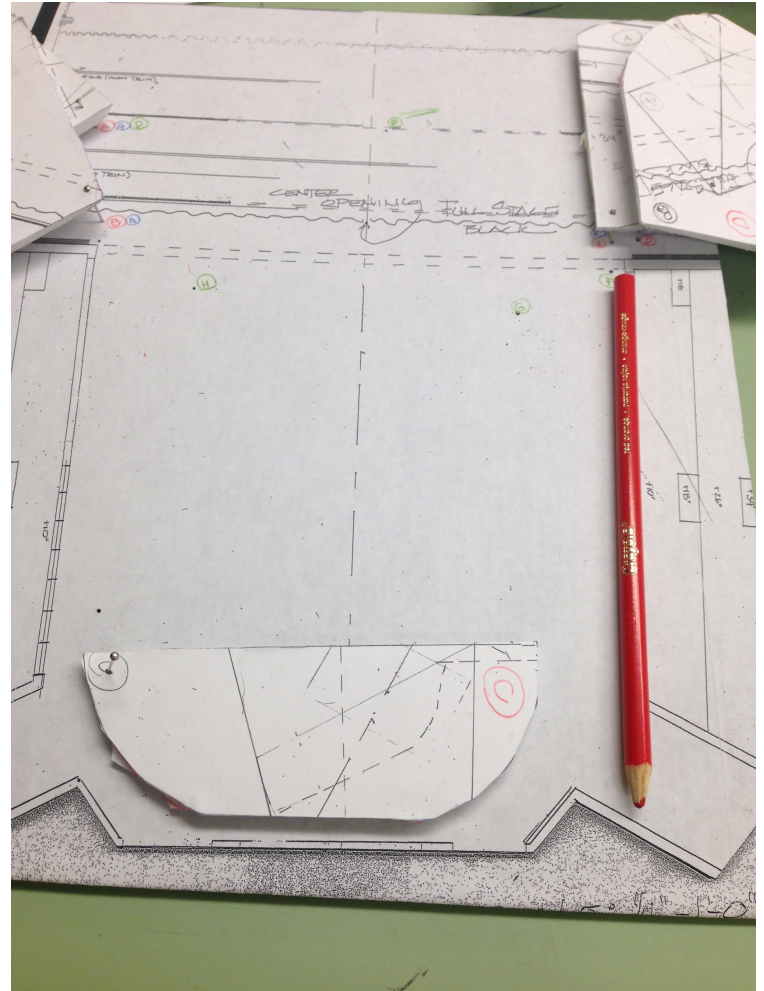
