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# The Hopeless Hope or The Poet's Passion in The Farmer's Pragmatic World: Directing Eugene O'Neill's Beyond the Horizon

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THE HOPELESS HOPE OR THE POET'S PASSION IN THE FARMER'S PRAGMATIC  
WORLD: DIRECTING EUGENE O'NEILL'S *BEYOND THE HORIZON*

By

Nicholas B. Radcliffe

B.A., National-Louis University, 2001

A Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Master of Fine Arts in Theater

Department of Theater  
In the Graduate School  
Southern Illinois University Carbondale  
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THESIS APPROVAL

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For the Degree of

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In the field of Theater

Approved by:

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Southern Illinois University Carbondale

March 29, 2016

## AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

NICHOLAS B. RADCLIFFE, for the Master of Fine Arts degree in THEATER, presented on December 14, 2015, at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

TITLE: THE HOPELESS HOPE OR THE POET'S PASSION IN THE FARMER'S PRAGMATIC WORLD: DIRECTING EUGENE O'NEILL'S *BEYOND THE HORIZON*

MAJOR PROFESSOR: Olusegun Ojewuyi

*The Hopeless Hope...* documents the process of directing *Beyond the Horizon*, presented December 11-13, 2015 in the McLeod Theater at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. The document specifically details the development of the director's vision for the production, from the initial readings and research through rehearsal, performance and post-production evaluations.

The document is organized chronologically, beginning in Chapter 1 with a discussion of the director's research and how that research influenced the analysis of the play, progressing to the development of the vision and concept. Chapter 2 details the production process from design and casting, through rehearsal and into performance. Chapter 3 is a personal evaluation of the overall process and production, including the discovery of opportunities for future growth and experimentation in the art of directing. Chapter 4 examines collaboration as a tool for the director, specifically exploring the commonalities between successful and failed collaborations, aiming to arrive at possible strategies for preventing breakdowns in collaborative partnerships.

## PREFACE

The initial process for this thesis production of *Beyond the Horizon* began with a return to a script with which I have been intimately familiar since junior year of my undergraduate studies. I attempted to read the play anew, dismissing previous notions and interpretations as much as possible. Following these initial readings and study of the text, I began to research both play and playwright. This research included critical essays, interviews, biographical materials and collections of letters written by the playwright.

The purpose of this research was to gain a deeper understanding of Eugene O'Neill (influences, background, personal aesthetic preference/perspective, etc.) and to become familiar with the criticism written by other artists and scholars. I hoped this research would unlock themes, action, and aspects of character contained in the play I may have missed on my own. In hindsight, I can say that this research and analysis was effective with regard to its intended purpose. My own personal response to the discoveries I made would have both positive and negative impacts on the process and the resultant production.

The first chapter of this document details this literary work – research, analysis and its application to the development of my vision and concept for the production. Chapter Two details the production process, from design meetings and rehearsals up to opening night. Chapter Three contains my own personal evaluation of the process, the production, and my own lessons and projections for my future work as a director. The fourth chapter is a study of the collaborative process. In it I discuss the commonalities among both successful and failed collaborations in the theatre and search for possible strategies to prevent breakdowns in the process. The research for this chapter included the reexamining of several books written specifically on directing, design and/or collaboration, as well as interviews with directors and artistic directors of LORT Theatres, and designers and directors (past and present) at SIU.

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## CHAPTER 1

### RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

#### Beginnings — O'Neill's Stylistic and Technical Influences

Eugene O'Neill's life as a playwright began in the early twentieth century. A series of short plays initially staged by the anti-commercial Provincetown Players proved to be the launching pad for his future success. O'Neill's early works, like the four play *SS Glencairn* cycle (1914-17), displayed the beginnings of a new form in dramatic literature. Strongly influenced by August Strindberg, O'Neill broke ground in the United States with his own version of the Psychological Realism trending on the European stage. With the Broadway premiere of *Beyond the Horizon*, O'Neill's developing form found the spotlight in front of the larger New York audience.

The commercial success of *Horizon* would create an irreparable rift between O'Neill and Jig Cook, the founder of The Provincetown Players. O'Neill's partnership with the Provincetown Players, and thus his platform for experimental work, was seemingly destroyed. But *Horizon* would ultimately pave the way for his more experimental work, like *The Emperor Jones*, to also reach the Broadway stage. The expressionistic form of *The Emperor Jones* proved to be one of the most concrete displays of European influence on the young O'Neill.

August Strindberg is one example of this European influence. In his Pulitzer acceptance speech of 1936, O'Neill himself cites Strindberg as the greatest influence on his writing. Strindberg's plays and novels provided O'Neill with examples for dramatizing the subjective, inner, personal turmoil's that dominate his writing. In Clara Blackburn's article "Continental Influences on Eugene O'Neill's Expressionistic Drama", she explains

that both Strindberg and O'Neill are "super-subjective" individuals. Strindberg projected his own soul onto the stage, dramatizing his personal struggles and subjective states (Blackburn 3). Naturalism required O'Neill and Strindberg to remove their subjective view of man's struggle as well as to eliminate the projection of their own personal experiences onto the stage. This subjectivity — Robert Mayo is a projection of O'Neill — is at the core of *Beyond the Horizon*.

According to Agnes Boulton (O'Neill's wife at the time *Horizon* was written) O'Neill read Strindberg's novels far more frequently and with much greater esteem than any of the great Swede's plays. Boulton also states that O'Neill may have been drawn to Strindberg for reasons more personal than literary:

Gene was very impressed by Strindberg's anguished personal life as it was shown in his novels [*The Son of a Servant* (1913) and others, all autobiographical]; particularly of his tortured relationship with the women who always seemed to be taking advantage of him. These novels Gene kept by him for many years, reading them even more frequently than the plays. I imagine he had the same feeling of identification with the great tortured Swede up to the time of his own death (Boulton as qtd. in "Strindberg and O'Neill", Hartman 2).

Strindberg and O'Neill have similarly tragic backgrounds: strong feelings of being an unwanted child, a suicide attempt, and three turbulent marriages are features of each man's biography. Both men were tormented by a view that "man's doom came at the hands of woman" (Hartman 2). O'Neill uses the relationship between Robert and Ruth to dramatize this theme in *Beyond the Horizon*.

These subjective dramatizations were, primarily, influenced by Strindberg, but Nietzsche and the Greeks had a palpable influence on the young writer as well. O'Neill, as quoted in Egil Tornqvist's article "O'Neill's Philosophical and Literary Paragons", states that he aimed to "interpret Life in terms of lives, never just lives in terms of character. I'm always acutely conscious of the Force behind" (3). Tornqvist goes on to explain how Nietzsche and O'Neill both "considered Greek tragedy the unsurpassed example of art and religion" (19). Both men found "modern life" to be "completely lacking" in the depth of spirit they recognized in the ancient texts. Ancient Greek culture, particularly the theatre, was infused with a mystic spiritualism — man's existence as part of the Life Force (2-4). The institution of Broadway, and thus the commercial success of *Beyond the Horizon*, is in direct conflict with certain aspects of the spirit these men observed to be inherent in the ancient Greek culture. But despite this material conflict, as a piece of dramatic art, *Beyond the Horizon* is a potent example of O'Neill's efforts to dramatize the fatalistic aspects of the mystical relationship between man and the universe residing at the heart of Greek tragedy.

O'Neill declared Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*, "the most stimulating book on drama ever written" (O'Neill as qtd. in "The Philosopher, the Playwright, and the Actor", Kornhaber 14) and its influence, as well as Nietzsche's theory of the superman or Übermensch, bore a clear influence on plays like *Beyond the Horizon*. Nietzsche's influence on O'Neill is immediately evident in the character of Robert Mayo. Nietzsche's ideal man, the "Superman" or "Übermensch", welcomed intense struggle, to the point of pain and suffering, with an expected result of growth and spiritual enlightenment. O'Neill, when speaking of *Horizon*, said "[A] man wills his own defeat when he pursues

the unattainable. But his struggle is his success!" (O'Neill as qtd. on Tornqvist 19) It is this simplified idea of the Superman or Übermensch I see evidenced in the character of Robert Mayo.

Nietzsche observed this pursuit of enlightenment through suffering to be at the core of Greek tragedy. One need only look to the protagonists of Sophocles and Euripides to identify characters who make choices that result in their own great suffering but who, eventually, gain at least some degree of enlightenment. Robert Mayo, O'Neill's protagonist in *Beyond the Horizon*, not only fits this basic profile of Nietzsche's Superman, but also marks the beginning of O'Neill's exploration of the Greeks' concept of mask.

There is a striking resemblance between Eugene O'Neill and the physical description of Robert Mayo: "He is a tall, slender young man...there is a touch of the poet about him expressed in his high forehead and wide, dark eyes. His features are delicate and refined, leaning to weakness in the mouth and chin" (O'Neill 1). Both character and playwright spent a year away at college while also sharing an infatuation with literature, especially poetry. In ancient Greece the mask was the onstage manifestation of the character. Strengthening the subjectivity at the heart of his writing, O'Neill wrote Robert Mayo as a mask, or on stage manifestation, of himself.

In *The Aesthetics of Failure*, Zander Brietzke posits that for O'Neill character is a matter of compatibility between multiple versions of the self (61). O'Neill's characters display an exterior persona, while also maintaining another, more private interior persona. Man's struggle against the Life Force manifests itself in the conflict between his external mask, the one he wishes to be and the internal mask, the one the Life

Force demands he must be. This concept of internal struggle between the competing needs of a character is now recognized as a basic tenet of realistic playwriting. But O'Neill was at least near, if not at, the forefront of this type of characterization in American theater.

This struggle, between the two masks of a character, is the heartbeat of the conflict in *Beyond the Horizon*. In its simplest form, Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*, breaks down the dramatic arts into a binary relationship between two masks: Order - Apollo; Disorder - Dionysus. It is this same binary conflict between order and disorder that O'Neill has placed at the heart of Robert Mayo's struggle in *Beyond the Horizon*.

Robert Mayo puts on an Apollonian mask of prudence and proportion (order) in an attempt to suppress the Dionysian mask of passion and poetry (disorder) that the Life Force demands him to embody. The struggle between these two masks goes beyond the point of pain and suffering. Searching for the secret that lies just beyond the horizon, Robert struggles to the point of death. The search for the secret drives his struggle and equals the greater spiritual significance and enlightenment also sought after by Nietzsche's Übermensch.

The dramatic action in many of O'Neill's plays centers on the reverberation or conflict between these two selves. The arc of the story is the move toward a de-masking of the central character and one of the two personas, exterior or interior, winning out over the other. Once this de-masking is complete, the play is over. The action in *Beyond the Horizon* hinges on the struggle between Robert's two masks, until the final de-masking in Act Three, Scene One when he admits his own failure. In the next scene, the finale of the play, Robert is granted his "right of release" (88). He has achieved the

greater spiritual significance of the Superman, and the play comes to an end.

*Beyond the Horizon*, provides an example of O'Neill's earliest influences: the subjectivity and projection of personal anguish taken from Strindberg, the influence of Nietzsche's writings in *The Birth of Tragedy*, his philosophy of the Superman or Übermensch and the basic tenets of Greek tragedy.

### The Dramatic World of *Beyond the Horizon*

*Beyond the Horizon*, O'Neill's first full length play to see production, premiered on the Broadway stage in 1920. It ran for 144 performances and won O'Neill the first of four Pulitzer Prizes (*Celebrant of Loss*, Black 1). Despite this success, both play and playwright saw their fair share of negative criticism. Critics categorized O'Neill's dialogue as clunky and unpoetic. They labeled O'Neill's innovative use of alternating interior and exterior settings the work of someone unfamiliar with the machinations of the theatre and blamed his innovation for the nearly four-hour running time. Today's critics often mock O'Neill's stage directions as novelistic. They say the length and detail of the descriptions is inappropriate for the theatre and that O'Neill's parentheticals seek to eliminate actors' interpretations.

I believe the stage directions perceived as novelistic and dictatorial were written out of O'Neill's frustration with the designers and performers of the day. His use of imagistic, poetic dialogue displayed the impact of the Greeks on his developing talent. The Strindbergian influence, which led O'Neill to craft dramas of a largely autobiographical nature, was evident as he wove in people and locations from his past while projecting his subjective states onto the stage. Eugene O'Neill wrote a hybrid form of naturalism and psychological realism, heightening the needs of his characters and



the worlds in which they lived. This hybrid form created new challenges for the designers and performers of the time.

The sets for *Horizon*'s original production were rooted in photorealism. They were large and clunky with lengthy changeovers killing the rhythm of the play and inflating the run time to nearly four hours. I hypothesize that O'Neill's dramatic world was, in all likelihood, impacted by the concepts of the New Stagecraft. Robert Edmond Jones, another early member of The Provincetown Players, brought concepts of the New Stagecraft back to the states following his European tour. Unfortunately, in 1920 Jones was still a relative unknown, and O'Neill did not yet have the clout to demand Jones design the original production of *Horizon*.

These new design concepts focused on imagery, with the essence and mood of the dramatic environment communicated through iconography. The work of Gordon Craig and Adolph Appia strongly influenced this imagistic approach and its use of light and shadow. This was a strong move away from the naturalistic, photo-reproductive designs of David Belasco and the like. As Jones said in *The Dramatic Imagination* (1941), a design for the stage should not present a picture, but rather an image. Jones conceived successful designs for several of O'Neill's subsequent plays. His design for *Desire Under the Elms* (1924), is cited in many books and articles as an example of the evolving New Stagecraft on the 1920s American stage. A more imagistic and less photo-reproductive approach to the design of *Horizon* would have solved many of the problems in the original production. From the purely technical side, the scene changes would have been quicker, with less disruption to the overall flow and rhythm of the production; but I also believe this approach to design would have more effectively

supported O'Neill's imagistic language. Jones was the type of designer that could have brought this type of aesthetic to *Horizon's* original production.

The settings in *Horizon* function, almost, as another character on the stage. A play's setting will often have symbolic weight, and it may restrict the characters in some way, but in *Beyond the Horizon* the location of the play, the setting, is given active, tangible power and control. I can think of many plays in which a general change of location, urban to rural or vice versa, would fail to redirect the course of events. But if the location of *Horizon* were changed after the first scene, nearly all of the conflict would disappear. Robert would, based on the text, get a job having something to do with writing, or at least, something for which he is more naturally fit. His marriage with Ruth would, in all likelihood, succeed. The major source of conflict would be removed.

The farm is a physical prison for Robert, holding him back and preventing him from achieving his dream. The impact of the farm on Robert's health is evidenced in his physical appearance. Its impact on Ruth and Robert's relationship is evidenced in their arguments; the farm is the main source of their conflict. These types of impacts on characters, the control the farm exerts over Robert, its impact on his physical health and his marriage, are most typically forces exerted by other characters, not purely by location.

The impact of the farm on Robert is concretized throughout the play, but the farm also reflects Robert's physical and emotional health. The symbiotic relationship between Robert and the farm is a critical element in the world of the play. As the farm's control over Robert is concretized in his physical health and his arguments with Ruth, the interiors display the wear and tear from years of neglect. The deterioration of the apple

tree illustrates this same impact on the exterior. The tree is alive and blooming in the first scene, but by the end of the play, the tree is dead and rotten. This visual deterioration of the setting in concert with the deterioration of Robert's physical health, his marriage to Ruth and her own emotional state, concretizes the symbiotic relationship between the farm and its inhabitants.

The farm, specifically the farmhouse, is a prison to Robert and Ruth, while the exteriors provide a place to dream. Out of doors the characters can see the horizon that promises a happier, more peaceful existence. There is a strong juxtaposition between the world that exists on this side of the hills (the onstage world), and the world that exists beyond the hills, closer to the horizon.

A realistic, photo-reproductive design could limit a designer's ability to concretize this relationship between character and environment. A nonrealistic design, with a strong use of imagery and iconography, could be very effective in illustrating the relationship between the farm and the characters. Removing the need for realism opens up many more creative opportunities.

The imagistic poetry that could inform such a design is evidenced on the first page of *Beyond the Horizon*.

A section of country highway. ...winding toward the horizon like a pale ribbon between the low rolling hills with their freshly plowed fields clearly divided from each other, checkerboard fashion... ...a section of field from the dark earth of which myriad bright-green

blades of fall sown rye are sprouting (O'Neill 1)<sup>1</sup>.

These words are alive with movement and color, they are not a sterile depiction of the play's locale. A designer who recognizes the difference between the descriptions of O'Neill and those of his contemporaries, will be freed from the shackles of photographic realism. The designer is free to conjure the essence of the environment using only the essential elements. Suggestive, fragmented or poetic realism, all stemming from The New Stagecraft, would make a beautiful and effective contribution to a production of this piece.

Critics, both then and now, claim O'Neill's language falls short of the poetic and argue there is an overall clunkiness to his structure and style ("O'Neill and the cult of sincerity", Wikander 220). O'Neill wrote in a language that exists in the subjective world of his plays. Neither the audience nor the actors of the time had experience with a hybrid poetic/naturalistic text. In all likelihood the lines of dialogue felt odd to the actors and sounded odd to the audience, leading to the conclusion that the writing fell short of the poetic. It is my experience as a student, audience member, acting teacher, and director that performers often fall into the trap of playing O'Neill in a melodramatic fashion. This is something I aimed to avoid while directing *Beyond the Horizon*.

I have seen actors interpret O'Neill's punctuation as an indication of lengthy pauses; they also appear to be playing moods and emotions rather than needs or intentions. Another trap is sprung when many performers read O'Neill as strictly naturalistic. They seek to create that style in performance and in doing so inhibit the

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<sup>1</sup> All citations refer to the 1996, Dover Thrift, print edition of *Beyond the Horizon*.

imagery and poetry O'Neill has constructed. Unlocking O'Neill's poetry means letting go of a desire to sound "natural" on stage and, instead, embracing the theatrical world he has penned for us.

The performance of O'Neill's text should also consider his thoughts on mask. His exploration of the concept was not solely related to the conflict in his characters. O'Neill also developed and wrote about his ideas on mask as they relate to performance. O'Neill recorded these thoughts in his *Dramatist's Notebook*, quoted here from an article by David Kornhaber:

The most splendid creative energy in actors have come where the play took them away from the strictly realistic parts they were accustomed to playing. ...a move toward masked drama is to create a chance for the actor to develop his art beyond the narrow range to which our present theatre condemns it. Usually, it is only the actors' faces that participate. Their bodies remain bored spectators that have been dragged off to the theatre. ...their bodies [should] become alive and expressive and participate in the drama ...a totally new kind of acting (38).

I interpret O'Neil's words to be an admonition for the actor to have a more holistically trained physical instrument. According to O'Neill's own observations, in his *Dramatist's Notebook* the performance traditions of the time left the actors unable to physically embody the text as he envisioned it. These thoughts are reflected in many other articles and books with O'Neill as the main subject.

I believe this problem persists in some contemporary productions of O'Neill's

work because of a perceived obligation to the performance traditions of the time in which his plays premiered. My research points toward a common belief that much of O'Neill's early work — including *Beyond the Horizon* — was naturalistic and that his work in expressionism did not begin until *The Emperor Jones* and *The Great God Brown* (*Brown* would use actual physical masks in its performance). This leads me to the conclusion that many producers, directors, and performers fail to recognize that, in *Horizon*, O'Neill was writing a form that requires an approach different from the naturalistic one often associated with the work.

Careful attention must be paid to the details of O'Neill's text — punctuation, rhythm, imagery, repetition, onomatopoeia. Basic actor training in playing Shakespeare teaches the importance of these elements, often called Folio Technique, in unlocking the text of the bard. My own undergraduate actor training was focused in Shakespeare and this Folio Technique. With his heightened poetic language in mind, I worked with the cast in the application of a modified folio technique, in the hopes of creating effective performances of O'Neill's text.

#### Given Circumstances

*Beyond the Horizon* takes place in rural Connecticut in 1918. The action covers a span of eight years: Act One takes place in the spring — a season of birth and new beginnings; Act Two takes place three years later, in the summer — the season of life and prosperity, and the third act takes place in the fall — a season of withering, death and decay. The onstage locations are limited to the exterior and interior of the Mayo farm. Through the action and the dialogue O'Neill is able to establish a strong binary between the two worlds. The exterior of the farm is the equal to Robert's poetry. It is a

world of passion where the characters are free to dream in the expansive outdoors – the infinite horizon stretched out before them.

The farmhouse interior represents the rewards and the reasons for toiling in the fields day after day. The concrete, tangible nature of the interior restricts the characters' thoughts and discussions to the work that provides "...the orderly comfort of a simple, hard earned prosperity, enjoyed and maintained by the family as a unit" (O'Neill 15). This is a prison for a man like Robert.

The socioeconomic status of the Mayo family can also be gleaned from O'Neill's description of the interior. The family is economically secure. They live simply but comfortably. It can be inferred that the Atkins farm is reasonably similar to the Mayo farm in size and production. There are multiple references to Mrs. Atkins's savings and the use of them to help Robert and Ruth limp along as the Mayo farm continues to disintegrate. This creates some sense that the Atkins are in a slightly higher socioeconomic class than the Mayos.

O'Neill makes no reference to the politics, economics, or social concerns of the time; he almost conspicuously leaves out dollar amount costs or value of goods and services. The play is tightly focused on Robert's struggle within himself and against the Life Force in pursuit of his dream. Robert's struggle, as well as Andrew's, occurs in isolation from the typically impactful social circumstances of the period. Considering this and O'Neill's own words in his *Dramatist's Notebook* regarding the focus of his writing, "Life in terms of Lives", I conclude O'Neill to have written a phenomenological representation, using Robert Mayo as the experiential lens, of rural life in the American northeast during the early part of the twentieth century.

Socio-economic/political concerns of the period are excluded to ensure that the focus of the story remains on Robert's experience of life on the farm. If O'Neill were to bring those circumstances from the period into the world of his play, Robert's story would lose a great deal of its subjectivity as the audience begins to relate to the historical events on a more personal level and less so through the lens of Robert Mayo. This manner of examination, as I understand it — bracketing off material reality to focus on the analysis of localized experience — points to phenomenological reduction.

The given circumstances as they relate to each character will be discussed in their individual analyses.