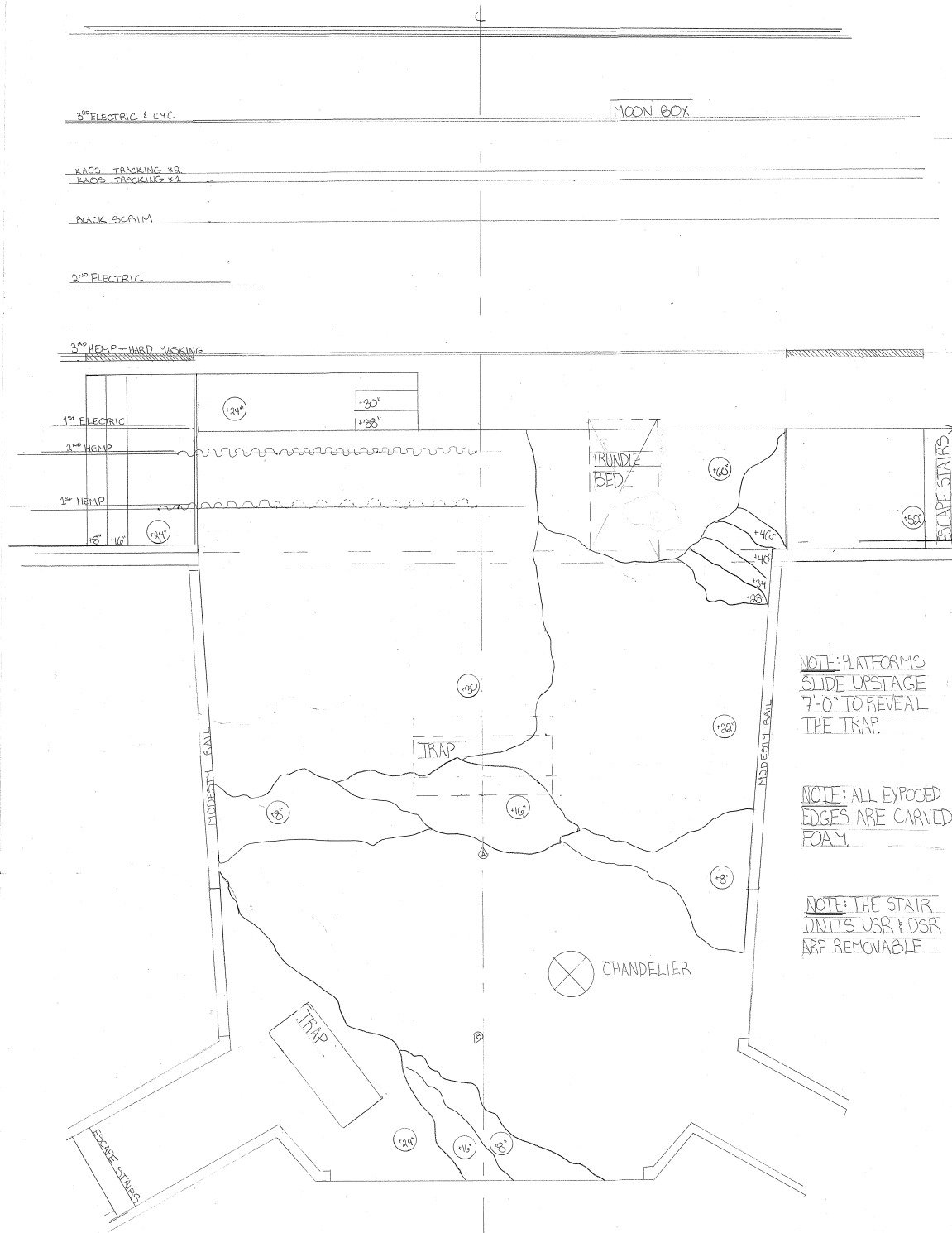


Figure 12: *The first complete scale model of the scenic design proposed to the director, technical director, and thesis supervisor. This model shows the proposed platform position after the characters find Dracula in his coffin—pivoted upstage left, upstage right, and downstage to reveal an open trap.*



DRACULA	DIA. SARAH CARLETON	SEPTEMBER 16, 2016	SCALE: 1'-0" = 1/2"	1
ROYALL TYLER THEATRE	DESIGNER. ROSALIND ISQUITH	REVISIONS SEPTEMBER 30, 2016	GROUND PLAN	

Figure 13: Ground Plan

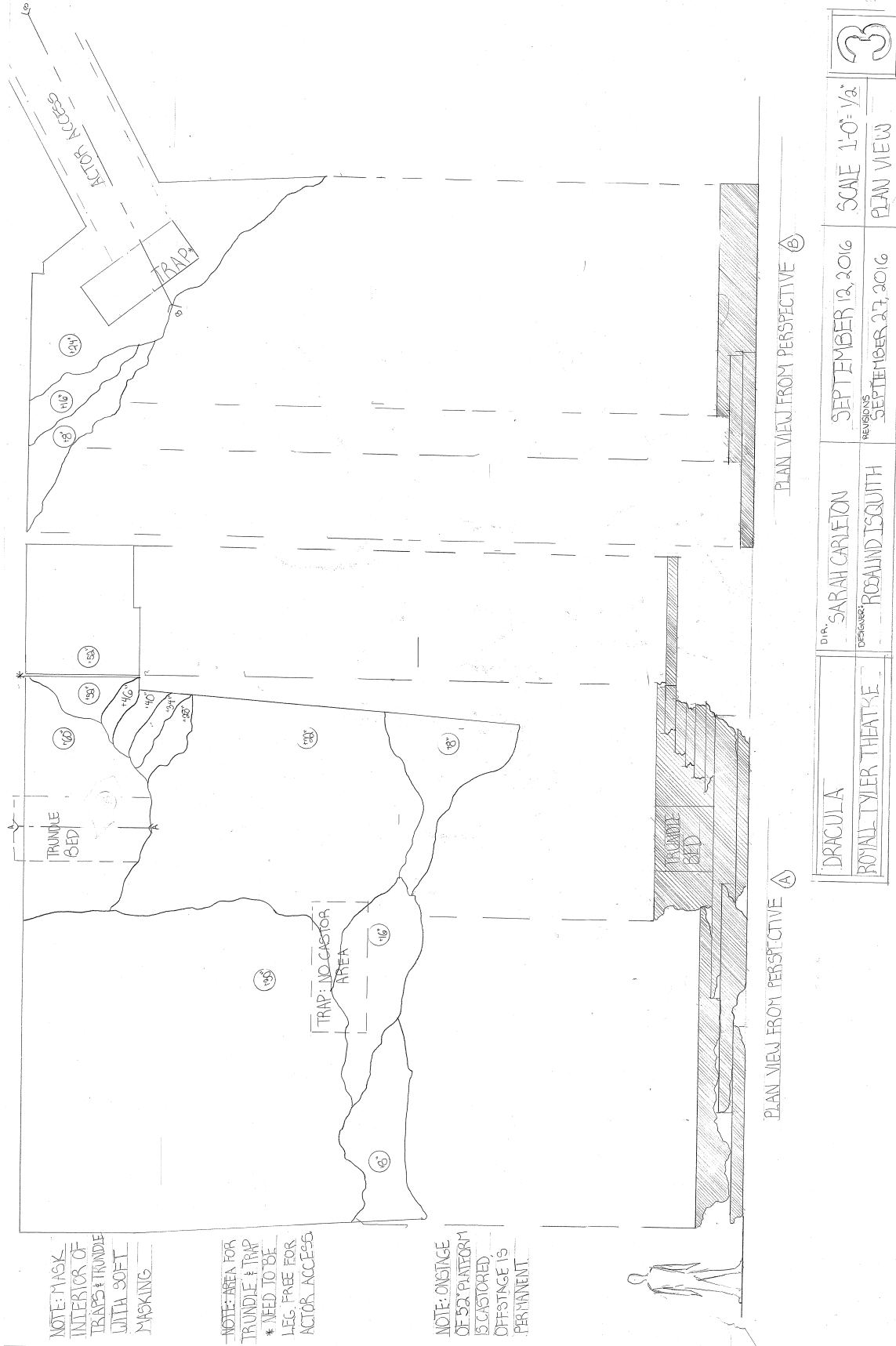
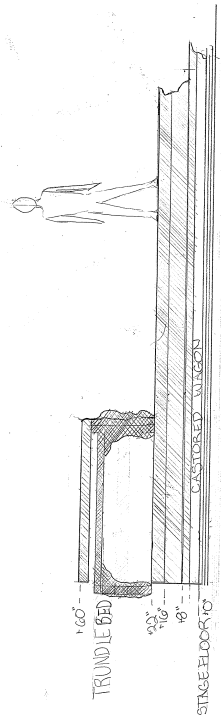