### Analysis

O'Neill made the following statement about *Horizon* in 1922:

The higher the dream, the more impossible it is to realize fully. A man wills his own defeat when he pursues the unattainable. But his struggle is his success! He is an example of the spiritual significance which life attains when it aims high enough, when the individual fights all the hostile forces within and without himself to a future of nobler values (Diggins 266).

O'Neill is describing Robert Mayo, his protagonist in *Beyond the Horizon*. *Beyond the Horizon* is Robert's story — a story about a man willing to suffer and sacrifice in pursuit of greater spiritual enlightenment — in pursuit of the secret that lies beyond the horizon.

The following analysis is focused on the moment to moment conflicts in the play as they relate to my vision. This provided a concrete roadmap to guide the storytelling



during the initial stages of rehearsal.

Robert plans to leave the farm and join his uncle on the high seas for a three-year voyage. Robert's brother, Andrew, plans to marry Ruth, the neighbor's daughter, and eventually take over both farms. Fates change when Robert reveals his love for Ruth. She reciprocates and Robert, deciding love is the biggest dream of all, chooses to stay on the farm and learn to be a true Mayo like his brother Andrew. Andrew is devastated by the loss of Ruth and decides to take Robert's place with Uncle Dick.

Trading places sets each man on a path in direct opposition to his nature. Robert, the poet, remains farming the land while Andrew, the farmer, takes up the romantic life of the seaman. The consequences of these decisions and the conflict between each brother's inner and outer mask is the driving action of the play. This driving action plays out in each man's struggle to live in opposition to the Life Force, his natural place in the universe – his true self.

Robert's decision to stay on the farm leads to great suffering for both Ruth and him. Their relationship disintegrates under the stress and pressures of running a farm, having a child, and taking care of Ruth's paralytic mother. Horrible, hurtful words are said by both characters, and between Act Two and Act Three their daughter dies. Robert's lack of knowledge, experience, and success tarnishes the Mayo family name. The local hands will not work for Robert, because the other hands shame them for it. Eventually the more experienced men start taking advantage of Robert, several of them robbing him blind. In the end he is left unable to pay his help. The state of the farm reflects the state of the characters living there; it is in shambles, and the family appears to be both emotionally and financially bankrupt.

Andrew's decision to leave makes an equal contribution to the farm's demise. His love for the farm is replaced with greed, and his father dies, presumably of a broken heart resulting from Andrew's abandonment of the family and the property.

As the play progresses, the condition of the farm and the characters goes steadily downhill. Andrew and Robert continue to fight for their respective dreams throughout the play. No matter how desperate the situation becomes, neither character gives up on his goal for more than a few moments. It is this tenacity in pursuit of their dreams, as well as the dreams themselves, that keeps the audience interested in what can become a very depressing story.

Both Andrew and Robert depart from their natural course because of love. Robert abandons his dream, his search for the secret that lies beyond the horizon, for the love of Ruth. Andrew runs away from the farm and his natural place in the universe to avoid the pain of losing Ruth to his younger brother. The theoretical influences on O'Neill and the philosophical core of his writing will be discussed for decades to come, but, in the end, these characters make their decisions based on love.

Robert makes his decisions in pursuit of love while Andrew makes his initial decision running away from love. As the story progresses Robert continues to pursue his love for Ruth, while Andrew loses himself to greed. It is important to note that Andrew's greed is fueled by a nobler desire to someday return home and turn the Mayo farm into a superior operation. This motivation makes it possible to tie the source of Andrew's greed back to his love for his family.

### ACT ONE, SCENE ONE

O'Neill establishes the conflict between the farm and the poet, and then uses

Robert and Ruth's actions in the first scene to light the fuse on the explosion that changes the stasis within the world of the play.

It is spring, a season of birth and new beginnings, the farm is being plowed and prepared for planting. The play opens with, what would appear to be, a typical exchange between the two brothers. O'Neill uses a jovial, ritualized conversation between Andrew and Robert to quickly establish the inherent conflicts at the core of the play: Poet versus Farmer and Passion versus Pragmatism. A very tactile example of this conflict occurs on page two of the play:

Andrew: What is it this time — poetry, I'll bet. (He reaches for the book.) Let me see.

Robert: (Handing it to him rather reluctantly.) Yes, it's poetry. Look out you don't get it full of dirt.

Andrew: That isn't dirt — it's good clean earth; but I'll be careful of the old thing. I just wanted to take a peep at it (O'Neill 2).

O'Neill's use of the tactile as well as the juxtaposition of terminology, earth versus dirt, concretizes the conflict between poet and farmer. When James Mayo enters the scene, the juxtaposition between Robert and farm life is highlighted even further:

Mayo: Hello boys! What are you two doin' there roostin' on the fence like a pair of hens?

Robert: (Laughing.) Oh, just talking things over, Pa.

Andrew: (With a sly wink.) Rob's trying to get me into reading poetry. He thinks my education's been neglected.

Mayo: (Chuckling.) That's good! You kin go out and sing it to the

stock at nights to put 'em to sleep. What's that he's got there — 'nother book? Good Lord, I thought you'd read every book there was in the world, Robert; and here you go and finds 'nother one!

Robert: (With a smile.) There's still a few left Pa (4).

O'Neill very quickly establishes Robert's lifelong, inherent conflict with the family farm.

The Mayos and the Scotts are two halves of the same family, with one half more agriculturally inclined, and the other half far more fitted to the romantic life of the sea. Each son and each parent belong to one of these two halves.

Robert: ...well, you're the Mayo branch of the family, and I take after Ma and Uncle Dick. It's natural enough when you come to think of it. The Mayos have been farmers from way back, while the Scotts have been mostly seafaring folks...

Andrew: You do favor Ma. I remember she used always to have her nose in a book when I was a kid; but she seems to have given it up of late years.

Robert: (With a trace of bitterness.) The farm has claimed her in spite of herself. That's what I'm afraid it might do to me in time; and that's why I feel I ought to get away. ...You're a Mayo through and through. You're wedded to the soil. ...Father is the same. This farm is his life-work, and he's happy in knowing that another Mayo, inspired by the same love, will take up the work where he leaves off (6).

O'Neill uses the farm as a mask — or to represent the pragmatism and prudence

tied to the "true Mayo"— while the sea is a mask for passion and freedom — tied to the Scotts. At this point in the play a balance exists between the Mayos (Pragmatism/Farm) and the Scotts (Passion/Poetry) — two and two. The world of the play is in stasis.

The first small explosion in the play is felt when Robert confesses his love to Ruth and she reciprocates (through the first thirteen pages O'Neill has built up the Mayos' assumption that Ruth's heart belongs to Andrew). O'Neill will continue to build up this assumption in the next scene. Clearly establishing this assumption makes the confession of the young couple's love an even greater blow to the family. Ruth says it is Robert she has loved "right along" (13). Ruth begs Robert to stay on the farm and, after nearly a full page of protest, he gives in, promising Ruth he will stay.

O'Neill spends the first thirteen pages of the script establishing, concretely, Robert's incompatibility with the farm and the inherent conflict between the Mayo/Scott personalities. On page fourteen, Robert commits to a life on the Mayo farm. The stage is set for the drama, and the core of my vision, to unfold — Robert, a poet with a spine of passion, will attempt to make a life in the pragmatic world of the farm and he will do it, all in the name of love.

## ACT ONE, SCENE TWO

On page one, the play's stasis includes a balance between the Mayo (Farmer) and Scott (Poet) personalities. There are two of each: Robert and his mother, representing the Scotts/Poets; while Andrew and James represent the Mayos/Farmers. O'Neill leverages this familial binary to create a house divided over many subjects, including the subject of Robert's trip. Mrs. Mayo wishes Robert wouldn't go, saying the whole point of the trip was to get him well — but now he is well, so the trip is no longer

needed. Andrew comes to his defense by reminding everyone that Robert wants to go, “He’s been dreaming over this trip since it was first talked about” (18). There is a sense of dramatic irony created for the audience as they watch these debates unfold with the knowledge that Robert has already changed his plans.

The house is also divided in regard to Ruth and the expectations for her future. Mr. Mayo is hopeful that Andrew and Ruth will eventually marry. He explains:

...there’s advantages for both o’ them in this match...The Atkins farm is right next to ourn. Jined together they’d make a jim-dandy of a place...And bein’ a widder with only a daughter...She needs a man, a first-class farmer, to take hold o’ things; and Andy’s just the one (20).

But Mrs. Mayo knows that Ruth’s heart already lies with Robert. James Mayo is approaching love from a very pragmatic perspective, the perspective of the Farmer. Kate takes a much more instinctual even poetic approach to the matter.

O’Neill establishes an environment in which Robert’s change of plans will upset some and shock everyone. The dramatic irony O’Neill has constructed helps to keep the audience hooked into the story as they await the family’s reactions to the information they already have. The action of the scene builds to this moment. Andrew’s response to Robert’s news takes the conflict and the pitch of the scene to the next level.

Andrew, very quickly, decides that he will take Robert’s place on the *Sunda* with Uncle Dick. The initial conflict that occurs as a result of this decision is between father and son, James and Andrew, the two “true Mayos”. James Mayo, Andrew’s partner or match in the binary, is able to see through everything he says and call him a bold faced

liar. Any of the characters in the play can probably see through Andrew's words. But in the world O'Neill creates, it seems James, the other half of the pair, is the only one that can say it to him. This type of pairing reoccurs with Robert throughout the second and third acts.

Andrew's final line in the scene, "Everything'll turn out all right in the end" (33), presents an opportunity for both actor and director. Andrew believes these words. The more the audience believes these words, the more hope they will have. Everything will turn out all right in the end. They will have doubt, but just like Robert, they must have hope — however hopeless that hope may be.

#### ACT TWO, SCENE ONE

Act Two, Scene One moves ahead three years. It is summer, a season of life and prosperity. It is spring in the opening scene, and the season seems to align with the overall mood and condition of the farm and its characters. But moving forward into summer there is a strong contrast between the season and the overall mood and condition of the farm and the family. In summer, the season of life and prosperity, the audience learns of the death of James Mayo and that under Robert's leadership, the farm is failing. Robert may, in fact, need to take out a mortgage to financially survive until the harvest.

Mrs. Atkins and Mrs. Mayo, who open the scene together, are the perfect antithesis of one another. Mrs. Atkins is blunt, insensitive, and even cruel. Mrs. Mayo strives to keep her calm and handle any comment by Mrs. Atkins in a diplomatic fashion. This contrast between the two characters creates an inherent conflict on stage. The struggle between the two provides the exposition the audience needs to fill in the

gap of the last three years. This same struggle continues when Ruth enters the stage. Mrs. Atkins continues to belittle Robert and his efforts while Mrs. Mayo and Ruth continue to defend him. O'Neill writes four pages of exposition in a way that still puts active conflict on the stage.

The atmosphere of the farm is dominated by sorrow and despair, but O'Neill provides a spark of hope in Andrew's imminent arrival. Mrs. Mayo, Mrs. Atkins, Ruth, and Robert all excitedly await Andrew's return from three years at sea. This is another example of how O'Neill masterfully scores the ebb and flow of hope and despair throughout the play.

Ruth's sense of hope is heightened. Her suffering and disappointment at the hands of Robert's failure have raised the stakes on Andrew's return. Andrew's letter, folded pages in an envelope handled only by Ruth, performs her secret feelings and makes the invisible visible. The tighter Ruth clings to Andrew's letter the more she distances herself from Robert.

Robert sacrificed his dream, a life of adventure seeing the world by sea, for a new dream – a life of love and passion with Ruth. Baby Mary is the physical manifestation of that dream. Robert's palpable love for Mary is an active attempt to care for that dream, to foster it and keep it alive. When Robert enters the room the first thing he does is kiss Ruth on the cheek. Immediately following that kiss all of his attention turns to Mary.

Ruth threatens to whip Mary, and Robert comes to a stern defense. Robert rescues Mary from this whipping. He rescues the dream and the love they once shared from further abuse and possible destruction. Robert puts Mary down for her nap and



turns his attention to his books; his inner poet is fighting its way to the surface. This creates another small explosion and intensifies the conflict between Ruth and Robert. This argument is the first time Ruth stops herself just short of calling Robert a failure.

Skillfully sculpting the highs and lows of the scene, O'Neill enables Robert to return to calm and show his still deep love and compassion for Ruth. He makes an agreement with her — she will be encouraging, and he will be on time for meals. He kisses her on the head and for a moment the audience has hope — love lives — but on the very next page the audience is slammed back into hopelessness. Ben, the hired man, comes into the house and quits the farm. Robert has an opportunity, in this moment, to show Ruth what he is capable of and regain her faith, confidence, and love. But Robert's inability to control or dominate Ben, despite what reads to me as a proper handling of the situation, reignites Ruth's ire for him. The hired man is lost, Ruth is furious and, as a result, another fight breaks out between the couple.

In the middle of this argument O'Neill brings the pitch back down and creates a strong juxtaposition between Robert and Ruth's individual perceptions of the situation. Robert gives his own imagined account of Andrew's adventures. The audience hears Robert's longing for the dream he sacrificed. Ruth's mindfulness of the present moment, the failure of the farm and all that is bearing down on them, is a stark contrast to Robert's romantic musings. This conflict reignites the argument. This is the second time in just a few pages that Ruth stops short of calling Robert a failure. James is Andrew's perfect match in the binary, so he is able to reflect Andrew's truth back to him. As is evidenced in the arc of Robert's journey, he has no match within the play. Since Ruth is not Robert's match in the binary between Farmer and Poet, she is unable to tell him this

truth that he is a failure.

The scene continues to build until Robert and Ruth explode. Ruth tells Robert she regrets marrying him, saying: “Oh, if I’d only known! If I hadn’t been such a fool to listen to your cheap, silly, poetry talk that you learned out of books! If I could have seen how you were in your true self — like you are now — I’d have killed myself before I’d have married you!” (48). Ruth devalues Robert’s books in this line, privileges the pragmatism needed to successfully run the farm, and insults Robert’s “true self”. This argument reinforces the core of the story – Robert’s internal struggle between the binary aspects of his personality and the fight for a dream he is not capable of accomplishing.

Ruth continues to describe her longing for Andrew’s arrival because: “He’ll attend to things like they should be. He’ll show what a man can do! I don’t need you. Andy’s coming!” (48). Robert uncorks on Ruth in much the same fashion: “And now — I am finding out what you’re really like — what a — a creature I’ve been living with. God! It wasn’t that I haven’t guessed how mean and small you are — but I’ve kept on telling myself that I must be wrong — like a fool! — like a damned fool!” (48).

The argument reaches its pinnacle when Ruth declares her love for Andrew and Robert responds by calling her a slut. O’Neill puts the final punctuation on the moment by scripting a loud cry from the baby — the manifestation of their love — just as Andrew arrives. Mary cries out in suffering as her parents’ love is suffering and the dream is dying. Act Two, Scene One closes with the hope that surrounded Andrew’s return overshadowed by a slew of possibly negative repercussions.

## ACT TWO, SCENE TWO

Robert is left alone to contemplate his dream – is it dead, is there still something

to fight for, did he make a tragic error in judgment? He takes Mary, the physical manifestation of that dream, to the highest point on the farm – to the place he has always gone to dream – and he asks her how she would feel if he went away. Mary gets very upset and begs Robert not to go. This is in stark contrast to the end of Act Two, Scene One, when Ruth tells Robert she would be glad to get rid of him. Mary represents the last of Robert's hope for happiness with Ruth. If Mary tells Robert he should stay, then there is still hope. Mary keeps Robert's hope alive when she tells him, "Dada mustn't go 'way. Mary loves Dada" (52).

Act Two, Scene Two is a mirror of the play's opening scene. Robert begins the scene alone with his dream, his passion: the poetry and the dreams of what lies beyond the horizon. In Act Two, Scene Two that passion is Mary, the physical manifestation of his love for Ruth. In the next section of the scene Andrew and Robert discuss the farm, but this time, rather than discussing Andrew's love for the farm, the audience hears more of Robert's scorn for the farm. The audience also hears Andrew's disgust with the trip that Robert envies. The degree to which each man is mismatched to his journey and his environment is made concrete.

Mary remains on stage for the entire conversation between Robert and Andrew, just like the poetry book in the opening scene. O'Neill could have used the child's presence to heighten the tension between the two brothers; after all, she is the product of Robert and Ruth's marriage – a marriage that was supposed to be between Andrew and Ruth. But Andrew enters and instantly picks the little girl up, tickling her and making her laugh. This removes any tension that could be created by Mary's presence.

The audience has no reason to believe, at this point in the play, Andrew's

feelings for Ruth have changed. So her declaration of love and his arrival set up the probability, in the audience's mind, for certain outcomes. Andrew's interaction with Mary rattles these possible outcomes and raises new questions in the audience's mind. Now instead of waiting for the other shoe to drop, the audience is left unsure of exactly what the other shoe is.

Five pages into the scene Andrew tells Robert that it took less than six months to forget all about Ruth and to realize he never loved her after all. This moment reverberates against Ruth's declaration of love for Andrew, eliminating any possible future between them and further complicating her relationship with Robert.

When Ruth enters and Robert exits, the mirroring of Act One, Scene One continues. This scene between Ruth and Andrew is an antithetical reflection of the opening scene between Ruth and Robert. Robert professes his love for Ruth in Act One, Scene One; she reciprocates and convinces him to stay on the farm. In this scene the tables are turned; Ruth is now the one with romantic feelings to express, but Andrew never gives her the chance. He explains that he left the farm three years ago as a silly young man, and there is no need to worry about any other such foolishness going forward. Ruth's hopes are crushed, and the audience is left wondering how the revelation of Andrew's feelings will impact her relationship with Robert.

Andrew explains to Ruth that he has a plan to take the load of the farm off of Robert. For a moment it seems the farm could be saved and, without any mutual feelings between Andrew and Ruth, there is some hope that her relationship with Robert could be repaired. But Andrew delivers another blow when he confesses that he does not intend to stay permanently. While he intends to be on the farm long enough to set

things right, he has his own dream to pursue in Buenos Aires. When Captain Scott arrives, Andrew is given the opportunity to leave the farm and pursue his dream immediately. Andrew's rapid departure heightens the tension surrounding the farm and drives the final nail in the coffin of its impending doom. Andrew leaves with the intention of returning. His motivation is to make enough money so that when he returns home he can improve the farm beyond anyone's wildest dreams.

Until this moment the audience has at least some hope for the future of the farm, and with it, perhaps a reconciliation of the young married couple. But with the last hope for the farm leaving on a boat for Buenos Aires and Ruth and Robert's expressed hatred of one another, both the characters and the audience are left wondering how Andrew could have possibly been correct about everything turning out all right in the end.

### ACT THREE, SCENE ONE

In Act Two, Scene Two the play goes outdoors so that each character's dream can be explored once again. The lofty dreams and romantic experiences of Robert, Andrew, and Ruth cannot be expressed in the confines of the farmhouse. But in Act Three, Scene One the action returns to those restrictive, oppressive indoors.

Five more years have passed. Mother Mayo and Mary have both died. Robert is terribly ill — presumably his old trouble has returned. But the sudden plunge in his health seems most attributable to the heartbreak of losing Mary, their "last hope of happiness" (70). Her death signaled the death of any remaining hope or love between Ruth and Robert — the dreamer is left without a reason to live.

Along with Robert, the farm has also slipped into an even deeper state of disrepair. In Act One, Scene Two O'Neill describes the interior of the farmhouse "...the

atmosphere is one of the orderly comfort of a simple, hard-earned prosperity, enjoyed and maintained by the family as a unit" (15). In this scene O'Neill's description is a full 180 degrees from the start of the play: "The whole atmosphere of the room, contrasted with that of former years, is one of an habitual poverty too hopelessly resigned to be any longer ashamed or even conscious of itself" (67). The symbiotic relationship between the farm and its inhabitants is undeniably visible in this scene.

As the scene begins, whatever small amount of hope that exists is, once again, tied to Andrew's arrival. This time the hope is twofold. Ruth and Mrs. Atkins believe Andrew will have the money to rescue the farm from its demise and that the specialist coming with him will be able to save Robert's life as well.

The initial conflict in the scene takes place between Ruth and Robert. Robert is in firm denial about the seriousness of his condition, believing he has reached the turning point and will only get stronger from here on out. Ruth tries to manage Robert by encouraging him to go back to bed, or to at least sit by the stove where it is warmer. Robert refuses and continues to deny the desperate nature of his condition. Robert, over the next few pages, takes the time to process the last few years of his life.

Robert tries to empathize with Ruth. He apologizes for the hardships she has experienced. He demonstrates his frustration and jealousy of Andrew's adventures and success. He mourns the loss of his daughter and lashes out against the abuse of his mother-in-law. It is the final battle between Robert's two masks — the Farmer he has fought so hard to be, and the Poet that has been fighting so hard to get out. Finally Robert completes his journey — as he admits his failure on the farm, and his de-masking is complete. It is this admission of failure that will free him, in the next scene, to

finally go beyond the horizon.

The Poet, no longer buried under the mask of the Farmer, is free to share a new dream. Robert details a dream of a new life for Ruth and him, a life far more in sync with Robert's true self. They will move to the city and Robert will write. Robert will show her that all of his reading does in fact have worth. Robert declares to her: "Why shouldn't we have a future? We're young yet. If we can only shake off the curse of this farm! It's the farm that's ruined our lives, damn it!" (71). Once Ruth agrees to go with him to the city, Robert begins to fight for that future. He refuses to sit down, he declares that now all his strength is returning. But when he looks to his precious horizon to see the sun rising as an, "augury of good fortune" he sees nothing but "the black rim of the damned hills outlined in creeping greyness" (73).

Andrew arrives with the specialist, who immediately goes into the bedroom to have a look at Robert. Andrew questions Ruth about the condition of the farm and Robert's health. For the first time in the play, instead of blaming Robert for every problem, someone puts the onus on Ruth. Andrew also tells Ruth of his wins and losses in the wheat pits of Buenos Aires. The conflict in this part of the scene comes from Andrew's difficulty in processing, understanding, and accepting the present circumstances and his helplessness in combatting them. He continues to fight for a solution to the problems on the farm, including his brother's failing health.

Just a few lines after Robert emerges from the bedroom he states: "I know I am dying" (80). O'Neill provides a stage direction at this moment: "Ruth bows her head and covers her face with her hands. She remains like this all during the scene between the two brothers" (80-81). O'Neill uses this stage direction to isolate Ruth from the brothers,

while still keeping her on stage. Ruth's response shows the audience, that despite her words, she still cares for Robert. It is one of several moments in the scene where O'Neill provides the opportunity for Ruth to actively love Robert. These opportunities are important to Ruth's arc. Her character is widely considered to be O'Neill's misogynistic depiction of woman's role in the failure and suffering of man. Given the Strindbergian influence on O'Neill and the piece, this interpretation certainly seems to be valid. But, for my money, it is always much more interesting to watch a character struggle with their love and their pain than it is to just watch them be cruel.

The key to this interpretation was in the performance of the subtext. I worked with the actor to create a Ruth who fights her own internal battle between the real love she feels for Robert and the inherent understanding that Andrew would provide an easier, simpler existence.

Robert, having completed his own de-masking earlier in the scene, now tries to help Andrew find enlightenment and return to his roots as a Farmer. Andrew's greed prevents him from being his best, truest self. It is the mask of the Farmer that will lead Andrew to the harmonious place Robert speaks to him about. The following speech from Robert is a microcosm of Andrew's journey up to this point in the play, and a foreshadowing of things to come.

Robert: You — a farmer — to gamble in a wheat pit with scraps of paper. There's a spiritual significance in that picture...you're the deepest-dyed failure of the three Andy. You've spent eight years running away from yourself. Do you see what I mean? You used to be a creator when you loved the farm. You and life were in



harmonious partnership. And now — ...you're gambling with the thing you used to love to create proves how far astray you've gotten from the truth. So you'll be punished. You'll have to suffer to win back — (82).

Andrew's de-masking will not be completed in the course of the play. It is Robert's story; he is the protagonist, and because it is his phenomenological lens through which the audience experiences the events of the play, his de-masking is the only one that can be completed. Andrew will have to suffer, just as Robert has suffered, to complete his de-masking. Andrew will be forced to rebuild his connection to that which he abandoned.

Andrew goes into the bedroom to get a pillow for Robert's chair. Robert, "looks at Ruth who shrinks away from him in terror. Robert smiles bitterly" (80). When Andrew comes back on stage, Robert says that he will be quiet, once he has made his "position clear". His next line, "In the first place I know I'm dying" (80) leads Ruth to bow her head and cover her face with her hands. I think O'Neill intended Ruth to do this in anticipation of Robert telling Andrew about their fight five years earlier and her declaration of love for Andrew. Robert does none of this. In any case, the exchange of looks between Robert and Ruth when Andrew goes off stage, seems inconsistent with the exchange between Robert and Ruth earlier in the scene. When Robert goes back to his bedroom, Ruth has just agreed to move to the city with him and there is a definitively positive energy between them. When Robert comes back out his perspective has changed; going into his bedroom he believed himself on the road to recovery, but after the doctor's visit he now recognizes his imminent death. Regardless of this new discovery for Robert, the

description of a fearful response from Ruth and what sounds like a malicious response from Robert, seems incongruous to the earlier moments in the scene. This inconsistency points to the most glaring weakness in O'Neill's script — the clarity of Ruth's feelings for either man and the clarity of Robert's true feelings for Ruth after their argument in Act Two, Scene One.

As the director of the production I was obligated to make a choice about the feelings of both characters. I recognized that I could not tell a muddy story, regardless of the muddiness in the writing. I made the choice that Ruth never really loved Andrew. Her words to Robert in Act Two, Scene One come out of disappointment and anger. I intended to have Act Three, Scene One play out as a reconciliation between the two characters, a rediscovery of their love for one another. Robert tells Andrew to marry Ruth out of love for her. Robert may, as Andrew says, already know that Ruth will be taken care of without marrying him, but he also recognizes her suffering and wishes the rest of her life to be filled with the happiness he could not provide her. Andrew will be able to provide for her, and in that provision perhaps they can find love together.

In this production Ruth was not directed to sit with her head bowed, hands over her face. Ruth was staged in a way that distanced her from the conversation. Ruth takes this action out of respect for what she knows will likely be the last conversation between the two brothers. She sat in an elevated position, the dining room table on the upper level of the set, observing the conversation as it took place on the lower level just a few feet away. Ruth was still in a position that would enable her to leap into action if her husband needed her.

At the end of the conversation Robert goes into the bedroom, leaving Andrew

and Ruth alone again. There is a looming conflict from Act Two, Scene One that must now be resolved. Because Robert has insisted Andrew marry Ruth, Ruth must now tell Andrew about the fight between her and Robert just before his arrival five years ago. This conflict must be resolved to satisfy the audience, but dramatically it raises the stakes attached to Robert's request and Andrew's promise to marry Ruth after he dies.

Andrew is devastated by the news of their argument five years earlier, believing Ruth's actions are to blame for Robert's impending death. He orders Ruth to tell Robert that it was all a mistake, that she never loved Andrew and she only said what she did because she was angry. Andrew knows it is too late to save his brother, but if Ruth does this, perhaps he can at least pass on in peace. Ruth agrees, reluctantly, but when she goes into the bedroom to speak to Robert, she discovers he has crawled out of the bedroom window. O'Neill has ratcheted the tension up to its highest point heading into the play's final scene.

Throughout the play O'Neill brings the characters to these moments of nearly resolving conflict. Then, in Wagnerian fashion, he masterfully halts the resolution to heighten the tension or uses the resolution itself to create further complication and initiate a conflict with even greater stakes.

### ACT THREE, SCENE TWO

Act Three, Scene Two, the play's final movement, is all resolution. The audience knows Robert is going to die. The conflict within the scene comes from Andrew's very active attempts to save his brother. While Robert, not resigned to his fate, looks forward to the freedom of release, Andrew makes multiple attempts to move Robert back to the house, to put him in his bed. But Robert spurns these overtures and explains to Andrew

the peace and beauty of what now lies before him. Robert also takes this last opportunity to pass the lesson he has learned on to his brother before he goes:

Robert: You mustn't feel sorry for me. It's ridiculous! Don't you see I'm happy at last — because I'm making a start to the far off places — free — free! — freed from the farm — free to wander on and on — eternally! ...I've won to my trip — the right of release — *Beyond the Horizon*! ...Andy! Remember Ruth — Ruth has suffered — and for your own sake and hers — remember, Andy — only through sacrifice — the secret be-yond there — The sun! Remember! (88).

These are Robert's last words.

After Robert passes, Andrew explodes in anger at Ruth because she failed to keep her promise and tell Robert that her words in Act Two, Scene One came solely out of anger — that she never meant them. Andrew blames Ruth for Robert's death, calling her a murderess. But Ruth appeals to Andrew using Robert's own words and cites the peace he found in death without her keeping the promise she made to Andrew. Andrew apologizes for his outburst and seems to accept Ruth's words as a sort of apology as well. This brings the onstage conflict between Andrew and Ruth to a close. Andrew accepts Ruth's suffering and is willing to forgive her words and actions over the last five years as being the result of that horrible suffering. I hoped, when Andrew forgives Ruth, the audience would as well.

### Character Analysis

The majority of the characters in *Beyond the Horizon* can be separated into the aforementioned two binary groups, the Farmers (Practicality/Order) and the Poets

(Passion/Disorder). The Farmers are pragmatic and prudent. The Poets are romantic dreamers. O'Neill uses dialogue, action, and physical description to create a strong juxtaposition between these two groups on stage. The action of the play is fueled by this contrast between the two groups. *Horizon* is driven by the interconnected lives of the characters. Just as O'Neill says, he is interpreting life in terms of lives, not just life in terms of character (Tornqvist 3).

O'Neill begins to establish these two groups and their inherent conflict from the very first page of the play. "At the rise of the curtain, Robert Mayo is discovered sitting on the fence. He is a tall, slender young man...there is a touch of the poet about him expressed in his high forehead and wide, dark eyes. His features are delicate and refined, leaning to weakness in the mouth and chin" (O'Neill 1).

Robert loves books, especially poetry. He spent a year away at college before returning home — also a feature in O'Neill's biography. Another similarity between the character and the playwright relates to Robert's dreams of adventure on the sea. O'Neill did not choose to go to sea but was sent, by his father, on a steamer tramp voyage to Buenos Aires. Robert's brother, Andrew, his binary opposite, is the next character to enter the stage. Andrew is described as: "...an opposite type to Robert — husky, sun-bronzed, handsome in a large-featured, manly fashion—a son of the soil, intelligent in a shrewd way, but with nothing of the intellectual about him" (2). As I discussed in an earlier section, O'Neill uses Andrew and Robert to establish the conflict of passion and freedom versus prudence and proportion.

### Robert

Robert is 23. He is intelligent and well read. His intellect and his passion are his

strength. His physical abilities, mechanical aptitude, etc. are his weakness. He was sickly as a child and physical limitations persist into adulthood. His passion, a strength, also plays a major role in his demise. Except for one year away at college, Robert has spent his entire life on the farm. From the time he was a small child he dreamed of the secrets beyond the horizon.

O'Neill writes Robert with an amount of stubborn determination. Robert, from early in the play, is determined to prove he is not a sickly invalid incapable of doing a hard day's work:

Robert: All of you seem to keep harping on my health. You were so used to seeing me lying around the house in the old days that you never will get over the notion that I'm a chronic invalid, and have to be looked after like a baby all the time, or wheeled round in a chair like Mrs. Atkins. You don't realize how I've bucked up in the past few years. Why, I bet right now I'm just as healthy as you are — I mean just as sound in wind and limb; and if I was staying on at the farm, I'd prove it to you. You're suffering from a fixed idea about my delicateness — and so are Pa and Ma. Every time I've offered to help, Pa has stared at me as if he thought I was contemplating suicide. ...If I had no other excuse for going on Uncle Dick's ship but just my health, I'd stay right here and start in plowing (6).

Robert goes on to say that his counterpart in the family — his mother — has been claimed by the farm, "in spite of herself" and "That's what I am afraid it might do to me in time; and that's why I feel I ought to get away" (6). Robert is planning to leave the

farm because he does not want to die there — not because he cannot live there, or so he believes. Robert does not want his passion to die on the farm, as his mother's has.

But Robert, being a bit of an idealist, chooses to stay on the farm and marry Ruth, the woman he has secretly loved his entire life. He has dreamed of life beyond the horizon, but after his conversation with Ruth, Robert explains to the whole family, how his dream has changed:

Robert: ...something I discovered only this evening -- very beautiful  
and wonderful -- something I did not take into consideration  
previously because I hadn't dared to hope that such happiness  
could ever come to me. ...I had never dared to dream...I've found  
— a bigger dream (23).

His idyllic view of love and the future with Ruth results in the poet wedding himself to the soil. He sacrifices his dreams of adventure for the love of a woman at home.

This decision, and the impulsive manner in which it is made, points to a major aspect of Robert's character. He never stops dreaming, despite the obstacles he encounters along the way. Robert, in Act Two, Scene One, launches into a poetic declaration of his hatred for those same hills he used to dream of going past: "They're like the walls of a narrow prison yard shutting me in from all the freedom and wonder of life!" (47). And he goes on to say: "Sometimes I think if it wasn't for you, Ruth, and — little Mary, I'd chuck every-thing up and walk down the road with just one desire in my heart — to put the whole rim of the world between me and those hills, and be able to breathe freely once more!" (47). Demonstrating the conflict between the two halves of Robert, his Poet side still dreams of the life beyond the hills, chasing the *Horizon*, while

the pragmatic Farmer refuses to abandon his family.

As the relationship between Ruth and Robert disintegrates, Robert's love for Mary becomes more critical to the psychology of the character. Robert loves Mary dearly, and his love and kindness is evident both in his action and language with the child. When Mary dies, the last of his hope dies with her. Her death is critical in the development and evolution of the character. Robert himself calls her their "last hope of happiness!" (70).

Nearing death Robert proposes that he and Ruth make a new start in the city.

Robert: Do you know what I've been dreaming of back there in the dark? .... — I was planning our future when I get well. After all, why shouldn't we have a future? We're young yet. If we can only shake off the curse of this farm! It's the farm that's ruined our lives, damn it! ...We'll go where people live instead of stagnating, and start all over again. I won't be the failure there that I've been here, Ruth (71).

Robert admits to being a failure, and his earthly journey is complete. This admission secures his passage beyond the horizon. As O'Neill said repeatedly, "Man's only success is in failure" (Brietzke XIV). Robert dies in the next scene, and the dream comes true. Robert is granted freedom from his earthly struggle and is rewarded with the peace that exists beyond the horizon.

Robert is also a prideful character. This pride presents a major obstacle for Robert and points to the contemporary tragedy O'Neill was writing. Andrew has gone away and made a successful businessman of himself and, while he is not incredibly



wealthy, he does have the funds available to help the family out back on the farm.

Robert says, multiple times in the play, that it is his own stubborn pride that prevents him from asking Andrew for help. This idea is supported by his arguments in the first scene regarding his own ability to survive and contribute to the farm. Robert is determined to prove to everyone that he can be a “true Mayo” just like his father and brother. But this determination, this pride, ensures his failure, brings suffering on all of the people he loves, and leads to the eventual demise of the farm itself.

### Andrew

Andrew is 27. He is an opposite type to Robert. He appears, at the beginning of the play, to have no interest in literature or dreaming. He is focused on all things practical. Andrew’s pragmatic focus leaves him unable to understand Robert’s desire to leave the farm. He does not understand the dream of finding the secret that lies beyond the horizon.

Andrew: ...we've got all you're looking for right on this farm. There's wide space enough, Lord knows; and you can have all the sea you want by walking a mile down to the beach; and there's plenty of horizon to look at, and beauty enough for anyone, except in the winter. (He grins) As for the mystery and spell, and other things you mentioned, I haven't met 'em yet, but they're probably lying around somewheres. I'll have you understand this is a first class farm with all the fixings (O'Neill 8).

This monologue displays Andrew’s own romantic view of the farm, and his focus on the practical becomes clear throughout this early conversation with Robert. O'Neill

uses this dialogue to concretize the binary between pragmatism and passion. The dialogue in this scene also foreshadows Andrew's future, his financial endeavors, and further establishes the Poet/Farmer construct.

Andrew: ...There's always a chance of a good thing coming your way in some of those foreign ports or other. I've heard there are great opportunities for a young fellow with his eyes open in some of those new countries... ...Well, if you get to be a millionaire all of a sudden, call 'round once in a while and I'll pass the plate to you. We could use a lot of money right here on the farm without hurting it any (7).

Andrew will prove to be the one with his eyes open, and he will pursue the opportunities in those foreign ports. But these opportunities are, themselves, dreams. Over the course of the play, Andrew comes to dream in much the same way as Robert. Pride, also, seems to be a trait that runs throughout the Mayo men. When Andrew decides to leave he tells Robert: "I'd go crazy here, bein' reminded every second of the day how my life's been smashed, and what a fool I'd made of myself. I'd have nothing to hope or live for" (32).

Initially, when Andrew decides to join his Uncle Dick, he tells his family he has "always wanted to go, even if I ain't said anything 'bout it" (26). Andrew is lying, and as I have already discussed, James is the only one who can truly call him out on it. The characters of *Beyond the Horizon* are dependent on these moments of mirroring to complete their evolutionary arc.

Using O'Neill's own words, James Mayo is "an Andrew sixty-five years old" (4). In

Act One, Scene Two, Andrew is staring himself, forty years older, straight in the face when James Mayo says:

Mayo: You want to go out into the world and see thin's! ...You're a liar, Andy Mayo... ...Runnin' away's the only words to fit it. You're runnin' away 'cause you're put out and riled 'cause your own brother's got Ruth 'stead o' you... (28).

James's words, as he confronts Andrew, further concretize the pragmatic spine of the farmer in both characters.

Your place is right here on this farm — the place you was born to by nature — and you can't tell me no different. I've watched you grow up, and I know your ways, and they're my ways. You're runnin' against your own nature, and you're going to be a'mighty sorry for it if you do. You're tryin' to pretend to me something that don't fit in with your make-up, and it's damn fool pretendin' if you think you're fooling me. 'S if I didn't know your real reason for runnin' away! (28).

James's words are given greater gravity by the clarity of this construct, and when he hits Andy with his true motivation, the audience takes his words as gospel. James's words also take us back to the recurring idea of the true self when he tells Andrew he is "runnin' against your own nature" (28). Andrew hears these words again near the end of the play, this time from Robert, when he experiences another moment of mirroring.

James is the mirror for Andrew's true self, the farmer, Robert is the mirror of

Andrew's inner turmoil and conflict. He reflects the cumulative impact of Andrew's actions near the end of the play. Robert: "You've spent eight years running away from yourself. Do you see what I mean? You used to be a creator when you loved the farm. You and life were in harmonious partnership" (82).

Robert's speech on page eighty-two helps to de-mask Andrew and push his dominant self to the surface. But after eight years of running, Andrew has words of his own that display the reemerging of his dominant mask, "I need a rest, and the kind of rest I need is hard work in the open — just like I used to do in the old days" (78).

Each time Andrew returns from the sea he iterates his plans for the farm. But when Robert is on his death bed, Andrew explains that greed got in the way of that plan, and each time he got close it cost him the majority of the money he had accumulated, forcing him to start all over again. Greed has become the major obstacle for Andrew in pursuit of his own dream, or, objective.

After his first voyage, Andrew apologizes for the way he left. He explains that he never loved Ruth and that he was a kid who liked the idea of being in love, taking over the Atkins farm and caring for her and her mother — he liked being the hero. Andrew's need to be the hero is the spine of his character, but after leaving the farm his avenue for heroism changes. Andrew begins to focus on the money that can be made in Buenos Aires and what he can accomplish back home on the farm once he makes that money.

Andrew returns, the final time, at Ruth's request. Despite losing big on the wheat market, time and again, Andrew has the opportunity to be the hero when he comes home. Andrew brings a doctor with him, a specialist, to examine Robert and determine

the treatment necessary to bring him back to health. Andrew has a difficult time accepting the doctor's news that Robert's fate has already been determined and there is no cure. It is understandable that Andrew has difficulty accepting his brother's imminent death, but his difficulty understanding Robert's refusal of financial help points to the larger issue being that Andrew has once again failed to be the hero.

But in the final moments of the play, when Andrew determines to keep his promise to Robert and forgives Ruth, he finally gets to be the hero.

### Ruth

Many critics describe Ruth as a misogynistic depiction of O'Neill's experiences with the women in his life — his first wife, his mother, and the young woman prior to his first marriage who was pregnant with his child (Her pregnancy was terminated when O'Neill's father insisted on and paid for an abortion; it was at this same time that James O'Neill sent his son on the steamer tramp voyage that inspired the writing of *Horizon*.).

This dominant interpretation is consistent with Strindbergian influence and Agnes Boulton-O'Neill's statement that O'Neill believed, "Man's failure comes at the hands of woman" (Hartman 2). The description on the back of the acting edition published by Dramatists Play Service says that Ruth is "engaged to Andrew" and that she later realizes she is "still in love with Andrew". This seems to be a popular (mis)understanding of the play — Ruth's fickle feelings are to blame.

It could be argued that the text of the play supports the ideas of Agnes Boulton-O'Neill and the discussion of Strindbergian misogyny. Ruth does have hurtful words for Robert in Act Two and treats baby Mary in a cold and unloving fashion throughout much of the play. She insults Robert and compares him to Andrew, saying when Andrew

returns he will “show what a man can do” (48). She generally fails to support her husband as he struggles to successfully maintain the farm and provide for his family. And in a moment of intense rage she declares her love for Andrew. But as I have discussed in the analysis of the play, Ruth’s love for Andrew earlier in the play is the product of assumption, by readers, audiences, and even on the parts of some characters in the play.

Ruth, in the opening scene, flatly denies ever being in love with Andrew, saying she was in love with Robert all the time; but she spent her time with Andrew because it seemed Robert did not have time for her.

Ruth: ...I’ve loved you right along.

Robert: (Mystified) But you and Andy were always together!

Ruth: Because you never seemed to want to go any place with me.

You were always reading an old book, and not paying any attention to me. I was too proud to let you see I cared because I thought the year you had away to college had made you stuck-up, and you thought yourself too education to waste any time on me (14).

Sure, she could be lying, but there is nothing in the text to support that interpretation over another. Ruth’s conversation with Robert reads, to me, like a young woman trying to muster the courage to confess her feelings to the man she loves, not like a woman firmly in love with another man, miraculously swept off her feet by “cheap, silly, poetry talk” (48). Ruth is already in love with Robert, and his plan to leave causes them both to confess the truth of their feelings for one another.

If Ruth is not in love with Andrew, then why does she cling to his letters and

shout her love for him at Robert in the closing moments of Act Two, Scene One? The answer may well be because she has reached the crisis moment, the point of absolute desperation. Ruth did not grow up learning the typical lessons of a farm girl in the early twentieth century. If she had, then she might have been better prepared for life with Robert — or had the foresight to consider the impracticality of marriage to such a man.

A closer look at Ruth's upbringing helps illuminate the aspects of her character that explain, not only her choice to marry Robert, but her outburst at the end of the Act Two, Scene One as well. Ruth's father passed away "many years" (36) ago, and hired men have been running the farm for the Atkins. Ruth is also an only child. Though she undoubtedly carried a great burden in caring for her mother, Ruth was spared the work of helping to raise multiple siblings while also cooking and cleaning in a more typical farm house in the early twentieth century.

Compounding matters, Mrs. Atkins's narcissistic tendencies would have only created more obstacles for Ruth's development. The abusive, infantile nature of her mother may have resulted in a young woman who is emotionally stunted, to some degree, rather than resembling the hardened, forged steel we usually associate with women in this specific culture. Lastly, no one knew Andrew was going to decide to abandon the farm and join Uncle Dick for three years at sea. Ruth and Robert declare their love for each other and plan to marry with the assumption that Robert will be working alongside both Andrew and James. The demands of life as a farm wife/mother in the early twentieth century would have been a bit of a shock for a young woman like Ruth.

This same upbringing that left her ill prepared for the responsibilities thrust on her

at the time of marriage also influenced her decision to marry Robert. Ruth went without a model marriage to influence her development. She, instead, spent her formative years taking care of a narcissistically abusive, infantile mother. Growing up in this situation leaves Ruth dreaming of a love that is so much more than practical. Ruth is not concerned with marrying a man who can provide for her basic needs. Ruth has dreams, just like Robert, and she sees her dreams fulfilled by the passion in his words.