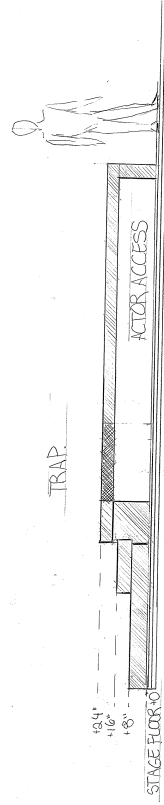
Figure 14: Plan View

NOTE: AREA FOR TRUNDLE & TRAP NEED TO BE LEG FREE FOR ACTOR ACCESS

NOTE: MAKE INTERIOR OF TRAPS & TRUNDLE WITH SOFT PADDING



SECTION VIEW A<->A



SECTION VIEW B<->B

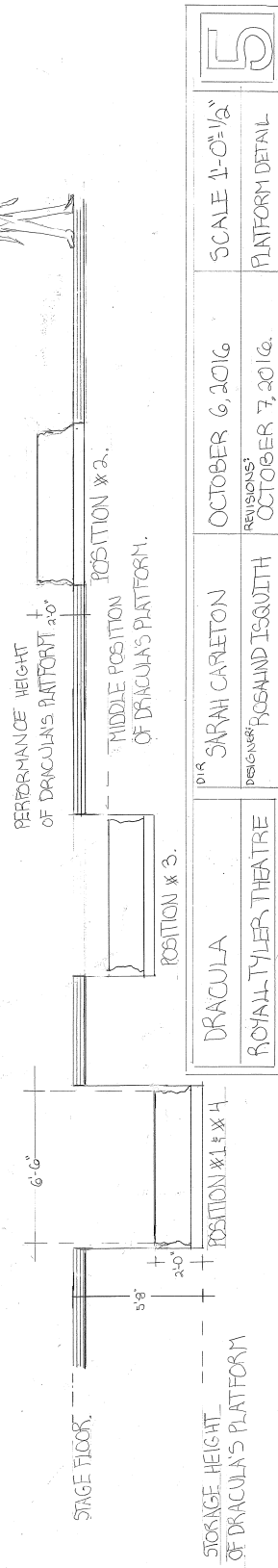
DRACULA	DIR. SARAH CARLTON	SEPTEMBER 30, 2016	SCALE 1'-0" = 1/2"
ROYAL TYLER THEATRE	DESIGNER ROSAMUND ISQUITH	REVISIONS: OCTOBER 7, 2016	SECTION VIEWS



Figure 15: Section View

NOTE: DRACULA'S PLATFORM IS ON AN ELEVATOR SYSTEM WITHIN THE STAGE FLOOR TRAP.

NOTE: DRACULA'S PLATFORM IS FACED WITH CARVED FORM.



DRACULA	PIA SARAH CARLETON	OCTOBER 6, 2016	SCALE 1/4"=1'-0"	5
ROYAL TYLER THEATRE	DESIGNER ROSAMUND ISQUITH	REVISIONS: OCTOBER 7, 2016	PLATFORM DETAIL	

Figure 16: Platform Detail

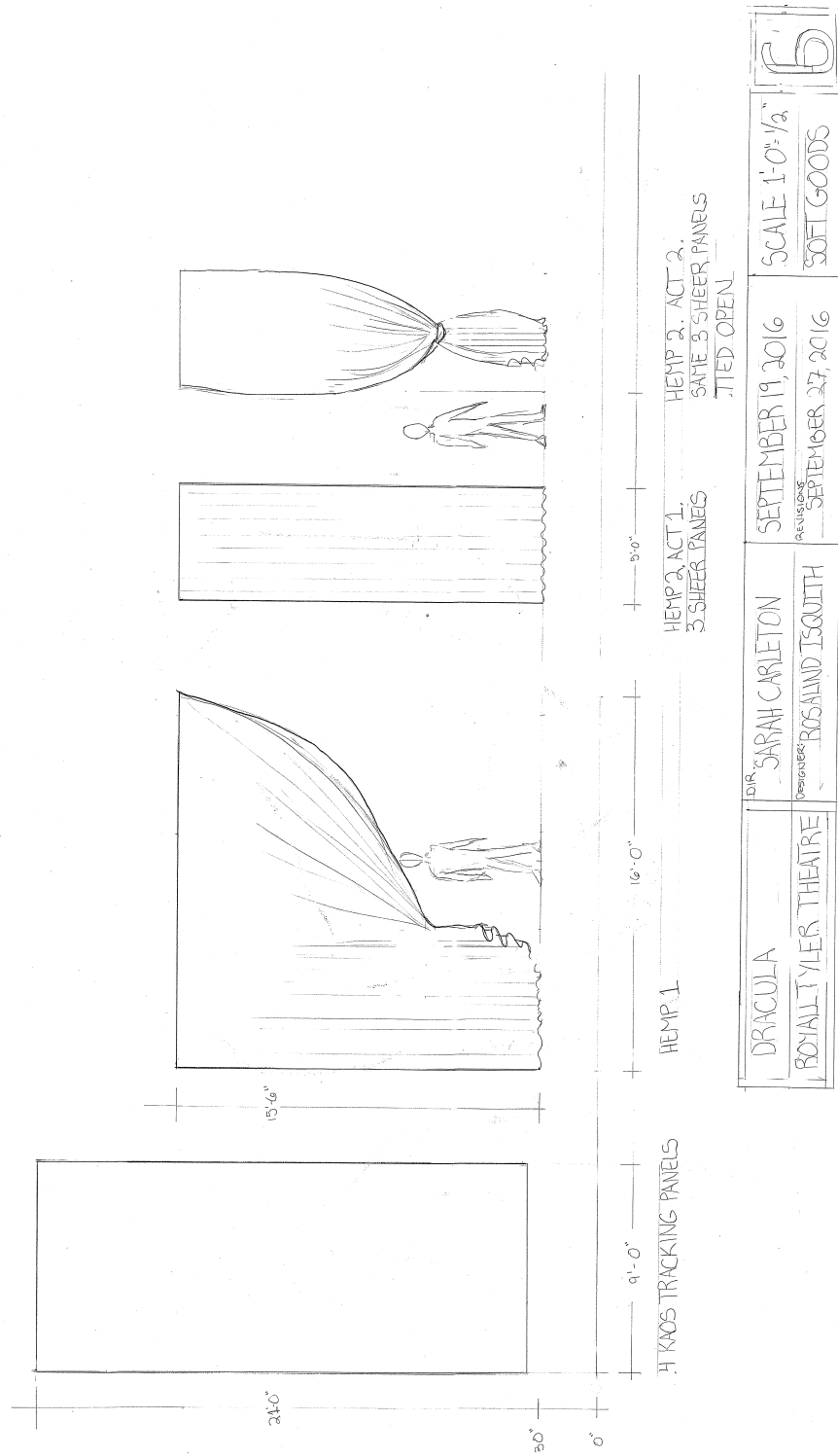


Figure 17: Soft Goods



Figure 18: Final Model

Process Shots:



Figure 19: Cartooning of Deck Cover



Figure 20: Cut Out Deck Cover with Foam Added and Carved



Figure 21: Downstage Right Vom



Figure 22: Carriage Allowing for Upstage and Downstage Movement of Set



Figure 23: Foam Primer and 1st Layer Treatment on Downstage Right Vom



Figure 24: Foam Primer and 1st Layer Treatment on +8" and +16" Platforms



Figure 25: Surface Primer, Foam 2nd Layer Treatment Viewed from House Left



Figure 26: Paint Samples and Platform Markings



Figure 27: Rolls of Kaos Fabric



Figure 28: Full Scale Image of Kaos Fabric



Figure 29: Completed Set Under Work Lights, House Center



Figure 30: Completed Set Under Work Lights, House Left

Production Photos:



Figure 31: Completed Set Under Work Lights, Act I Preset



Figure 32: Lucy's Bedroom Under Stage Lights, Act I



Figure 33: Lucy's Bedroom under Stage Lights, Act I



Figure 34: Lucy's Bedroom under Stage Lights, Act I



Figure 35: Renfield's Cell under Stage Lights, Act I



Figure 36: Renfield's Cell under Stage Lights, Act I



Figure 37: Dracula's Castle under Stage Lights, Act I



Figure 38: Dracula's Castle under Stage Lights, Act I



Figure 39: Dracula's Castle under Stage Lights, Act I



Figure 40: Dracula's Castle under Stage Lights, Act I



Figure 41: Asylum under Stage Lights, Act II Preset



Figure 42: Lucy's Tomb under Stage Lights, Act II



Figure 43: Pre-Stage Move under Stage Lights, Act II



Figure 44: Post-Stage Move under Stage Lights, Act II



Figure 45: Post-Stage Move under Stage Lights, Act II



Figure 46: Elevator under Stage Lights, Act II



Figure 47: Elevator under Stage Lights, Act II



Figure 48: Elevator under Stage Lights, Act II

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