As time passes, Robert's failures breed resentment, and eventually the couple exchanges some harsh words that do significant damage to the relationship. As is unfortunately the case with many young couples, no apology is ever issued, and the damage done between the two goes unresolved for years to come.

As the years pass, the gap between Ruth and Robert widens. Ruth responds with a sort of emotional shut down. She is left feeling dead inside, as though she loves no one. But in Act Three, Scene One Ruth and Robert rediscover their love for each other. In Ruth and Robert's conversation at the beginning of Act Three, Scene One, and at three other very clear points in the third act, opportunity is provided for Ruth's love for Robert to make its way back to the surface: 1) When Ruth hears the facts of Robert's condition from Dr. Fawcett; 2) When she tells Andrew how things have deteriorated between her and Robert and, 3) When she enters the bedroom to find Robert missing. When Robert dies, in the final moment of the play, this rediscovery of her love becomes fully concrete, and the audience should see that Ruth loved Robert all along. She is a victim of her upbringing, ill prepared for the life she chooses, and like Robert she too is driven by the pursuit of unattainable dreams.

This is, again, not the obvious or prevailing interpretation. The weight of



Strindberg's influence on the play and the misogyny that runs along the surface, seem to dictate more prevailing interpretations. O'Neill's constant (dully) parenthetical directions for Ruth also lead the reading audience to view her with a much flatter interpretation. Relying on my close analysis of the given circumstances, leaning heavily on Ruth's subtext, and ignoring O'Neill's parenthetical directions, I believed I could minimize the misogyny and direct the actor into a much more vibrant and sympathetic interpretation of the character.

#### James Mayo (Father)

James is sixty-five years old. He is, as O'Neill describes: "His son Andrew over again in body and face" (3). He is dedicated to the prosperity of the farm and what it provides for his family. But more than that, James is a farmer because of the satisfaction he gets from working with the earth. James's dialogue, no matter the subject, eventually returns to the farm and what is required for its success. At dinner in Act One, Scene Two, despite visiting company and his youngest son's imminent departure, he sits with a copy of the farm journal in his lap.

At the beginning of the play James is in harmony with the farm, the universe, and himself. But Andrew's departure upsets the balance of the Farmer/Poet binary – it is no longer two and two. In the practical sense this imbalance creates a greater workload for James. On a deeper, more emotional level, James is heartbroken and incomplete from the loss of Andrew, his perfect mirror. The heartbreak of losing Andrew and his own stubborn pride prove to be too much for James; he dies between Acts One and Two.

#### Kate Mayo (Mother)

Kate is from the Scott side of the family. She is the mother of Andrew and

Robert. Fifty-five years old at the start of the play, she dies at approximately age sixty, between Act Two and Act Three. Kate, a former school teacher, is intelligent and well educated. Andrew describes her as always having her nose in a book when he was a child, “but she seems to have given it up of late years” (6). Robert adds to this by saying the farm has “claimed her in spite of herself” (6). Typical of the “Farm Wife” Kate is the mortar that holds the family together. In Act One, Scene Two, her clear motivation is to keep the family together as a unit.

Being a Scott, more attuned to matters of passion and emotion, Kate already knows that Ruth's heart lies with Robert and not with Andrew. Kate defends Robert as his father and uncle protest against his decision to stay behind on the farm. She does this in an effort to keep the family unit together. She makes the same overtures to Andrew when he announces his intentions to leave and is the most active opponent of the conflict between Andrew and James. All of this points to her role as the mortar that holds the family together.

In Act Two, Scene One, her loyalty to her family continues as she defends Robert and her deceased husband against the insults of Mrs. Atkins. Mrs. Mayo has resigned herself to farm life, as O'Neill describes, “the years of it have bent but not broken her” (15). When Kate stands up to her husband and her brother, in Act One, Scene Two, the fire can still be heard in her words, but in Act Two, Scene One, when Kate defends Robert against the attacks of Mrs. Atkins, her response is much more diplomatic and passive. The change in her character comes as a result of the family unit being broken, Robert's struggles, and especially, the death of her husband, James. Kate draws her strength from the family unit, and with it broken, some of her strength is

lost.

### Captain Dick Scott (Uncle)

Captain Scott is fifty-eight years old, the older brother of Mrs. Mayo. O'Neill describes him as a "typical old salt, loud of voice and given to gesture" (15). He is the catalyst for the play's central action. If Captain Scott never arrived, Robert would never declare his love for Ruth, there would be no change in stasis, and life would go on for the Mayos, business as usual. Captain Scott's arrival disrupts the balance on the farm. There are now three passionate personalities and two pragmatic personalities. Captain Scott creates the possibility of choice for both Andrew and Robert.

Captain Scott's character does not fit in on the farm and his presence helps to concretize the unfitness of the Poet for the world of the farm. His dialogue, in terms of subject and his vernacular diction, seems out of place in the Mayo home. The Captain has several lines referencing the farm and his lack of interest in a life ploughing the dirt and patting it back down again. The Captain's personality clashes with the elder Mayo, and the two have multiple conflicts in their lone scene together. The Poet (Captain Scott) is upsetting the orderly world of the Farmer (James Mayo). These two characters experience conflict on an inherent or diametric scale as well as on a more concrete need based level.

The Captain wants a mate for his ship. He states how lonely he has been and how excited he is about the promise of Robert joining the crew. Captain Scott is all but devastated by the news that Robert will not be joining him on his next voyage, and this escalates the conflict between James and him.

In his second scene, Captain Scott is much less adversarial. He has had a

partner at sea for the last three years. His need for companionship has been fulfilled. It would seem he is grateful for the relationship he has developed with Andrew. Captain Scott is once again the catalyst for departure as he helps Andrew find a berth on another vessel so that he can pursue his dreams in Buenos Aires.

### Mrs. Atkins (Ruth's Mother)

Mrs. Atkins is forty-eight years old when she first appears on stage in Act Two, Scene One. She has suffered from "partial paralysis for many years, condemned to be pushed from day to day of her life in a wheel chair" (36). A "widow for many years" (36), owning the farm next to the Mayo's, she has hired men to tend her land and has built up an ample savings over that time. Robert takes over the Atkins farm once he and Ruth are married. In the years between the second and third acts, Mrs. Atkins takes back control of her farm, once again using hired help to tend the crops. She uses the majority of her savings to keep Robert and Ruth afloat between the second and third acts.

Mrs. Atkins fills the pragmatic void left on stage by the death of James Mayo. She is the anchor that keeps Ruth's ship from sailing. Without her, Ruth would be free to leave the farm with Robert at some point (once the elder Mayo passed on this might have been an easy solution to several of the couple's problems). Outside of the play's three-character nucleus, Mrs. Atkins is the only one to survive the length of the play. O'Neill has to keep her alive to keep Ruth and Robert on the farm.

Mrs. Atkins also antagonizes many of the characters. She insults James after his death, declaring it God's punishment for his blasphemous existence. These words are very upsetting to Mrs. Mayo, wounding her deeply and leading her to lose her composure. The audience never hears Mrs. Atkins ridicule Robert to his face, but both

he and Ruth speak of her ordering him about and blaming Mary's death on a weak constitution she inherited from him. This causes Robert great distress and contributes to the wedge driven between Ruth and him. Mrs. Atkins's perpetual ridiculing of Robert drives the husband and wife conflict.

The argument between Ruth and Robert at the end of Act Two, Scene One, reaches its climax when Ruth claims she loves Andrew. But the argument(s) in that scene springs from a seed planted by Mrs. Atkins. Ruth enters the scene complaining of Robert's insensitivity, specifically his consistent lateness for meals. But her complaining is fairly passive, and her other remarks in the scene indicate she has accepted this as a part of Robert's character. When Robert enters the scene, Ruth's complaints go beyond her comments from earlier in the scene, echoing her mother's. This interaction concretizes Mrs. Atkins's cancerous impact on the young couple's marriage. If Mrs. Atkins was not there to plant those seeds, the arguments between Ruth and Robert might never have happened, at the least, they may have played out very differently.

### Mary

Mary is the daughter of Ruth and Robert. She is two years old when she first appears onstage. She dies between acts two and three, at approximately the age of six. Mrs. Atkins says that Mary is just like her father, in health and disposition. Mary is a real human character, but, as the physical manifestation of Ruth and Robert's love, she also functions in a very symbolic way.

As previously discussed, Ruth and Robert have opposing relationships with Mary that are indicative of their feelings about one another and the marriage. It is Mary's chastising of Robert for his talk of leaving that keeps him on the farm after Andrew's

initial return.

### Ben

Ben's lone appearance occurs in Act Two, Scene One. He is described physically as, "a hulking, awkward young fellow with a heavy, stupid face and shifty, cunning eyes" (45). He is the hired man on the Mayo Farm. He is slow, narrow minded, and intensely concerned with the perception other farmers and hands have of him due to his working for Robert. O'Neill uses Ben to concretize public opinion of Robert's abilities as a farmer and to escalate the conflict between Ruth and him.

If Ben never came on stage the final fight between Ruth and Robert would never happen. The reconciliation that occurs between them just before he enters may very well have served to repair many of the issues between the couple. But Ben, despite O'Neill's description of him as slow, has a keen awareness of others' opinions and on what basis those opinions are formed. In this case, the opinions others have formed about him have been based on Robert's ineptitude. Ben is not without pride and this leads to him walking out on the farm. Ben walking out not only makes a statement about his character, it also clarifies Ben's dramatic function in the piece. He is the last bit of gasoline needed to create the explosion about to take place between Robert and Ruth.

### Doctor Fawcett

Doctor Fawcett is the specialist brought to the farm by Andrew, in a last ditch effort to save Robert's life. The doctor's appearance is brief. He is introduced to Ruth and almost immediately exits into the bedroom to examine Robert. When the doctor returns, he delivers the news that Robert will not be alive much longer. O'Neill uses the doctor as the messenger for this news, not only to Andrew and Ruth, but to the

audience as well. The doctor also foreshadows the way in which Robert will die: “A hemorrhage, resulting from any exertion...will undoubtedly prove fatal” (79). Only “interested in the facts” Dr. Fawcett leaves no hope, outside of a miracle, for Robert’s recovery.

Andrew refuses to give up on Robert, even as the doctor is explaining the grim prognosis. The doctor’s resolve in the dire state of Robert’s health creates a great obstacle for Andrew to overcome in his constant optimism. While Ruth accepts the news, already knowing it to be true, Andrew continues to hope and search for a way to save his brother’s life. The Doctor, like Ben, serves to further the conflict for each of the characters — both internally and externally. His character is built more on the basis of dramatic function than on intense personal needs and objectives.

### Production Goals

- A major goal of this production was to create effective pacing and heightened performances, steering clear of melodrama.

A heightened performance includes: a clearly pursued intention/goal with heightened emotional response coming as a result of the characters’ interactions with the obstacles they encounter in pursuit of their goal(s). We aimed for performances that incorporated the actors’ total physical and vocal instrument in the communication of character and story, while also turning our attention to the rhythm, texture, and imagery in the language. My own personal aesthetic and approach to text is specifically attuned to this type of work.

- In a letter to the *NY Times* in April of 1920, O’Neill wrote that he was waiting for an audience to be able to visualize a whole set from one or two suggestive

details (*NY Times* 1). It was my goal to lead the artistic team into the creation of a physical world rooted in the poetic/suggestive realism of Robert Edmond Jones, Jo Mielziner, Ming Cho Lee, and Mordecai Gorelik. It is my personal belief that this style of design more effectively supports the performance of O'Neill's heightened language, and when the environment and language are in sync, the poetry soars more effectively.

- This was my second realized production, as a director, in which I was not the scenic and/or lighting designer. I sought to successfully lead a team of designers from preproduction through design, tech, and into performance. These designers all came to the project with varying levels of experience. The process required me to exhibit patience with them as it was a learning experience for them as well. I worked to find a balance between a patient, willingness to guide and teach my younger collaborators with my responsibility to the overall success of the production. I had been criticized in the past for being too concerned with other people's opinions of me, and so I had been encouraged to make the production the priority and lead without a concern for likeability, etc. In leading without concern for personal opinions, I still sought to maintain tact, respect, and cordiality among my collaborators.

- I directed two comedies in my first two years at SIU; this was my first dramatic production at the university. It was my goal to translate the skills I acquired while directing *Picasso at the Lapin Agile* and *The Music Shop* to my work on *Beyond the Horizon*— specifically, my ability to tell a story with clarity and specificity. In my first dramatic venture since beginning my studies at SIU, I wanted to maintain a clear awareness of the difference in mood, rhythm, and the overall manner in which the production must flow, compared to comedic works. I feel obligated to add, there is a



great deal more comedy in this piece than, I think, many people realize.

- Both of my previous projects at SIU were produced in small spaces.

*Beyond the Horizon* marked my first production, at the university, on a large proscenium stage. I aimed to translate my skills in picturization and composition from these smaller spaces to the large proscenium of the McLeod Theatre.

### Vision and Concept for Production

Our training, as directors, at SIU teaches us that our vision is, in short, the story we want to tell, and our concept is the visual(s) we will use to effectively concretize this vision.

Vision: *Beyond the Horizon* is a play about a man, Robert Mayo, who abandons his true self, and his dream of adventure on the high seas, to fight for a life with the woman he loves, in a world in which he has no hope of surviving. *Beyond the Horizon* is, at its core, a love story. It is a love story about a poet who gives up his dream for the girl he has been in love with his entire life. He “fights all the hostile forces within and without himself” (*Eugene O’Neill’s America*, Diggins 266) to make a life with Ruth. Robert’s love for Ruth becomes the reason for his existence. But this dream of a happy life on the farm is unattainable for Robert, and so his struggle against the environment and his own deficiencies is the journey the audience follows.

Concept: Based on O’Neill’s subjective writing, I wanted Robert to serve as the lens through which the audience experienced the play. I hoped, seeing the world of the play and the actions of the other characters through Robert’s eyes, would draw the audience further into his world. I also believed the suggestive/poetic realism I proposed for the physical world of the play would support this phenomenological approach.

I believed this phenomenological approach to the visual world of the play — staging and design — would provide an environment that aesthetically matched O'Neill's heightened imagistic language. I was striving for a cohesive production concept that would meet the audience in a world outside of their expectations for a realistic drama of the early twentieth century. But I also hoped to concretize the inherent conflict between Robert and the world he must struggle against to achieve his goal.

### Design Inspiration

The design concepts of the New Stagecraft came, in part, as a response to years of photographic realism on stage, while impressionist art came as a response to the evermore popular photographic image of the time. Adolph Appia and Gordon Craig pioneered the dramatic use of light and shadow in their scenography. The impressionist painters felt their ability to manipulate light and shadow in their subjective landscapes helped elevate their work above that of the photographer. I felt that impressionism's kinship to the New Stagecraft, coupled with its focus on natural landscapes and its core of subjectivity made it an excellent foundation for the design of the exterior locations.



Dune Road, Truro by Arthur Egali



Eucalyptus Sunset by Karen Winters

Figure 1.1 Impressionist Inspiration Images

The phenomenological approach meant the exterior locations needed to feel like the dream of a poet. The impressionist painters themselves describe their work as having a dreamlike quality, and their emphasis on the movement of light across the scape correlates well with Robert's poetic sensibilities. The artists' emphasis on depicting the passage of time through the use of light provided inspiration for the lighting designer, as O'Neill's play covers a span of eight years in six scenes, with each act occurring in a different season and at a different time of day. Through the use of this impressionist inspired visual concept, I hoped to concretize the subjectivity and help the audience locate the character or dominant perspective in the world of the play.

The apple tree and stone fence from the opening and final scenes of the play depict the overall disintegration of the farm. The farm and the mental/emotional state of the characters who inhabit it are directly linked. I did not think these elements, along with the oak tree and boulder from Act Two, Scene Two, should be created in the impressionist mode. I believed these scenic elements should be concrete and realistic in appearance. I hoped the choice to make these elements more concrete would help to ground the production with some selective realism, but the major purpose for the choice comes back to the subjective focus of the play. No one, not Robert or the audience, can deny the disintegration of the farm — it is not a subjective idea. The farm's demand for care and tending is real and so are the consequences of its neglect. The rest of the exterior can be viewed through Robert's subjective lens. But the damage done to the farm under Robert's leadership is hard reality.

In order to create a contrast between the outdoor world of Robert's dreams and the oppressive indoor world of the farmhouse, I thought the design of the Mayo home

needed to take its inspiration from a more confining and oppressive place than the open pastorals of the impressionist movement. In an effort to help the audience relate to Robert and his struggle, I looked to create a strong juxtaposition between the indoor/outdoor locations, using color, mood, and texture. I approached the process with an inclination that fragmented or poetic realism, akin to the work of Jo Mielziner and Ming Cho-Lee could be an excellent place to start. I needed both Robert and the audience to feel the oppressive nature of the indoor space, and yet, even this indoor space should not be so concrete that it becomes a photorealistic design. If the audience, through gaps in walls and the ceiling/roof, could see the world of the dreamer outside his prison, I believed the audience would understand him to be trapped by the farmhouse.

I was hopeful that the costumes for this production would also help to concretize the juxtaposition between the Poet/Farmer binary. I felt the conflict between the Scotts (Poets) and the Mayos (Farmers) could be highlighted by the costumes. Part of this concretization of the binary would include the creation of the physical juxtaposition between Andrew and Robert. I hoped to cast a Robert who was tall and thin, lanky; while I hoped for an Andrew that was much fuller, stronger and physically capable. I like to encourage the artistic team to use color to create a visual vocabulary for the audience. I thought we should do our best to clearly, and quickly, communicate where these characters fit in the worlds of Poet and Farmer. I also encouraged the designers to experiment with color to help concretize their journeys through those two worlds.

Perhaps the most important element in the design comes from the play's title — the horizon. I wanted the audience to long to go "*Beyond the Horizon*" just as badly as

Robert does. I originally thought an effective choice might be to keep some of the horizon hidden for the majority of the performance, revealing the full horizon at the end of the play, during Robert's death. I proposed the idea of the horizon as a fantasy. That horizon, and the secret that lies beyond it, are a major part of the audience's journey with Robert. I wanted the possibility of it to be ever present so that the audience's anticipation of it could grow as the play progressed. When Robert dies and the horizon, or what lies beyond it, is finally revealed — it is heaven — I hoped for something too beautiful to be real.

### Performance

The play is written in Robert's language — poetry. The dialogue is a heightened poetic language, and I hoped to unlock that poetry for the actors and the audience. Our approach to the text attempted to marry intention based acting/directing with my own modified folio technique. The punctuation has, in my past experiences, been the key to unlocking the rhythm and pacing of language. I believed this same technique, which I have used so often in the past, would produce the same successful results.

The early part of the rehearsal process was also centered on helping the actors learn to connect their entire instrument to the text. Language of this complexity will not tolerate a mere vocal recitation. Their bodies must move in the same poetic manner as the language. The physicality associated with their text should help to illustrate the action and concretize their internal struggles. The actors spent three nights performing rigorous physical exercises based in the Viewpoints technique. I use the same grid work and vocabulary (tempo, duration, kinesthetic response, repetition, shape, architecture, spatial relationship and topography) as Anne Bogart and Tina Landau. But as

Landau/Bogart used the original Viewpoints work of Mary Overlie as the jumping off point for their own techniques, I have used their work as the springboard for my own research and application of Viewpoints.

The goal is for the actors to gain a new understanding of their physical instrument and begin to explore the physicality of their characters. The exercises progress to silent improvisational scenes, giving the actors the opportunity to explore the possibilities for interaction without the hindrance of language. Some spoken text is then added to these physical exercises so that a vocabulary of sorts, a concrete relationship between the physicality and the text, begins to develop among the ensemble.

The vocabulary that develops within the ensemble has a strong influence on the staging of the production. The Viewpoints work provides the actor with a concrete understanding of the relationship between movement and the text. When an actor makes this discovery, it becomes increasingly easy to attain the type of specificity I have come to demand in my work. I was confident this approach would unlock tremendous power in O'Neill's text and elevate the performances to a level that the actors themselves did not believe they were capable of achieving.

Spatial relationship played a large role in performance. I divided the stage into sections, for myself. Each section was assigned a value. In the opening scene, for example, the stage right area held the value of "farm" while the stage left area held the value of "dream". Robert is repelled by the stage right area until the moment he commits to life on the farm. Then he makes a move to that part of the stage and never again, in that scene, moves back to the stage left area. This same type of division continued

throughout the rest of the play.

### The Script

Aside from operas and musicals, contemporary audiences are not accustomed, generally, to sitting through three-hour productions. Even Shakespeare, widely considered the greatest writer of heightened language, is cut the large majority of the time. These cuts to the plays of William Shakespeare are done for the sake of time and to eliminate elements of the dialogue a modern audience has no frame of reference to comprehend. I made these same types of cuts to the script for *Beyond the Horizon*.

I am of the strong belief, that if a story is told well, a production of three hours can be very successful. With this in mind, I intended to leave as much of the play intact as possible, cutting the moments that were repetitive and/or not essential to the advancement of the dramatic action. I believed, at the time, that the cuts made were extensive. The dramaturg and I repeatedly returned to the script and reevaluated the cuts, striving for the leanest script possible while maintaining the necessary dialogue to communicate my vision.

The success or failure of this interpretation of the play hinged on the ability to effectively direct the subtext of the play. Perhaps the best example comes near the end of Act Two, Scene One, when Ruth tells Robert she loves Andrew. If Ruth's subtext is the same as the surface text, "I love Andrew", we would have a portrayal that does not match the interpretation on which the vision and concept were based. But if Ruth's subtext is "I hate you", or her intention in saying the words is to destroy Robert or to shatter his dreams like he has shattered hers, Ruth could be received in a way much more consistent with this interpretation. It is a fine line between these different

interpretations, and it was a challenge to direct an undergraduate actor into an effective portrayal of such a complex interpretation, but it was crucial to my vision for the production, so I did not shy away from the challenge.



## CHAPTER 2

### PRODUCTION PROCESS

The initial design meeting for *Beyond the Horizon* took place at the end of the spring semester of 2015. I was excited to find the designers had clearly identified the difference between the two brothers, and the conflict between their true self and the paths they chose to take. I utilized charts and images to help concretize the binary relationship between Andrew/Robert, the Mayo/Scott families and the indoor/outdoor locations in the world of the play.

Table 2.1, Binary Comparison Charts

<b>Apollo = Prudence &amp; Proportion</b>	<b>Dionysus = Passion &amp; Freedom</b>
The Farm	The Sea
The Mayo Family	The Scott Family
James, Andrew	Mother, Robert,
Soil	Poetry
Duty	Dreams

<b>Indoor = Hard reality of life</b>	<b>Outdoor = Freedom &amp; Dreams</b>
Prison & Death	Freedom & Life
Concrete/Restrictive	Dream!
Suggestive/Poetic Realism	Impressionist Visual Inspiration
Suggestive/Poetic Structures	No real structures (buildings, etc.)
Furniture props, etc.— VERY concrete	Important Elements: Fence, Tree, Rock

<b>Robert — Dionysus</b>	<b>Andrew — Apollo</b>
Poet - FIGHTS to be a farmer for LOVE!	Farmer - Loses himself to GREED
<b>INNER MASK/PERSONA:</b> Passionate, HOPE/DREAMS!	<b>INNER MASK/PERSONA:</b> Pragmatic, Prudent, Calculating.
<b>OUTER MASK/PERSONA:</b> Farmer	<b>OUTER MASK/PERSONA:</b> Adventurer

There was some concern, entering this meeting and the process overall, that the student scene designer might not have the knowledge and background to understand the approach (Suggestive/Poetic Realism) I was hoping would become the root of the design. The head of the graduate scene design program had retired just prior to this designer beginning his studies at SIU, and the position had been in-flux for the past academic year. In an effort to give the designer concrete examples of the aesthetic I hoped to create, I included images from the designs of Joe Mielziner and Ming Cho-Lee. I encouraged the designer to seek out more of their work, as well as the work of Robert Edmond Jones, Gordon Craig and Darwin Reid Payne. After a conversation with Professor Dr. Anne Fletcher I determined I should do my best to catch the designer up on the topics while doing my best not to talk down to him. I felt, after an additional conversation with one of my committee members, that I had been successful in this task.

Following this meeting, the designers had the summer to work. Our formal meetings would resume the first week of classes, and rehearsals would begin about seven weeks after that. Since the scene designer and I were both in Carbondale for the summer, we agreed to have some informal meetings/discussions to help advance the process. It was believed, given the designer's lack of experience, that these meetings would be helpful in bringing him into the aesthetic world of non-realism. It is recognized among the faculty that the students in the SIU theatre department gravitate to realism.

The designer was very concerned about avoiding the traps he felt other designers had fallen into in his time at SIU. His major concern was overdesigning the production to the point that elements had to be cut in the days leading up to opening.

His concern indicated to me, along with what seemed to be a shared preference for non-realism, that a fragmented design could be the solution he was looking for. While other aspects of our meeting concerned me, these specific conclusions held some promise for our work to come.

The next part of our meeting was troubling. I looked at several images created by the designer, most of which leaned more toward construction drawings than artist sketches. The mood, line and shape depicted in these images felt miles away from what I had hoped to inspire in the designer. As we discussed these images, I asked very specific question(s) – how does this element help us tell the story? what does this element tell us about the world of the play and its inhabitants? – and in one of the designer's responses, I was told that my suggestion for an impressionist inspiration was irrelevant to the play.

I had never had a designer, or any other artist for that matter, speak to me in such a way. I worked to maintain my calm as I had a good personal relationship with this designer and while I was taken aback I did not see his statement as anything we could not work past. The designer was concerned that this approach to the design (an impressionist inspiration) would lead to a set that was very beautiful for the actors to look at and do their work in front of, but from the audiences' perspective it would be muddy and unclear. I fully admit that this confused me at first, but he went on to explain that paintings are created to be viewed from a gallery distance, not from the distance between an audience and a stage. I recognized the disconnect for the designer and continued to ask questions in the hopes of helping him come to the realization that in the theater, distance between audience and stage plays the same role as the distance

between gallery wall and museum patron. After a while it clicked for him and he understood that the designer/scene painter, must adjust their technique to suit the audience's perspective.

We also discussed the possibility of revealing the larger horizon when Robert dies. The designer had a research image, from a production we could not identify, that depicted a horizon showing through a large tear in the cyc or drop. Our thought was that this tear could open up further, as Robert dies, revealing his final destination and completing his journey to go beyond the horizon. This discovery was very exciting, given the importance of the horizon to the play, and we would return to the topic throughout the design process.

I enlisted the help of the dramaturg to get the designer away from the technical drawings he had shown me at our informal meeting. The major roadblock, in the beginning of our process was a resistance, from the designer, to mix style in the design of the production. He was struggling to understand that no production/design/concept is ever pure, everything is a hybrid. The dramaturg and I showed him images of realized designs that had clearly used artistic/painting schools as their jumping off point, but also combined elements of realism in the final product. The designer recognized the hybrid nature of the images and agreed there was something there worth exploring. I walked away from the meeting hoping that with two weeks before our first formal meeting the designer would have time to produce some preliminary sketches that would provide a more artistic representation of his creativity.

The lighting and costume designers on the production were also graduate students. At our first formal design meeting of the semester they brought in some

wonderful inspiration materials, sketches, and research. The scene designer did not bring anything new to the meeting. The next steps for him were discussed and a clear plan was laid out. Once again, I left the meeting hopeful that progress would be made. I was especially hopeful after this meeting because the designer now had a full time faculty mentor in new Assistant Professor of Scene Design Tatiana Vintu.

Professor Vintu recognized the largest stumbling block was probably the student designer's lack of experience. She and I met privately with him on three separate occasions, successfully developing the basic foundation for the design of the interior environment. But between our last informal meeting and the next official design meeting very little progress was made.

This sort of stop and go approach would become a staple of our design process. At the request of his advisor, the designer and I continued to meet. In these meetings progress would be made on the broad strokes of the design. We would leave the detail, finishes, etc. for him to complete before our next meeting. Each time, the result was the same, little to no work was done between meetings. The designer's lack of progress was becoming a detriment to the production as a whole. The lighting designer and technical director were unable to complete their work, and the costume designer was left to make color choices with no reference to the set.

The process, and its challenges, had been public knowledge. The majority of the faculty were present at the formal design meetings, and I had regular conversations with his Qualifier Committee and the faculty technical director. I also spoke with my own advisor early in the process and kept him updated through my weekly rehearsal reports. We did have another meeting scheduled at one point during the process, at my

advisor's request, but the appointment went unfulfilled. Eventually the student designer's Qualifier Committee took greater steps to intervene. They established a very strict set of deadlines, which the designer continually failed to meet. Professor Vintu continued to take on a larger role in the design process until eventually the student was removed as scenic designer.

Associate Professor and Department Chair J. Thomas Kidd informed me of the official decision to remove the student from his role as scenic designer, and also took the time to assure me of the department's support of the production. I also gleaned from this conversation, as well as conversations with Professor Vintu, that the project had essentially become a design by committee. It would be up to her, the student technical director, and me to complete the scenic design.

Up to this point my interactions with Professor Vintu had been very positive; we had worked well together as we guided the student designer through the early stages of the process, and our individual aesthetics seemed to align quite nicely. But as the process continued, our efforts to collaborate began to break down. In retrospect, I believe the breakdown began when Professor Vintu requested that several elements be redesigned. The faculty and student technical directors and I agreed that no matter how exciting it was to consider what an experienced designer could bring to the production, there just was not time to step backward in the process.

As we moved forward, it seemed that our collaborative partnership became more strained with each decision that had to be made. When we were selecting an image for the back wall, I experienced a designer who did not seem interested in collaborating, either with me or her fellow designers. When I say that, what I mean is that I

experienced a designer with a very clear and creative vision, but also a designer unwilling to bend their vision in favor of a cohesive and unified concept in production. This continued through the rest of the process.

As the build and the need for decision making intensified, so did the strain on our collaborative partnership. I had, up to this point, used guided questioning with the designers. In the case of the lighting, costume, and sound designers I believe this questioning was quite effective. As a result of a conversation with one faculty member I learned that my method of questioning was very well respected, but I also gathered in another conversation with that same faculty member that it was time to stop questioning and begin to very clearly state what I thought the production needed to be successful. It was at this point, when I stopped doing as much “questioning” and began doing more “telling”, that the collaboration between Professor Vintu and me experienced a total and complete breakdown.

This total breakdown resulted from a series of events, centering on the design decisions for the upstage ground row unit. Through some miscommunication, an ill-advised email from the student technical director (that I must take some responsibility for), and my own growing desperation to see the design completed, a situation was created that left the faculty designer feeling disrespected and invalidated. Ultimately, Professor Vintu and I failed to agree on the proportion or paint treatment for the ground row unit. As a result of a final, heated, discussion about the unit, it was determined that Professor Vintu would complete the production with sole control over all scenic design decisions.

The lighting designer responded well to the concept of the visual binary. From

the start she had excellent ideas for the use of color and pattern to help create the mood and define the two worlds of the play (indoor/outdoor). As the design for the set slowly came along, I was able to develop the idea of using the scene changes as a part of the storytelling. The lighting designer responded to this idea by presenting a couple of different options for the way lighting could support this approach to the scene changes.

The lighting in the outdoor environment used warmer colors. This was obviously influenced by the sunlight that would be present in the location, but we also wanted this environment to feel welcoming and free. The lighting for the interior scenes used cooler colors. This was done to create a less welcoming, harsher, more oppressive environment. Steeper, harsher angles were also used for the interior scenes, as well as breakup patterns that resembled wooden slats or prison bars.

I intended to use the scene changes to concretize the passage of time for the audience. The lighting designer and I agreed that her work could support this convention. The designer and I originally discussed a progression of sunrises and sunsets as the platforms came on stage and/or rotated into position. There was a brief discussion of using a snow bag to help achieve this effect, but the delays in the design process took that option off the table. The lighting designer suggested we use a series of gobos to create the illusion of snow, in much the same way she was able to achieve the look of clouds moving and changing in the other scenes. But ultimately even the use of gobos to create the snow effect had to be abandoned.

The graduate student costume designer was the most proactive member of the design team. She worked in a methodical way with clear progression in her sketches and color selection from meeting to meeting. Her research was excellent but, early in



the process, I found her designing from a perspective of “preference” rather than dramaturgical/analytical support. I continued to ask the questions: “What does this choice tell us about the character? How does it help us understand them and their journey?” Her answers did not, initially, reference the characters or the text, but as I continued to encourage her to go back to the script, I saw a change in the design(s). As the designs changed, I did not need her to support her choices orally; returning to the text resulted in work that did the talking for her.

One specific item that required extended discussion was Andrew’s suit in the third act. Initially the designer wanted to put Andrew in a green suit, but the defining color for the world away from the farm had already been established as blue. Robert wears blue in the opening scene, when he is supposed to go off to sea; Captain Scott also wears blue. Putting Andrew in a blue suit would quickly communicate just how far away he had strayed from his true self. The color green was already established as part of the world of the farm. I asked the designer for justification for the green, and she explained that Andrew had returned to farming in the third act. This was an instance when I pressed her to look more closely at the text. When we spoke about it again she had done the study I asked her to do and come to the following conclusion: Andrew has not returned to farming, he has turned to the business of grain and, by this time, is purely an on paper investor — a gambler. He states that he needs a rest, and the rest he needs is the kind of hard work out in the open that he used to do back in the old days. Those old days were the ones growing up on the farm. If Andrew had in fact returned to farming during his last trip to Buenos Aires he would not utter those words in the third act. The final rendering had Andrew in a sort of cadet blue single breasted suit

that I loved on a personal and directorial level.

The process for the sound design was very exciting. I had always wanted to use environmental sound in a production but had never run into the right circumstances to give it a try. *Beyond the Horizon* presented the opportunity for a couple of different reasons. The outdoor location for half of the play created an obvious opportunity. But the contrast between an interior devoid of any sound besides dialogue, and an exterior environment that utilized birds as well as grass and leaves rustling in the breeze seemed like a great choice for the production.

During the interior scenes, not only was there an obvious lack of environmental sounds, but the sound designer actually utilized a technique that takes standard silence to a deeper level. He recorded the natural, ambient sound in the McCleod theatre and identified the exact frequency of those sounds. He then constructed a recording of white noise that was the exact inverse frequency. Playing this constructed track back into the environment the inverse frequency would cancel out the natural frequencies within the theatre. In theory, by doing this, we could create a more silent silence.

The sound designer also built all of the environmental sounds. Some of them were layers of stock tracks with different birds, but there were other tracks that he had to construct from scratch. The sound of the grass and trees rustling in the breeze was recorded in the SIU anechoic suite. This is a large chamber that allows for the most pristine of recordings. It stands on its own foundation, which eliminates vibrations from the street or any other part of the Communications Building. Large foam teeth cover the walls and are installed below a steel grated floor. Even with the door to the chamber open there is a noticeable difference in the room's temperature, and when there is no

sound being produced in the chamber, it almost feels like sound is being sucked out of your ears.

Choosing music for the production was very challenging. I enlisted the help of Jessica Samples, a graduate student in the School of Music. Samples is a walking encyclopedia of music— classical, popular, and culturally specific. The first pieces she brought me were classical, orchestral pieces. I fell in love with a German piece composed during World War II. Jessica said the first time she read the play, when she thought of Robert, she heard this piece in her head. I had originally thought this piece would be used to open the show. It would play as Robert entered the stage, looked around at the environment, and individual areas lit up as he discovered them.

The major theme in the piece never resolves. At the moment it should resolve it becomes dissonant. This also seemed to serve the dramatic action effectively as Robert's choice inhibits the ability of his own theme to resolve. When I discussed the piece with Jessica and described to her what I heard in the progression of the music she explained that those were her exact reasons for choosing it. My original plan was to have the piece manipulated, specifically, to have the theme resolve. I would use the original version to open the play and use the altered version, with the chord resolution, at the end of the play, to coincide with the resolution of Robert's journey. I locked in on this idea very early on, and we continued to search for pieces that would fit the scene changes while the original piece served as a bookend.

We continued to listen to various instrumental pieces, but nothing we listened to really seemed to concretely aid in the storytelling the way I hoped. Trying to give the scene changes such an amount of agency was making the music selection more

difficult. As the design of the set continued to come together, I was able to concretize my vision for the scene changes. Now I could see exactly how the pieces would move. I saw that it could resemble work being done on a ship, and this realization led me to the final decision, the sea shanties.

The dramaturg, Brooke Oehme, had played a sea shanti for the cast at the first read through. I liked the song in and of itself and one day sitting at home decided to play it, just for my own enjoyment. That was when it hit me that these sea shanties could be just what we needed to tie the scenes together, and the instrumental piece could still serve as a bookend to the entire production. I began to pour over the sea shanties I could find on Spotify. Samples began to search as well, but she was not entirely sold on the sea shanties. She understood what I was trying to accomplish and hoped to bring me something she believed would serve me better than the shanties. Samples searched, but never found the pieces she was looking for. She had described them to me in conversation as old Appalachian folk songs.

As rehearsals progressed into runs, I began using the instrumental piece that would open the show, but I quickly noticed that the piece was setting the wrong tone for the beginning of our production. The dissonance in the chord resolve seemed to foreshadow the end a bit too much. I also observed that if we ran the opening scene, using the instrumental piece, the scene was a bit of a dirge. But when we ran the scene without the original instrumental piece it started off with a great deal more energy and on a much more positive note. In a three-hour play with a half a dozen deaths the last thing we needed was to start off on a somber note. As much as I hated to do it, I scrapped the instrumental piece and went back to the drawing board.

I felt we needed a contrast between the shanties and the piece that would open and close the production. I listened to other instrumental pieces, but nothing seemed right. It clicked for me one day that the shanties were all a cappella pieces. It might seem that a contrast between instrumental and a cappella would be the best choice, but given the attempt to establish the world of the play as being so subjectively centered on Robert, I decided there needed to be some consistency between the musical selections. I knew the piece that would open and close the show needed to be a cappella.

One of the actors and another friend of mine, over dinner one night, suggested “Danny Boy”. I knew the song but had not heard it in years and so the next day I looked up several versions on YouTube and Spotify. The lyrics struck me as fitting to the story and to Robert’s journey overall. But it sounded like a funeral march in nearly every version to which I listened. Then another idea came to me: what if we created a new arrangement of the piece? What if the song had a more hopeful air about it and was sung as a loving farewell to a man going on the journey he had dreamed of for years? And what if, at the end of the play, we heard the second verse, as a man saying goodbye to the two loves of his life, his wife and his brother, knowing that they would all be together again someday? If this could be achieved through the performance of “Danny Boy”, I thought we had our answer.

I contacted one of the graduate students in the Opera/Music Theatre program, Michelle Ford, and asked her if she would be interested in working on this with me. She and I had worked together the previous winter when I directed her as the lead soprano in the SIU School of Music production of *The Music Shop*.

We met and looked at the music together, coming, very quickly to another

arrangement of the piece. After working through the song together a few more times, we settled on what we thought would work very well for the opening and closing of the play. It would be a week or so before we could get a recording made, so I sang it myself for the first few runs. Even with me singing it, I noticed an immediate difference in the impact of this song on the first scene. The piece seemed to inform Robert's entrance much more effectively and kept the mood and air between Andrew and Robert much brighter and more hopeful through the play's first moments.

After tinkering with the sequence of the sea shanties for a few more rehearsals all of the sound and music was in place and ready for tech.

### Auditions

Two nights of open calls were held. The actors were required to prepare a one to two-minute monologue from a Eugene O'Neill play, other than *Beyond the Horizon*. I wanted to use this initial round of auditions to identify the actors who could best handle O'Neill's language.

I knew the vast majority of the actors auditioning. There were freshman/transfers, non-majors, and a few community members that I did not know who auditioned as well. I did not advance actors through to the callbacks based on past experience working with them or their reputation in the department. I brought actors into the callback based solely on their monologue audition. This led to some disappointments and some surprises. Several actors who are often cast in department productions did not receive callbacks, and some students known more as technicians were advanced to the next round of the process. When the callback list was posted, a few actors apologized to me for not auditioning. The call back list was ethnically diverse, and many of these young

actors made the assumption that the play would only be cast with white actors. I gave these young artists the same advice that was given to me in my undergraduate program: Don't type yourself. Be seen by anyone who will see you and let them decide if you are right for their production. I entered the callbacks confident I had multiple options at each role.

### Callbacks

The callback process was a bit bumpy. Several people declined their callback. Many of these students were non-majors only auditioning as a requirement for the beginning acting class. The list of people declining callbacks included all of the men I intended to read for the role of Andrew. A second callback would be needed to cast the roles of Andrew and James. It would be a few more weeks before I found a young girl to cast in the role of Mary, and the role of Dr. Fawcett was filled by a faculty member, Dr. Kenny Collins, with whom I had worked in the past.

The callback had two components: A physical component and readings from the script. Each actor was given a poem (See Appendix C) and asked to identify the "once upon a time" in the poem. Then, using only their bodies, no spoken text, the actors were instructed to clearly define the story, from beat to beat, identifying the individual actions that make up the arc of the poem. I hoped this technique would help me identify the physical imagination and creativity of each actor, while also locating strengths and weaknesses (flexibility, body control, imagination).

After each performance I spent a few minutes working with the actor on a specific beat in their piece. I worked to refine and specify their movement. This exercise helped me to eliminate a couple of actors immediately. The physical work I ask for in production

is very specific. I like the actors to create strong physicality for their characters, and I also strive for very specific patterns of movement. This specificity is holistic and is required in staging, prop handling, and interaction with other characters. This audition technique worked well and is something I intend to experiment with going forward in my career. The readings proved that the monologues in the open call had also been effective. All of the actors in the callback did well with O'Neill's language

I strive to keep an open mind when I head into an audition process. But, like many directors, I do typically have an actor or two in mind for the major roles of a production. There was an actor, a nontraditional senior, I had long thought would be one of my top options for the role of Ruth. But in the callbacks I was surprised to find she could not bring the innocence and charm I envisioned for the character. It was a freshman, who I had originally called back for the role of Ruth's mother, that brought the innocence and charm I was hoping to find for Ruth.

I began by reading them as I originally envisioned, with the freshman in the role of Mrs. Atkins and the senior in the role of Ruth. But when I read them in this arrangement, it just did not work. The freshman's Mrs. Atkins was unable to dominate the senior's Ruth and, as I mentioned before, this interpretation of Ruth failed to evoke the innocence and charm I envisioned. I worked them for about five minutes to see if a little coaxing would do the trick, but it did not. I asked them to reverse roles and read the scene again. It was instant magic, their chemistry was wonderful, and I saw versions of the characters emerging that I believed would put us on track to success.

There was one additional quality to this freshman's interpretation of Ruth that put me over the top in the decision to cast her. I have already discussed, at length, my



interpretation of Ruth and its contrast to the prevailing criticism. Asia Ward's reading in the callback instinctually gravitated to this same non-traditional interpretation. The actor also made some wonderful discoveries, just in the audition. When Ruth tells Robert her heart would be broken if he left, Ward found a reading that sounded as though she was surprised by the idea of heartbreak. Ruth's pain and surprise at the pain was crystal clear in Ward's delivery.

My next step was to reevaluate the male auditions from the open call and find a new crop of men to read for the role of Andrew. After a second pass through the forms and a brief beating of the bushes I still had a very short list, and not a proven talent among them. The young man, a transfer sophomore, who was eventually cast in the role is an interesting study in open call/first impressions versus callback/process performance.

In his initial audition I saw talent and instinct, but his performance lacked depth. I thought this might be due to a lack of time to prepare or a young actor's failure to understand O'Neill's material. Not knowing him at all, I gave him a bit of direction on the monologue and asked him to take another crack at it. The actor made zero change based on the direction I gave him. When I brought him in for the second callback it appeared that getting fresh material in his hand made all the difference. He was much more malleable; in fact, his adjustments were good, and he had a clear willingness to explore the possibilities. At the end of the night I decided to cast him in the role. I would later develop a new hypothesis about the actor's lack of adjustments in his first audition.

### Casting

Shortly after the cast list was posted and all of the actors accepted their roles,

additional conflicts started to roll in. The most major conflict involved the actor playing Ruth. She was in choir and failed to indicate those rehearsal and performance obligations on her conflict form. The choir was scheduled to have dress rehearsals and a performance during the tech process for *Beyond the Horizon*. I briefly considered recasting the role and read another actor for the part. I also considered shuffling the existing ensemble and gave the actor cast as Mrs. Atkins another shot at the role. After consulting with my advisor I stayed with my original casting decision and used a stand in when the actor was unavailable. Timing worked in our favor and, in the end, the actor missed far less time than was originally anticipated.

### Rehearsal — Textual Work

The core of O'Neill's play, the major dramatic action, hinges on internal conflict for the triumvirate of characters – Robert, Andrew, and Ruth. I discuss the playing and revelation of a character's internal struggle, with both actors and students, as the process of making the invisible visible. The first step in making this invisible struggle a visible one, involves breaking the script into clear beats, or, units of action. These beats guide the storytelling and help define the arc(s) of the characters and the play. The density of O'Neill's language makes defining these beats a greater challenge for the director; it also creates a greater challenge for actors in their efforts to concretize these internal struggles in performance.

After dividing the script into titled beats, I make notes on the subtext of certain lines. I focus on the lines that are most critical to my vision and interpretation of the play. I do not want to make notes on the subtext of every line; I prefer to discover the majority of the subtext in rehearsal with the actors. The beats help me shape the story and the

notes on subtext give me markers or check points, while my work with the actors threads it all together.

The production was cast a full eight weeks before beginning rehearsal; giving the actors this much time alone with O'Neill's difficult text filled me with trepidation. I was, specifically, concerned they would lock into self-indulgent, melodramatic portrayals that no amount of rehearsal would change. I decided to combat this by having an early read through of the play. I intended to use this read through to communicate to the actors the way we would work with the text, specifically, the subtext and the punctuation. This is a different approach from what I typically experienced, as an actor, at a first read through. My experience(s) of a first read through as a professional actor, typically, amounted to reading the play, getting to know each other a bit and then going home. A director's approach to the *performance* of the text was rarely so specific that it required discussion with a group of professional actors.

I was very excited, finding the cast had no trouble understanding the approach we would be taking with O'Neill's text. They expressed an excitement about this intense focus on the subtext and quickly understood how the specific punctuation technique (See Appendix B for information on this punctuation technique.) I employ helped them to discover unique readings of the dialogue. This read through also helped to identify a couple of trouble spots in the actors' pacing. One actor was prone to speaking the words at a snail's pace, and another actor paused after every line.

We returned to the text for another read through some eight weeks later. I briefly revisited the punctuation technique and stopped the actors from time to time to discuss the subtext of a line. My goal in this read through was to reinforce the specific attention

that must be paid to the punctuation and the subtext in O'Neill's play. In his video series, *Playing Shakespeare*, John Barton talks about finding a performance of the Bard's text that creates the shortest distance possible between actor and audience. I find this idea to be enormously helpful, and I think it is also applicable to twentieth century playwrights like O'Neill and Williams. I also believe subtext and punctuation are the map on which we may find this shortest distance.

I was somewhat disappointed in the work the actors had done on their own over the past eight weeks; but rather than dwelling on that, I chose to focus on how easily they seemed to be grasping the foundation concepts of subtext and punctuation. I cannot overstate how crucial the application of the punctuation technique, or their ability to understand and effectively play subtext, would be to the success or failure of our production.

#### Rehearsal — Physicality

My undergraduate actor training was strongly rooted in physical theater. We studied Viewpoints, circus arts, *Commedia*, Laban, mask, and employed some exercises and techniques that resembled the work of Grotowski's Lab Theatre. My directorial aesthetic has been strongly influenced by this physical work. I aim to help the actors create strong physical characterizations. The first three nights of my process are focused on helping the actor explore and gain a better understanding of their physical instrument. They begin by exploring certain fundamentals of physicality and movement as they relate to themselves as people, then they move into the exploration of animal physicality and, lastly, the actors work to translate their animals into concrete characters with complete given circumstances. This physical work culminates in the creation of

their characters for the production and the ensemble's exploration of how the characters relate to each other in nonverbal ways (See Appendix A for more specific information on this physical approach).

This group was extraordinary in their physical exploration. They did two nights of work in one. They took to the work so quickly – its concepts and principles — on an instinctive level that they successfully exhausted each step and then moved to the next without the usual verbal inputs required from me. Their work was inspiring to watch.

In their second physical rehearsal the cast continued to advance through the process without the usual amount of instruction. Strong, clear physical characterizations began to emerge. With the group working in lanes, the basic foundation of Viewpoints, and their characterizations crystalizing, I asked the cast to open up their soft focus and allow the work of the others to inform their own. After just a couple of minutes the arc of the play began to unfold in front of me. They covered that arc from start to finish three times, using only their bodies, no words.

Typically, at this point in the process, I use an improvisation game called “Bus Stop”. This game allows me to control which groups of characters are on stage together, without the limitations of the script. It provides us with an opportunity to explore dynamics and relationships the script does not, and our findings enable us to add a greater depth and texture to the performance. This group did their own exploration in the lane work that is the foundation for the exercises, making Bus Stop less of a requirement and more of a luxury.

Bus Stop allowed me to give Robert and James an amount of time alone in the space. This gave them the opportunity to find the depth of love that exists between

those characters — despite the differences at their core. James also had a chance to find the disappointment that his son is so unfit for the Mayo life. Putting Ruth and Kate alone on stage resulted in the discovery of an idea I had never considered. It is not women's intuition that assures Kate that Ruth loves Robert. Ruth has *told* Kate that she loves Robert. This discovery, made by the actors while playing Bus Stop, remained a part of the production and was concretized in the performance. The actors also made several discoveries that were particularly useful in the staging/creation of the physical dynamic between the brothers in the opening scene, and exploring how that dynamic changes when James is added to the scene

### Rehearsal — Staging

There are many different approaches to staging a play. Some directors write out their staging before rehearsals begin, others do not write anything down but still dictate the staging to the actors, barking at them if they move without being told. Some directors work in a more collaborative, improvisational way when staging a play. Each of these approaches has its own strengths and weaknesses. I have experienced all of these, as an actor, sometimes on the same production. Early in my directing career I wrote out all of my staging and dictated it to the actors like it was the gospel. But I quickly realized that this method of staging, for me, resulted in stale, stiff, clunky, perfunctory movement. I refer to this type of movement on stage as "blocking".

Blocking is heavy and clunky; it is what I was taught to do on the football field in my youth, and it is not the type of movement I look for on stage. I want elegance and grace on the stage. I want the movement on the stage to be pleasing to look at. Even in a straight play, the movement should be as pleasing and elegant as a ballet. I call this

type of movement "staging". Over the last ten years, and approximately fifteen productions, my process for staging has evolved. My time at SIU, and the lessons I have learned in regard to conceptual staging, culminated in my approach to the staging of *Beyond the Horizon*.

The first step in my process was the development of a staging concept that worked in concert with the imagining of several stage pictures critical to the storytelling. What I mean by staging concept is this: I develop a spatial and geographic vocabulary for my staging and use that vocabulary to help me construct stage pictures that will concretize story, character, relationships, and conflict(s). For example, in Act One, Scene One of *Horizon*, stage right equaled the farm and stage left equaled Robert's world of hope and dream. Robert only ventures to the stage right side in three very specific moments: 1) When he is talking about the role of the "true Mayo"; 2) When he begins his story about his mother pushing his chair to the West window, telling him to be quiet, and 3) When he makes the decision to stay on the farm with Ruth. In the first two instances, Robert is quickly repelled back to center stage. But in the third instance, he stays on the stage right side, even coming up short of center stage when he sees the first star as he and Ruth begin to exit. Indoors or outdoors, this same type of spatial/geographic vocabulary was used throughout the production.

I also echoed certain moments of staging to coincide with the echo of various moments of dramatic action. When Robert tells Ruth that his journey with Uncle Dick is just him keeping a promise of long ago, I placed him down stage center, and he skipped a rock down that road (imaginary). Later, in the second act when Andrew tells Ruth why he must go back to Buenos Aires, I echoed that same staging. This is just one example

of my application of echoing in the staging for *Beyond the Horizon*.

Rather than pre-staging every moment of the action, I prefer to use this staging concept as a frame and a few specific stage pictures in each scene as anchors. The moments of echoing make excellent anchors. This is the same sort of approach I mentioned regarding the text: using beats and specific lines of subtext as a frame and anchors. Just as I collaborate with the actors on the playing of the text to thread the beats and subtext together, I collaborate with the actor(s) to thread together the critical stage pictures I have in mind and develop the pattern of movement that leads us from one picture to the next. This technique usually leads to the discovery of several more pictures that prove to be of great value to the storytelling.

Somewhere in the transition from our physical rehearsals to our staging rehearsals, something got lost. When we stepped on stage and began our first scene (Act One, Scene Two), the actors were frozen. The same group of actors who so easily tapped into their physical imagination without a script in their hand were completely locked up. I admit that I panicked a little when this happened. It was a new problem I had not encountered, and the stakes riding on the production generated an emotional reaction. I decided, that night, that I would walk into every staging rehearsal from here on out with everything mapped out ahead of time. If I was able to tap into their instincts and impulses and stage the play in my usual manner, then great! But, if not, I would be prepared for it and dole out the staging line by line.

Stepping back I realized, overnight, our struggles in that first staging rehearsal were the result of a failure to use the punctuation effectively. This technique enables movement, inspires it from deep within the actor as it links them to the inherent energy



and movement of the text itself. I posted a note on the call board about using the punctuation. In a few brief sentences I explained that a full commitment to the punctuation was crucial to our staging and to the success of our production. Our next staging rehearsal was terrific. The text motivated their movement now, spatial relationship began to develop in a way that informed character and dramatic action. I left this staging rehearsal very excited about the work to come.

As we continued the process I learned which actors were making a full commitment to the punctuation and which actors simply lacked the experience and confidence to trust their instincts/impulses and act on them. I continued to dole out staging when necessary and allowed the actors to explore in the moments when they had compelling impulses. I staged this play in six nights. I have never staged a play of any real length in such a rapid fashion. I felt it was important to stage *Beyond the Horizon* as quickly as possible. It was a priority for me to get the scripts out of their hands and get them focused on the understanding and playing of the subtext.

Once the play was staged, we had a stumble-through. The stumble-through gives the actors and me a chance to see the whole play put together, however rough it may be. It also helps me to prioritize my scene work for the next phase of the process. The amount of staging that I doled out resulted in much less editing in the next steps of rehearsal. Our work could now truly focus on subtext, character, relationship, and action.

### Rehearsal — Polishing

The next part of my process is focused on the beat by beat cleaning, specifying, and polishing of the play. It is a slow process that touches on every performative aspect

of the production – staging, subtext, gesture, prop handling etc. When the actors are focused and the work is at its best, it results in the smallest of moments having tremendous power; at its worst, the director and the actors feel like their tires are spinning in the mud. The process for *Beyond the Horizon* was a mix of great nights and really, really bad nights.

The cast and I would work a scene and feel great about it, but then in a run a few nights later the scene would look like it had not been touched since the initial staging. After a couple of weeks I began to recognize the hurdles impeding our consistency. One challenge was related to the age of the actors; our triumvirate was comprised of two, twenty-year-old sophomores and one nineteen-year-old freshman. These actors lacked the life experience to grasp, on their own, the full gravity of their characters' actions or the subtext of their arguments. Sometimes the actors would fail to make any connection to the words and at other times they could only access the simplest of emotions, anger, and our scenes would devolve into screaming matches.

The problem was real – the age of the actors in relation to their characters and the given circumstances of the play was a legitimate hurdle. But, as the director, it was my responsibility to find a solution to the problem and get the performances I needed from these young, but very talented, actors. Their age or experience does not absolve me of responsibility.

This was not a problem new to SIU, or even to me really. I had assistant directed a production of *Radio Golf* two years earlier in which a seventeen-year-old freshman was cast in the lead role of Harmon Wilkes. Wilkes, a forty-year-old business man who grew up in the Hill District of Pittsburgh in the 1960s, declares his candidacy to be the

city's first black mayor. The given circumstances of the character could not have been much further from those of the young actor playing the part. My advisor was the director of that production, and he and I worked together to draw everything we could out of that young actor. Our most often used technique was to explain the given circumstances to the actor and attempt to put them into terms to which he could relate. We gave a lot of "As if..." direction with, what I would say were, mixed results. I decided this had been our most effective technique on *Radio Golf*, and so I began to use it on this production of *Beyond the Horizon*.

My background and life experience put me in a unique position to help the actors understand these characters. I was married in my mid-twenties and divorced at the age of thirty. I believed that if I explained the very concrete impact of their actions and words on each other and the relationships, it might help them to internalize the given circumstances of their characters. If they could internalize the given circumstances, I believed, we would achieve the consistency we were lacking.

Drawing from my own past experiences, I connected the dots for the actors, and you could see the "aha" moments and "light bulbs going on" for them. But despite these hopeful moments, I continued to run into the same problem as before. The actors would "nail" the scene and then when we returned to it, I would get a wholly different performance. But the clearer understanding they had of the scenario seemed to work as a solid touchstone, or anchor, for us all to use to bring them back to the desired performance.

In an effort to further combat their inconsistency, I began stopping the actors the moment I would see them disengage and fall into their habit of performing these

characters in a disconnected, "by rote" way. I kept the stoppage brief and to the point – "You are not listening and responding. You are acting." This sort of checking was effective in the moment, but at some point I would have to take off the training wheels.

My advisor suggested a line through before Thanksgiving break and again afterward: A sit down line through, forcing them to take their time with the words and intensely explore the subtext, not stopping them, except to help connect the dots at the moments of major decision and conflict, the guideposts for the characters. I did this two nights before Thanksgiving Break. I was trying every trick I had, and taking a couple from my advisor, to get this talented group to consistently perform at the level at which I knew they were capable.

I managed to stage the play and work my way back through it twice, with two runs, all before Thanksgiving break. I did not feel terrible (and I did not feel wonderful) about the state of the show when we left for break. When we returned from the six-day Thanksgiving Break, we would have five rehearsals before entering into tech.

Our first rehearsal back from break I held another line through and tried to impress upon them the importance of this work and what it could do for them. I reminded them of the discoveries they made in the line through before Thanksgiving and encouraged them to take that work to the next level. The second line through was also useful, but unlike the first one, I had to stop them after a few minutes to sort of wake them up — they were even doing this line through as a sort of by rote exercise.

### Rehearsal — Runs

I use runs of the show as a measuring stick and an opportunity to put the entirety of the play together. I do a stumble-through after I have completed the staging of each

act and full runs after each polishing process. The runs of *Beyond the Horizon* were very frustrating. As I mentioned above, our scene work would go very well, but when we ran the show much of that work was lost. During our first run, whole sections of staging and business were lost. These drops were so egregious that at one point I stopped the run to refocus the actors, pointing out just how much of the show was missing. Our future runs were better, but still not equal to our scene work. Our last run before Thanksgiving was the best we had up to that point. Despite the level of that run, I was still filled with trepidation by the lack of depth or consistency in their performance.

I had another trick in my bag that I believed would help us lock in the level of performance we were all striving for. It has, from my earliest directorial efforts, been a staple of my process to run an act twice in the same night, with notes in between. Having the opportunity to apply their notes right away, instead of waiting twenty-four hours, is usually a great asset for the actors. But the cast of *Beyond the Horizon*, almost seemed to use the first run as a warm up. I gave them notes in between runs, and they did an excellent job of using them. But more than that, the act would take such a leap forward that it left me wondering what cast of actors had performed the first run of the night. This occurred the night we ran the first act and the night we ran the second act.

Despite our success in the runs of the individual acts, when we put the whole show together the very next night, I found myself giving the same notes I had been giving for a couple of weeks: Specific notes about timing, rhythm — slow this moment down, take your time with that, touch her/him on this word, start your cross on this word and land in x spot on that word. What do you want in that moment? Does that come from a place of anger or from a place of heartbreak? The two are not the same thing

and we are much more interested in someone who's heartbroken than someone running around up there yelling like a maniac. I was very disappointed in the product I was leading into the tech process. We had a long way to go, and I was losing confidence that we could make it to the desired destination.

### Rehearsal — Technical and Dress

With the complexity of the scene changes, we reserved the Friday evening, before cue to cue, to specifically rehearse the shifts. The Friday night scene shift rehearsal proved to be invaluable. On Saturday, we were able to complete our cue to cue by 2:30 in the afternoon and get most of a full run in by the 5:30 dinner break. We returned from dinner at 7:00 pm and started from the top, completing one full run. The next day we had another complete technical run of the show. It was determined that the show was in good enough shape, in relation to the amount of work left to be done on the set, to cancel the Sunday evening rehearsal and turn the stage over so that more work could be done on the visual elements. Monday we would move into dress rehearsals with the show opening on Thursday.

My uneasiness about the acting continued as we moved into dress rehearsals. I felt very good about the technical aspects of the show. The costumes were in excellent shape; aside from some minor adjustments for the ease of quick changes their work was complete. The lighting designer and I would continue to discuss the cloud effect(s) and the timing/intensity of the downstage vignette specials was locked in prior to final dress.

The largest scenic struggle throughout the entire process, including tech, was the ground row. The paint treatment went through three different incarnations in a week's

time. Initially, the unit lacked any real depth or specificity. Department Chair J. Thomas Kidd gave notes on the paint treatment throughout technical rehearsals and slowly the ground row morphed into something more recognizable. But somewhere along the way there was another miscommunication, and much of the stage right portion had to be repainted from scratch. The depth and detail gained from Monday to Tuesday was somehow lost by Wednesday night, and the lighting designer, who had been adjusting her cues along the way wound up leaving the unit, largely, unlit.

The aspect of the production seeing the most growth over the technical process was sound. The sound designer and I continued to tinker with the environmental effects throughout tech. An interesting problem came up for us due to the configuration of the house. Environmental cues loud enough to be heard in the upper section of the auditorium were overwhelming in the lower section, but when the levels were set appropriately for the lower level, they could not be heard in the upper level. After some consternation on both our parts, the sound designer and I agreed the large majority of the audience would be in the lower seating area, and we locked in the sound levels that best suited that section of the house.

Near the end of cue to cue, the sound designer came upon an idea that would strengthen the use of the sea shanties during our scene shifts. He suggested we pump the shanties through the upstage/onstage speakers, and less so through the house speakers. Doing this allowed us to increase the level, creating the sense that more voices were singing the shanties and that they were truly a part of Robert's world, not just music perfunctorily played through the changes.

The acting made serious strides during the runs on Saturday and Sunday, but I

had some very specific concerns heading into dress rehearsals: consistency, rhythm/pacing, and Robert's physical transformation from the healthy man he is at the beginning of the play to his death in the final scene. Through dress rehearsals my notes were focused on the concretization of the internal struggles of our triumvirate, Robert, Andrew, and Ruth. Ruth was probably in the best shape of the three, though she still failed to listen/respond at moments, while Andrew still defaulted to blind anger at times. The rest of the ensemble had their own challenges to overcome but, overall, I felt much better about their work.

The actor playing Robert had a wonderful work ethic, and I was able to schedule some extra time to work on his physicality, particularly in the third act. This private work between us was very helpful. At the first dress rehearsal, when Robert made his third Act entrance, I saw a dying, defeated man, heading for the inevitable. For me, this combination of his physical tempo and carriage physically concretized the final stages of his journey. The cough we had worked on that same afternoon was also much closer to the painful, hollow, exhausted wrenching I was looking for. Over the next two dress rehearsals we would work toward a less controlled manifestation of the cough. By opening night the actor was motivating the coughs from within the character and not purely from my direction.



## CHAPTER 3

### EVALUATION

#### Vision and Concept Evaluation

As I reflect on the process, from reading, research and analysis through design, rehearsal and production, I still believe in my original vision and concept. I like this vision. It still resonates with me and feels like a strong foundation for a production of this play. I would say the same about the concept. But, I see now, that certain elements of plot and character I once believed were crucial to this vision are actually: 1) irrelevant, and/or 2) not possible to concretize.

One acute example, that surfaced while still in process, was my belief that I needed the audience to root for Robert's survival in the third act. O'Neill's text does not make that choice possible. Playing Robert in a way that gives the audience hope for his survival also invalidates most of the dialogue between Andrew and Ruth. This became clear to me during technical rehearsals, and I abandoned the choice, spending extra time with the actor who played Robert so we could correct his physical and vocal characterizations to reflect the lesson I had learned.

But another, more systemic, example was the result of an obsession I developed with a single aspect of criticism related to the play and its author: the misogynistic construction of Ruth's character. As I prepared my research, I locked in on the prevailing analysis of the character and became determined to prove the critics and the scholars wrong. As I detailed in the first chapter, I was determined to create a sympathetic Ruth. But my concept included a phenomenological approach, hinging on Robert as the experiential lens, so the audiences' feelings about Ruth really had no

bearing on my vision. My fixation on this criticism blurred my directorial focus throughout the rehearsal process, causing me to spend too much time trying to control the audiences' feelings about a character instead of concretizing my vision and concept. I should have spent more time showing the audience Robert's experience, the impact of Ruth's actions, not trying to control their feelings about those actions.

I will continue to use my training in the use of research and dramaturgy to inform the development of the vision and concept for the productions under my direction. But I will remember the work of the scholars and artists that came before me is there to support and inspire my own endeavors. My endeavors are not meant to disprove their scholarship or opinions.

#### Rehearsal Process — Evaluation

The overall process of rehearsal was well organized and effectively executed. The plan, as I laid it out, was purposeful and efficient. The physical work done in the first week of rehearsal was very impressive and led to a great deal of excitement about the work to come. The punctuation technique I have come to rely on so heavily, and with great success in the past, surprisingly proved to be a real challenge for this cast. Elements of the process I considered to be a success at the time I have now, with time to reflect, decided were detrimental to the overall finished product – specifically, my estimation of how well the cast understood the punctuation technique and the rate at which the play was staged.

The punctuation technique is a system. Offensive and defensive coordinators of football teams have their own schemes or systems. When a new coordinator is hired, the offseason and training camp is used to install the system. Younger quarterbacks

take more time than cagey veterans to learn a new system. This was a young cast, and I did not spend the time I should have, the time they needed, to effectively install my system. When used properly, this technique unlocks rhythm and tempo in a way that helps actors gain a deeper understanding of their characters from moment to moment. It also helps the actors get away from the predictable reading of dialogue and find a newer more exciting interpretation.

I spent the same amount of time teaching the actors this technique, and how to apply it to O'Neill, as I would have on any other play. But O'Neill is not any other playwright. O'Neill's text is a challenge on its own, so applying an unfamiliar system to it, increases the challenge. By not spending the time I should have, coaching the nuances of the system, I actually made O'Neill's text even more complicated. Instead of putting my team in a position to succeed, I gave them an even steeper hill to climb.

I staged the play in less time than I have ever staged a play of any real length. Staging the play in as few rehearsals as possible was part of the original plan, and at the time I believed it would be a real advantage for the production. I normally like to stage very quickly, creating an initial sketch of the production. Then I work back through the play, cleaning, specifying — polishing every aspect of performance. It has, so far, proved to be an advantage to create this sketch very quickly and leave as much time as possible for the actors and me to play.

But with a text as complicated, and foreign, as O'Neill is to these actors, moving on to staging without significant table work, and then barreling through the staging, had the opposite effect from what I intended. My rehearsal plan made sense: it was purposeful and well organized and, for a group of experienced actors, it might have

worked just fine. But I needed to take the age and experience of these actors into account. By failing to plan for the individual and specific needs of the cast I missed the opportunity to give them what they really needed to maximize their potential and the success of the production.

I do not, generally, do much table work. It has been my experience, as both an actor and a director, that the large majority of what gets accomplished in those long nights of table work only gets discussed all over again in staging and scene work rehearsals. The rest of what gets discussed during table work rehearsals is not actionable, meaning it is wonderfully stimulating intellectually, but completely useless to the actor's task. Now, all of that said, in retrospect, I think this cast would have benefited greatly from extended table work before beginning staging. The complexity of O'Neill's text, its foreignness to these actors, required a different process and approach. I held to my usual process and approach and failed to meet the needs of the actors.

Going forward, in similar situations, I will take two specific courses of action: 1) I will spend more time teaching and coaching the punctuation technique. We will read sections naturally, and then reread them using the technique, discussing the discoveries and answering questions and, 2) I will stage more slowly. I will increase my staging time, significantly, to allow for a table session prior to putting each scene up on its feet. I will focus these brief table sessions on a review of the scene's punctuation, specific guideposts of dramatic action and the subtext that is most crucial to illuminating character and relationship.

### Design Process — Evaluation

The design process was complicated by many factors, some for which I am

directly responsible; others were completely out of my control and put the production at a serious disadvantage before the process ever began. The assignment of a student designer who was, simply, just not ready, put us “behind the eight ball”. Perhaps his committee should have gotten involved sooner or taken strong action earlier. I did go to both his committee and my advisor and received positive, useful advice from both of those groups. I may have been too pedestrian in my discussions with them, and, perhaps I should have more directly expressed my feelings that he was not ready for this project. I recognized that this is an academic department and so, at the end of the day, the goal is to train, educate, and prepare the students for successful careers in theater. This recognition kept me on the side of helping the student through the process, being of whatever assistance I could in his development and in the success of the production. I was not interested in seeing him pulled from the production, but when that decision was made I did agree it was the best course of action for all of the parties involved. Overall, it was an unfortunate situation brought on by many outside forces and extenuating circumstances.

I have spent a great deal of time contemplating the breakdown in the collaborative partnership between Professor Vintu and me. I have considered options that may have had a more positive result, and I think, ultimately, I should have taken advantage of the support afforded me by the academic environment. I should have turned to my advisor, and in the event he was unreachable, the department chair. My age and professional experience have, occasionally, clouded my judgement as a student at SIU. I have, at times, forgotten my role as a student, and carried out my work as though I were still in a purely professional environment. On some occasions this

served me well, and in other instances it has had a negative impact. It is important for all of us to note this distinction in our work. Professional theatres do not appreciate directors (or other artists for that matter) who approach their work as it exists in academia any more than an academic institution appreciates a student who forgets their rank below the faculty.

I think there were several factors contributing to the breakdown in collaboration between Professor Vintu and me. I do believe one of them was my disregard for the faculty/student relationship. I engaged in the collaborative discussion with Professor Vintu in the same manner I would have a professional designer. This means I continued to ask questions, seeking out reasoning and support, via analysis and dramaturgy, for the artistic choices being made. When a choice is presented that I do not see as an aid to our storytelling I redirect the conversation, also in a questioning way. I begin by stating what I like, specifically, about the element and why, how it helps us tell our story. Then I like to ask questions along the lines of, “I wonder what would happen if... What would it look like if we... How do you feel about... Is there a way we can leverage this aspect (the detail I liked) to strengthen a part of the story?...”. But, I believe for a couple of different reasons, this inflamed an already stressful and difficult process: 1) I failed to hear the faculty designer’s very real and legitimate problems with the additional and unexpected workload of the project. As the director, and as it was my thesis project, I was very tightly focused on the production. Had I stopped, slowed myself down and remembered this designer is, not only a faculty member, but a person with competing responsibilities, I could have responded in a more supportive way, rather than pressing on, as I did, with the needs of the production. I had never experienced, professionally, a

designer being forced to take on a project and so this was not a topic that had ever arisen. The second issue arose, I believe, because of ideological differences.

It was explained to me, by another designer and another director that some designers are of the mindset that if the actor does not physically interact with a piece then every aspect of that element is up to the sole discretion of the designer. This is not, necessarily, a common approach or even one this director and designer could confirm as being from a particular school or cultural process, but as I reflect on the entire scope of my interactions with Professor Vintu, it would seem reasonable to estimate her work is grounded in this perspective. I will be the first to admit that I had never heard of this approach to the theatrical process, but given the elements that created conflict between Professor Vintu, the other designers and me (the hard cyc image, the ground row and finishes to flown pieces), this would seem like a reasonable conclusion.

My training at SIU was based on the idea that the director is responsible for the cohesive execution of their vision and concept. Collaboration is the key to unlocking the safe that holds our best, most effective creations. Collaboration between director and designer, to me, means combining creative imaginations, pooling strengths for the purpose of concretizing abstract ideas. But, at the end of the day, because the director is responsible for the cohesive execution of vision and concept, they have to be the one to say, “Yes, I think that’s our best answer” or “No, I think we can do better”. This is the only way to keep a production on track and prevent the product on stage from looking like three different plays in one theatre.

Now, bearing all of that in mind, I can honestly say, as an actor, director, designer and technician, working in professional theatre since 1998, I feel confident in

saying the designers, actors, and playwrights with whom I have worked in the past have found me to be anything but tyrannical. I have never experienced this type of breakdown in a professional relationship. The closest I ever came was directing a production of Georgia Douglas-Johnson's *Blue Blood* for Prologue Theater in 2009. The Artistic Director, Production Manager, and Managing Director had very legitimate concerns about the casting of the male juvenile role. They approached me as I exited the theatre following callbacks and, quite aggressively, explained I could not cast the man I had just been reading for the role. But of the actors I had seen at the auditions, and knew to be available, he was the best option. It was a difficult situation, and it would have been very easy for me to respond, as I felt attacked, in a demanding tyrannical way, but I did not.

To make a long story short, when the conversation was over, they apologized for ganging up on me and offered to help me find some more actors to read for the role. I also received a personal apology, via email, from the Artistic Director the next morning. We read a few more actors over the next week and eventually an actor was cast with whom we were all comfortable. This issue was successfully navigated and resolved because all parties involved were committed to and motivated by a deep desire to see the production not just happen but succeed. It was a professional production, not an academic one and, in my experience, there is a dramatic difference in the cultures of those two environments. This is not to say one is better than the other, it is just to say they are different and it is important to recognize and acknowledge the flexibility that is necessary to be successful in each of these unique environments.

Professionally, I was an actor who was cast without audition, by friends and by



people I had never met, based solely on recommendation. I was a director who was hired in much the same fashion on a few occasions, and was also called to “bail out” a couple of productions when the original director was fired. I found myself in a very uniquely challenging situation on this production, and I did not handle it in the way that would best serve the production or the people involved. I hope to learn from this experience and move forward, conducting the rest of my career as I have conducted the vast majority of it up to this point.

The individual process with the lighting, sound, and costume designers went very smoothly and, I think, each designer also made successful contributions to the production. All three of these designers exhibited a high level of commitment to their individual pieces and to the overall finished product. There was a high level of collaboration among these designers, not only with me individually, but as a team in the process. Lighting and sound worked well together to determine the geography of the environment. The placement of East and West directly influenced the work of both of these design areas. Costumes and lighting worked well together in their color selection, and there were no surprises with regard to a red dress looking black or something of that nature.

As positive as my experiences were with these other designers, I think my work with them suffered because of the extra time I had to put into the scenic design. I would like to have spent more time with the lighting designer in particular. I think there were more opportunities for us to enhance the phenomenological aspect of the production concept. But we needed more time to discuss the options available to us — isolation, color, patterns, etc. — and where, specifically, to maximize these opportunities. I think

we could have returned to the opening convention that was so successful in establishing Robert as the lens through which the audience would experience the play, as well as leveraging the lighting in the scene changes to greater effect.

#### Evaluation of Performance/Production

The production had grown throughout technical and dress rehearsals, and on opening night the cast took another step forward. Robert had a newfound connection to the text, his body and his face were more expressive than they had ever been, and he was finally finding and accenting the important words in O'Neill's text. Andrew was doing a better job of living in the character in the moment than he had the entire process, and his pace, for the first time in a week, was right where it needed to be. As the play went on, the rest of the cast seemed to follow suit. My lone note of any real substance from opening night was related to Mrs. Atkins. In her first scene the actor playing the role opened at a pace so rapid even I could hardly fill in the gaps to understand what she was saying. She eventually slowed to a more reasonable pace, but there was no getting back her important lines from the beginning of the scene. Despite this racing, it was the best I had ever seen this show.

As an audience member, I experienced a clear and fairly complete journey by the three main characters. I saw each character struggle with their decisions in clear and specific moments: Robert choosing to stay on the farm and marry Ruth, Andrew having to make much the same decision in the second act about a quick return to Buenos Aires, and Ruth's decision to say she loves Andrew, just to name a few. It took Robert and me right up until the last minute to get his journey as carved out as we did. I felt he did a nice job of physicalizing Robert's health and vigor in the first act, and I felt his slow

march to death in Act Three was particularly effective.

I thought James and Kate were a fairly balanced pair that glued the Mayo family together, with James's unmistakable dominance showing at the appropriate moments. I really wanted Kate to be the anchor for James. I sent her to him, taking his lapels and softly, lovingly asking him to stop and speak to Andrew later when they had both calmed down. I hoped the audience would believe that in more normal circumstances she is the calming melody James hears through the storm. His reaction, despite her usually calming voice, communicated just how upside down the dynamic in the home had become as a result of the decisions made by Andrew and Robert.

The opening moment was constructed specifically to establish that the story would be told through Robert, and that what he saw out in front of him, over the audience, would be reflected on the back wall of the stage. The scene changes and the vignettes that took place within them were also constructed for this same purpose: to keep the storytelling focused on Rob's experience. The use of the sea shanties during the changes was meant to invoke the feeling and idea of work being done as the house came together on stage. But because they were sea shanties they would indicate that, as we saw the changes through Rob, he still longed to be on the boat chasing that secret beyond the horizon.

Several of my goals for action and character were achieved with mixed results. The audience believing that Ruth never loved Andrew is a prime example. The hesitation with which Ruth delivered those words to Robert told me they were rooted in the heartbreak she was currently experiencing. I think a lot of the audience experienced it this way as well, but I know others who shared their experience by saying that

because Robert believed her, they believed her. At least this result told me they were tracking the story the way I hoped – through Robert.

Another important and difficult part of my vision that I achieved with mixed results was Robert and Ruth's rediscovery of their love for one another in Act Three, Scene One. The script reads like Ruth is merely placating Rob to calm his coughing, and O'Neill makes it clear from his playing directions that he intended Ruth to be completely cut off from any capacity to love. I made the choice to play this scene as the two of them apologizing and rekindling their long dimmed love for one another. Moments of this scene played very clearly for me. But the moments surrounding Rob's last major coughing fit always took me out of the action. It is an example of a moment to which I did not pay close enough attention earlier in the process.

The closing moments of the play were also a challenge in this effort to rebuild the love between Robert and Ruth. I staged the moment on the rock fence, between Robert, Andrew, and Ruth, in such a way as I thought might further that rediscovery of love. Robert called to Ruth in a line that does not necessarily indicate a calling to any one specific person. But I used this line to bring Ruth to him, next to him and put her in a position to help Andrew support Robert's weight. The two actors found some lovely moments looking into each other's eyes as Robert spoke of the freedom he was now experiencing. But the most difficult moment to get right was the look Ruth gives Andrew after Robert has passed away.

Andrew tells Ruth that perhaps someday they will...and the line, as scripted by O'Neill sort of trails off as Ruth is despondent and not listening to Andrew. I made the choice to give Ruth another moment of decision. I gave her a very specific subtext for

the look she gives to Andrew. I told the actor she must tell Andrew, with that look, that her husband is dead. And by that I mean, the only husband you will ever have, the man you truly loved since you were a child is dead. My husband is dead. She then holds Robert closer and kisses his forehead. This final business, pulling Robert close and kissing him on the forehead, did help me believe Robert was her one and only love. But I think we failed to get Ruth's look at Andrew to have the power I was really aiming for.

The most problematic aspect of the overall production, for me, was Act Two, Scene Two, our first scene after intermission. I struggled to sculpt this scene in what I felt was an interesting and effective way. Three separate times, the dramaturg and I looked at cutting the scene down, and each time we came away with the same conclusion: The information relayed, while not necessarily done in the most active way, was necessary. We did find some small cuts to make in the scene that amounted to about seven percent of the text in the scene.

My particular struggle with this scene was related to Andrew's pacing. He flew through the dialogue with such vigor that his partners never had time to develop their reactions from moment to moment. Robert and Ruth's characters have a specific arc in that scene, as they enter and then as they respond to Andrew's experiences and decision to leave again. But if Andrew cruises through his dialogue at such a rapid pace, his partners never have the chance to concretize that arc for the audience. Without that journey to watch, the audience is left trying to keep up with Andrew's flurried dialogue. The stories he tells of his time at sea are interesting, exciting even, but at that pace the audience never has a chance to get invested. In retrospect, I can say the real issue was not with the actor's pacing. The problem(s) in the scene were the result of something I

discussed earlier – rushing past table work and implementation of the punctuation technique to get the play staged. This is a prime example of the actors not being in a position to effectively play a scene because I failed to give them what they needed to understand it.

After the pains that it took to get the set designed and on stage, I was mostly very happy with the finished product and its impact on the production. The scene changes ran smoothly (except for some malfunctioning equipment that left me wondering if the scene changes in any production of *Beyond the Horizon* would not simply be cursed) and their use as a convention in the storytelling kept them from being a halt to watch people push boxes around on stage.

The painted hard cyc was beautiful. It gave the lighting designer the canvas she needed to show time of day, mood, and to help display the passage of time during three of the scene changes. I still believe a larger canvas was needed to maximize the effects discussed in the design and production meetings. In Act One, Scene One we caught a bit of a break with the large apple tree. The tree was not originally designed to be translucent. As designed it should have obscured a great deal more of the cyc. It turned out to be more translucent because of the amount of branches and blossoms that could a) be afforded and, b) the shop had time to install before opening. Had the tree been the opaque unit it was originally designed to be, we would have lost even more of the cyc in that opening scene.

I was very pleased with the texture of the cyc. The visible brush strokes helped to achieve the image of the living painting I hoped for from the start. The idea was for these elements, the ground row and the hard cyc, to be painted in this impressionistic

way. These were elements with which the actors would not be directly interacting. The other elements, which the actors would interact with more directly – the trees and the stone fence – would be, in contrast, mostly realistic. But the paint treatment of the ground row prevented us from completing this image of a living painting upstage with the actors working downstage. On the bright side, with the ground row in silhouette, the hills became the barrier between Robert and the *Horizon*, just as he declares them to be. So, while the ground row did not achieve what I hoped it would, the unit was still a useful compliment to the design and the storytelling.

The design of the interior location was meant to create a strong juxtaposition against the impressionistically painted units upstage. Hard lines and dark colors were used to create an oppressive environment that would restrict the dreamer. The flown elements and suggestive nature of the overall design — open walls, etc. — were meant to leave the exterior location visible. I wanted to see the dreamer's world colliding with the farmer's home. This is where I think the ground row's paint treatment hurt us. Forced to leave it mostly unlit, we did not get the feeling of the dreamer's world trying to break in and free him from the oppression of the farm. I think the more grid-like traffic patterns of the interior location contrasted with the more circuitous and angular staging in the outdoors also helped to communicate the difference in the two worlds — freedom versus restriction.

Our major failure in truly achieving the concept for the production was the ground row. The failure of this element impacted the effectiveness of every piece of scenery and also impacted the work of the lighting designer. Its size resulted in the cloud gobos having to be focused in a much tighter space, and this prevented the lighting designer

from effectively creating the movement we had all discussed in design and production meetings. This impacted our ability to create depth and impeded our ability to maximize the important conceptual element of time.

I worked very hard to echo various moments in staging. O'Neill uses a great deal of repetition in his text. At times, information is repeated, like Andrew telling the same story to both Robert and Ruth in separate sections of Act One, Scene Two. But O'Neill will also have two different characters use the same set of simple phrases in two different scenes. Andrew uses a lot of the same phrases to tell Ruth he does not love her that Robert uses in the opening of the play to tell her that he does love her. When this happens, Ruth thinks Andrew is headed toward the same resolution as Robert was earlier in the play. I repeated the earlier scene's staging in the later scene, to help highlight O'Neill's echoed dialogue. This is one example of a technique I used throughout the production.

Professor Ojewuyi suggested, in order to maximize the impact of this technique, I should work to engage all of the audience's senses. I should use a sound associated with the moment and a lighting effect if possible. The sound designer and I opted to use the sound of the wind pushing through the trees. So you would hear the wind and the branches rustle in these two moments. The effect was beautiful, but unfortunately, it is a prime example of an area the design suffered from the auditory imbalance I discussed earlier in the document.

### Self-Evaluation and Projections

At the end of the day I feel good about the production that went on stage. It was quality work that was, largely, enjoyed and appreciated by the audience. I had higher



hopes than were achieved, and while there were some extenuating circumstances, I have recognized some specific areas in which I failed to give the production what it needed to have its greatest possible success.

The largest of these failures is in regard to the personalization of the work. An artist will often feel passionately about a piece, but there is a limit to which the artist can give themselves over to that passion before it becomes a disservice to the work, in any number of ways. On this production of *Beyond the Horizon* I fell into the trap of over personalizing my work.

I have known and loved this play so long, and as I studied the man who wrote it I only came to love it, and him, more all the time. I let myself become far too personally attached to the playwright. I revered him and his work in such a way that I lost the ability to observe the text with critical honesty. I was locked in on the lens of the critics and, as a result of my reverence for O'Neill, I became determined to prove them wrong.

I wanted to prove them wrong about his language not being poetic, about his novelistic stage directions being useless, about the play lacking action, and, most of all, I was going to prove that Ruth was not the villain of this story. I set out to direct the play with the goal of proving a subjective idea that is, ultimately, irrelevant to my vision for the production and to the team of artists working on it. Critics will always have their opinions, and I cannot set out to prove or disprove their theories or ideas in the plays I direct.

Observing the text in a more honestly critical manner would have resulted in more extensive cuts to the script. Several sections of redundant information were maintained because of opportunities I saw to leverage them in my efforts to disprove the

critics. These could have been creatively eliminated so that the story and the overall impact of the repeated information was maintained, but the audience would have been saved from hearing it again, and the production would have lost some of its three-hour running time.

The actors also suffered from the mis-focus of my process. Where I normally dig deep into the subtext to reveal character, relationship, and story throughout the play, I became overly focused on the sections of the script that would allow me to make my point. This left the actors with a lack of understanding of dramatic function and action in some sections of the play, as I neglected them in favor of time spent on sections that would help me disprove the critics. Not coincidentally, these sections where I neglected to effectively communicate with the actors, are also sections that could have seen further cutting.

As I discussed earlier, the actors needed me to lay a thicker foundation for the rest of their work. I needed to provide them with a deeper understanding of the characters and the text earlier in the process, before we began staging. If I had spent more time solely in the text before staging, allowing them to focus on the complexities of the dialogue and characters, they would have been more likely to internalize it, deepening their performances and creating greater consistency.

My punctuation technique could have been a tremendous tool for them in this examination. But, again, I failed to spend the time with them that they really needed in learning to apply it to this text. I should have dedicated a full week, or maybe even two weeks, to the text, just as I dedicate a week to the physical process. In a full week's time, fifteen to twenty hours of rehearsal, we could have examined the text and the

application of the punctuation technique far more effectively. I can only speculate at how this would have impacted their understanding of rhythm, tempo, character, and relationship.

I thought my use of conceptual staging was very effective. The sections of echoed staging were helpful in bringing those moments of repetition to the forefront and gave them the gravity they needed. Overall, I thought the picturization and composition of the production was the best work I have ever done, and I look forward to building on it as I move forward in my career. That said, I was disappointed in the actors' physicality. Much like the time I should have dedicated to the text, I should have dedicated some time to coming back to the physical work from the first week of rehearsal.

The most disappointing physical loss was our work in the arena of gesture. We had begun working on a physical vocabulary to coincide with certain words repeated in the text — *farm, dream, poetry, work*. The idea was that each side of the dichotomy (Mayos/Scotts) had a gesture associated with the words that would help to further concretize each side's feelings about those ideas. I needed to schedule time to come back to this and weave it into the production.

It seems in hindsight that I rushed the actors through the process. I hurried through to the playing stage of my process. Just like building a house, your foundation has to be thick enough to hold the weight of the structure. If the foundation is not thick enough, it will crack and the building will collapse onto itself. I did not take the time to create a strong enough foundation for the work of the actors — a clear, solid understanding of the text, a more deliberate and guided installation of the punctuation technique, and the eventual return to the physical work so that we could thread it all

together later on. Metaphorically speaking, when I moved on to hanging the siding and putting in the windows, the whole thing sort of folded in onto itself.

Moving forward, I will keep a clearer head about me and not get lost to my emotions. I will remember the story I am telling, and I will take nothing for granted. I will lay out a process that provides for the needs of the actors and not expect any one technique or methodology to behave as a magic bullet for the effective execution of my vision and concept. I also look forward to future collaborations with my fellow artist, and approaching those projects with a less rigid expectation for the production concept. I hope to create a more circular approach to the hierarchy of collaboration. In Chapter 4, I will discuss this approach along with the research and interviews that led me to its discovery.

## CHAPTER 4

### COLLABORATION AS AN EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR THE DIRECTOR

Collaboration is the heartbeat of our creative existence, but it also plays a crucial role in our administrative and academic successes. I will discuss, in this chapter, the principles of effective collaboration, challenges created by the structural hierarchies of academic and professional theatre, and the importance of these hierarchies to the success and well-being of our fellow collaborators and the organizations/institutions with which we work.

I will begin this chapter by examining successful and failed (or very nearly failed) collaborations between directors, designers, and playwrights. Specifically, I will discuss the commonalities between experiences and the conditions/behaviors that help to create a fertile environment for successful collaboration. The foundation for this discussion will be interviews with four fellow artists, three directors and one designer, and the work of Rob Roznowski and Kirk Domer in their book, *Collaboration in Theatre: A Practical Guide for Designers and Directors*.

I began my interviews by asking for personal definitions of collaboration. As you would expect, each definition varied, but they expressed, essentially the same sentiment as the definition on the first page of *Collaboration in the Theatre*:

“Collaboration implies a meshing of ideas...A production team is comprised of separate individuals who indeed cooperate...but also inspire and affect each other to produce a cohesive production” (Roznowski and Domer 1). It is easy for us to agree on *what* collaboration is, but there are myriad factors that can impede effective collaboration.

Henry Wishcamper, my first interview subject, is an artistic associate at one the

Midwest's top LORT Theaters. He spoke with me about a production he directed at a prestigious drama school. Collaboration began to break down on the production almost immediately. The student costume designer was simply not prepared for the job and, Wishcamper believed, her faculty did not give her the support she needed to succeed. He went on to describe a scenario to me, in which he had to teach the student, during a design meeting, how to present research in a way that facilitated discussion between the two of them. He felt the faculty let the student "drown" (Wishcamper).

Wishcamper, describing his own approach to collaboration with designers, said he prefers not to speak to the designer in their language. For example, he does not want to say something specifically about color to a lighting designer. He prefers to make a directorial or editorial statement and let the designer use their personal talents to create a manifestation that transcends his original idea. But, Wishcamper explained, to facilitate this type of process, the technical director and production manager must support the designer's work as fervently as the designers are working to support the director's vision (Wishcamper).

Wishcamper is of the opinion that many academic *and* professional theatres lack the necessary resources to support this type of collaborative process. He went on to cite the value of repeat artistic teams and long term staff (technical directors, costume shop managers, charge artists) to successful collaboration. He also stated he has had similar experiences, to this academic production, in smaller LORT and summer stock theatres (Wishcamper).

The resources this director cites as an advantage to effective collaboration, interestingly enough, created some of the challenges experienced by my second

interview subject. Katy Brown is the Associate Artistic Director of an east coast LORT Theatre specializing in literary adaptations. This company will, on occasion, mount a second production of a previous work; despite producing approximately thirty-five productions a year, the intention is rarely to remount the original production. Brown explained, designers will, at times, assert their desire to do just that – “the same thing they did last time” (Brown). The resident structure of the company further complicates this issue.

She explained how, in this setting, personalities and egos have to be much more carefully navigated. The people working in resident companies *will* work together repeatedly, while freelance artists may be less likely to cross paths on future projects. But, Brown also explained, the people on each side of the aisle are often more interested in compromising than in the world of the freelance artist. They know each other, they like each other, and they want to make sure their future collaborations are fruitful, even if that means giving more than they are getting on the current production (Brown).

When I asked Brown about a failed or particularly challenging collaboration, she described a unique situation – a time she pulled *herself* off of a project. Directing a production of a new adaptation, the company entered design meetings while the script was still being written. The team read the source material, repeatedly, but the source material (a novel) was no replacement for the script. Eventually, Brown decided it would be best if she stepped aside and the playwright took over as director (Brown). Without a text for the director to interpret, or to use as a foundation for collaboration, the person who was responsible for creating the text seemed the best option to lead the process.

This put the rest of the artistic team significantly behind schedule, and cost the production one layer of collaboration: the director's interpretation of the playwright's text.

My third interview subject, Professor Tim Fink, is the director of countless productions at SIU. He chose to describe for me, a challenging collaboration with a faculty designer. The major challenge in this collaboration was caused by a conflict between the needs of the genre and the stylistic preference of the designer. The designer's early sketches failed to consider the technical needs of the famous farce being produced by the department. Looking back, the farce was a major departure from the very specific aesthetic found in the designer's previous work (Fink).

Despite the comic needs of the play being explicitly stated in the text, several meetings and versions of the design were needed before Professor Fink felt they had the "joke machine" the production required. Wanting to keep the hurdle of the designer's specific personal aesthetic out of the discussion, Professor Fink continually referred the designer back to the text, keeping the focus on the technical requirements of the play (Fink).

The interviews I have discussed up to this point illustrate some of the potential roadblocks on the path to effective collaboration – a lack of support/resources for lesser experienced team members (the student designer left to drown), competing visions and levels of excitement about the production (let's just do what we did before), failure to meet deadlines (playwright taking over as director), and a team member's lack of understanding the fundamental needs of the play (the scenic design for the SIU farce). Without a more intimate knowledge of these challenges, it is difficult to prescribe a silver bullet cure for the scenarios. I am also not a fan of "Monday morning quarterbacking"



someone else's production, because again, I cannot possibly know all of the process and rehearsal room details. That said, I think a fair hypothesis could be made that each of these challenges came as a result of the failure to understand and adhere to an agreed upon chain of command.

Roznowski and Domer explain the director's role, in most cases, is to serve as the prime interpreter of the script, to communicate a clear premise and to moderate a discussion among the artistic team members – allowing each member to influence, enhance, modify, or even significantly alter the original interpretation (9). The only “rule”, so to speak, is that all points be brought with legitimate support from analysis and/or dramaturgy and that, in the event a decision cannot be reached among the group, the director has the final say (17). This seems fairly simple and easy enough to follow, but each designer and director brings their own baggage to a production process that may complicate what seems like a simple exercise for trained professionals.

Directors have different conceptions of their role in this “chain of command”. Some directors see themselves as sitting at the top of an organizational chart with all of the boxes saying set designer, costume designer, lighting designer etc. tracing back up to the box that says director. See the figure below.

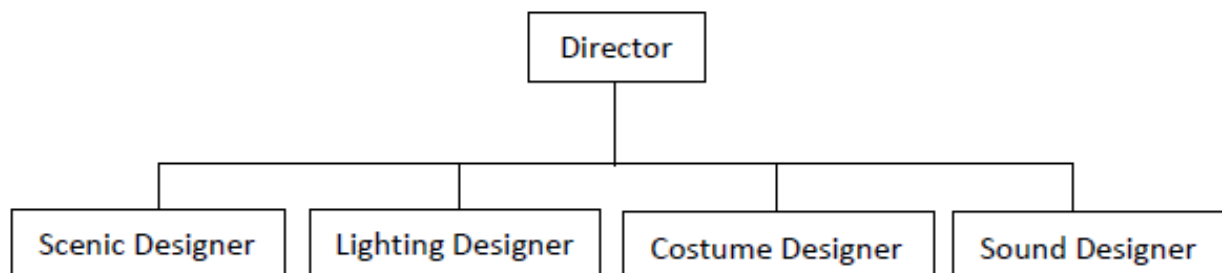


Figure 4.1 Outline of the organization of a typical theater company (Similar organization charts appear in books like J. Michael Gillette's *Theatrical Design and Production*.)

A director who works with this structure in mind is not necessarily a tyrannical dictator who blusters their way through the creative process. It means, consciously or unconsciously, they view the process, at least to some degree, in a managerial sense. I would even be willing to say that the explanation offered by Roznowski and Domer could fit within the same organizational chart.

Some directors enter a first meeting with more than a “premise” or vision. They enter the first meeting, sometimes unknowingly, with a full concept for the production and the opportunity for any *real* collaboration is nearly exterminated. Each of my interview subjects confessed to pre-determining a production concept at some point in their career. This sort of annihilates the chain of command and leaves the designer with zero ownership in the collaboration.

Designers will also come to a production with their own expectations in regard to, not only, directorial input but also the amount of input they want to give, or receive from, their fellow designers. Some of this is cultural; European designers for example, oftentimes work with the director individually and never meet with their fellow designers. Sometimes training and personal ideologies influence the designer's feelings about each team member's role in collaboration. All of this personal baggage, carried in by director or designer, impacts the chain of command and our effectiveness as collaborators.

In addition to the description I have already shared by Roznowski and Domer, I would like to share their explanation of an alternative chain of command. As we aim for a layered chain of command in which the ideas flow freely from one collaborator to the next, working to create a cohesive production of the director's interpretation, we should

consider the play to be the hub of the exchange. Instead of the director having veto power, the production has veto power (9). After considering this structure I diagrammed the chart below.

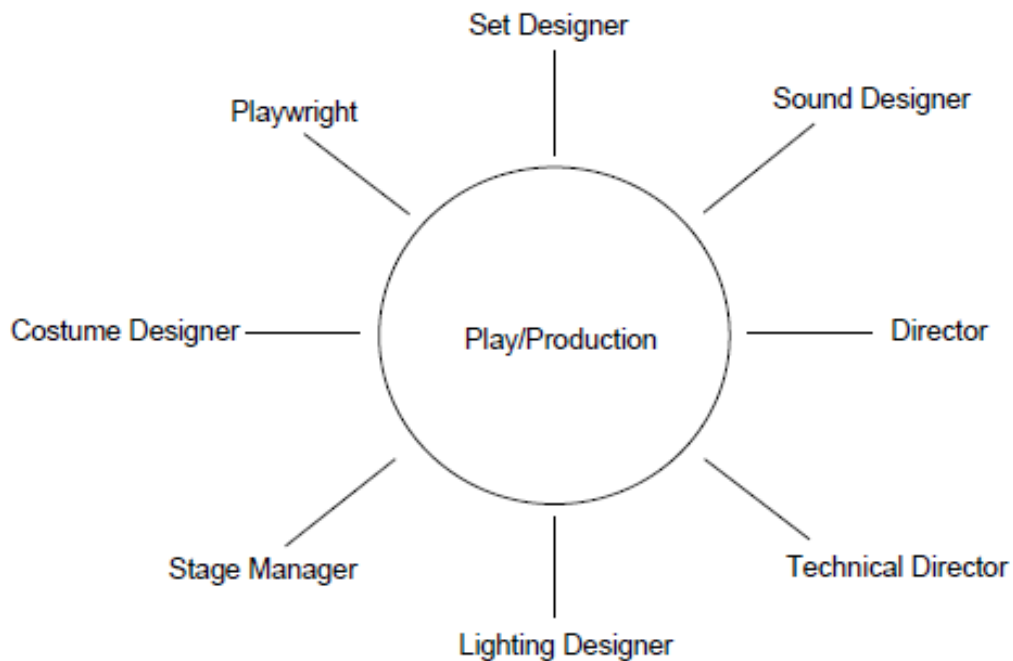


Figure 4.2 Circular Org. Chart for Effective Collaboration

Let me be clear, lest anyone be offended that their specialization was not included in the diagram. Obviously there are spokes to be added, or removed, based on the production (dramaturg, media/projection designer, producer, artistic director, etc.).

Now, consider these questions while you look at the diagram above. What happens if the organizational chart is circular and not a top down model? What happens if the play sits in the middle, like the hub of a wheel and the team members act like spokes? The flow of information, knowledge and collaboration among the team members creates the “rubber that meets the road”. This is a fascinating and exciting idea, but it is not without concern.

My initial thought as I considered this structure was: How do you achieve a cohesive production, what is to prevent you from ending up with three different plays on stage? Incidentally, this was a question that also arose in my conversation with Katy Brown. She finds, because of the company's focus on newly adapted works, there is no audience expectation to unconsciously keep the designers in check, and that makes it more difficult to keep the designers aiming for the same target (Brown).

Initially, this idea of the play having veto power seemed problematic to me. It assumes all team members have the same, objective understanding, of the director's interpretation. I, personally, feel the subjective nature of understanding to be the most challenging aspect of collaboration. My initial thought on the circular organizational chart was that it puts the production squarely in the crosshairs of miscommunication. That said, I think the circular chart can teach directors to reconsider their role in collaboration.

Instead of thinking of us as leaders, managers, the ones with veto power – or the one with the vision to be achieved – what if the director is the agent or the advocate for the play/concept? Instead of the designers feeling the need to “please” the director, the director becomes an empowered observer. The result is a larger creative space for the designers, while the director steps in to advocate for further discussion when a choice fails to support the production concept.

This eliminates the top down approach in which the entire process is funneled through the director. The designers are empowered to work in the circular fashion proposed by Roznowski and Domer while also alleviating my concern about the likelihood of a cohesive production. Perhaps *that* organizational chart looks something like this:

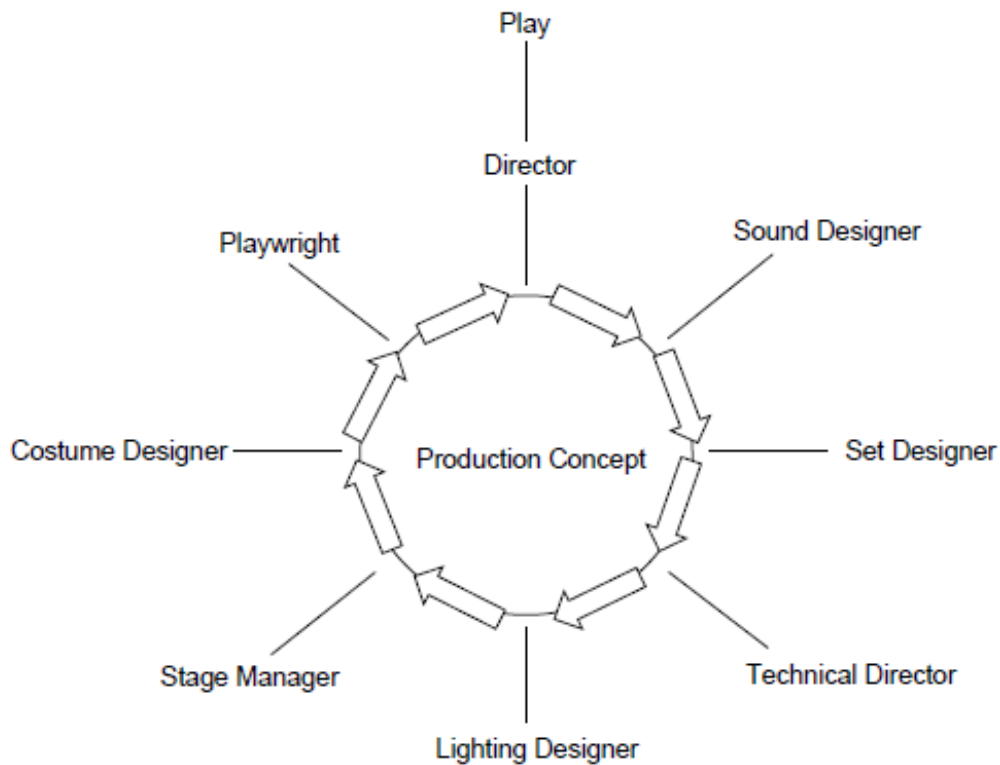


Figure 4.3 Circular Org Chart W/Director Subordinate to Play.

The chart in figure 4.3 implies the director is subordinate to the play, the production concept is subordinate to the team, and the director is the medium that goes between the two. The director's role is not to approve the production decisions; their role is to seek approval from the play.

I have worked to implement this methodology for collaboration in my current, post-thesis, production of *Macbeth* at the University of Dubuque. So far, the collaboration between the lighting, set, costume and video production designers has been positive and, in my opinion, wildly successful. I, much like my first interview subject, made a directorial statement at the outset, and beyond that I have found my comments and additions to the meetings to be far more limited than in past productions.

In fact, the structure of the meetings is even different. I do not feel as though the designers are presenting their work to me, but rather, they are presenting and discussing with the group. It is a free, open discussion, one in which the designers do not need to worry about stepping on anyone's toes or asking permission to interject while another designer is talking to the director, because the designer is *never* talking only to the director.

I do ask questions to clarify my understanding of the discussion and find myself, very literally, asking the play for its approval of the decisions being made. I try to stop myself from thinking in terms of what "I like" or "don't like", or what / feel best suits the concept. I, instead, work to evaluate the ideas and decisions based solely on the play's response. But, perhaps you are thinking, the play is a bunch of words on paper; what the heck is this hippie talking about? Ask the play?

When you take an idea back to the play and you ask it for approval, reading the play, listening to its response, there is no doubt in your artistic mind how the play feels about the idea. You will, taking all of your research and analysis into account, very quickly and very clearly know how the play feels about this idea – you will know, from testing the idea against the text, if the choice supports or inhibits the production concept. Let me add here, the director is not the only one with the "power" to go back to the play and ask for its approval. That is the point of the circular flow of the chart – all the artists are empowered to do this work and make these decisions *together*. The director is there to serve as the medium, the advocate for the greater good of the production when the team cannot agree with each other, or the play, on their own.

A concrete example of this approach to collaboration can be taken from a

production meeting which occurred just last week. Based on significant research and analysis the choice was made to stage our production of *Macbeth* as a pre-death nightmare. Macbeth lies dying on the battlefield from mortal wounds sustained before the beginning of Shakespeare's text. We are using the apron area to represent a present day "reality"; the space upstage of the plaster line is being used to define the world of Macbeth's nightmare. A decision had already been made to situate the nightmare world in a period reminiscent of the Italian Renaissance. The visuals in the nightmare world come, largely, from the paintings of Hieronymus Bosch.

An idea was presented, none of us even remembers by whom, to bleed certain nightmarish qualities of our own reality (ISIS, Middle-Eastern Military Conflicts, etc.) into the nightmare world as the play progresses. What we do remember is the sequence of events that led to our final decision. The lighting designer, Dustin L. Derry, mentioned fading the image of a Humvee in behind the Bosch paintings – he knew full well this was a crude and undeveloped idea, but he also knew there would be no judgment and the video/projection designer would feel no threat from the suggestion. The idea began to evolve; someone else (still not the projection designer) suggested we create images of American and Middle-Eastern Military, civilians and ISIS members in the same positions as depicted in the Bosch paintings. As the nightmare progresses these images begin to fade into Bosch's painting and supplant his subjects, leaving the rest of his work intact. The scenic designer, M.K. Hughes, immediately responded, almost shouting – I can do that! The projection designer simply smiled and said, if you can create the image I can figure out how to make the projection work.

Three people, none of whom are "in charge" of the projections contributed to the

evolution of, perhaps, the most exciting idea of which I have ever been a part. In the majority of my past experiences, the person who kicked it off, the lighting designer, would not have felt it was their place to make such a suggestion, assuming it to be the responsibility of either the scenic or projection departments.

Think now, for just a moment, how this type of organizational structure might have prevented the challenges that occurred for the three directors I interviewed? Perhaps, by his doing or not, the student costume designer was intimidated by the professional director (Wishcamper) and thought she needed his approval every step of the way. Maybe she was paralyzed by what she believed to be her subordinate role in the chain of command. If the long time faculty designer at SIU had asked the play – truly asked without his own aesthetic or predetermined conceptual ideas in mind – for its approval of his sketches, he might have found what was missing before he ever showed it to the director. Even the playwright who continually missed his deadlines, may have received the wakeup call he needed from a quick look at this circular organizational chart.

I think, perhaps, the most important part of the chart is the manner in which it reminds us all of our responsibility – not to the director or their vision – but to each other, and to the play. As illustrated by my example from *Macbeth*, it removes the boxes, shrinks the egos, and promotes an open conversation that constantly makes its way around the table. I apologize if, for some readers this is a “no brainer”, this is the way you have always viewed collaboration. But in my experience this would be at least a subtle adjustment to virtually every production of which I have been a part, and for many productions it would be a drastic change.



It has been my experience that the director, typically, sits at the head of the table and the designers all take turns talking to her/him. They are very careful not to speak about each other's work, or even to each other, their focus in presentation and discussion is on the director. I would call this the opposite of collaboration.

I saved my final interview subject for this portion of the discussion because I feel her experience best illustrates the efficacy of this circular organizational chart to the director's efforts as an effective collaborator. The nature of my first three subjects resulted in conclusions more readily applied by the other members of the artistic team. I also believe her experience makes an excellent contrast to the production of *Macbeth*, I described earlier.

M.K. Hughes is an alumna of SIU's MFA Scene Design program. The experience she chose to share with me involved a very challenging collaboration with a guest director at the university. Hughes described a scenario in which the director, essentially, refused to collaborate with the designers. Early in the process, when the designer asked for clarification of an idea, the director refused to elaborate. Hughes, based on this director's response, felt that her understanding of the vision and concept for the production was not a priority for the director. This breakdown in communication, created by the director's response, became the hallmark of the production process.

When a designer, or any other member of the artistic team, was confused or frustrated, the director dismissed their needs. The director also withheld feedback at times and failed to communicate the specific scenic needs – locations, etc. – to Hughes. This breakdown in communication resulted in several units being designed, only to be cut, because they were not useful to the production, while the overall design failed to

reach its fullest potential.

When I asked about the root cause of the breakdown in collaboration Hughes described a vision and concept, seemingly, rooted in ideas and thoughts that overpowered the script and the story more than they supported or enhanced it. The director also privileged, what she called “poor theater” or found object theater over the possibility of creating something with the designers. The final production was, largely, a disappointment for Hughes, and I would feel safe in saying many other participants in the production would share the same sentiment.

If you kept the circular chart in mind as you read my summation of this last interview, I think its efficacy to improving the director’s collaborative abilities is clear. The breakdown could have been prevented if the director approached her work as a subordinate to the play and fulfilled her responsibility to serve as medium between the play and artistic team. If the director asked the play for approval of her vision she may have discovered she was burying the story beneath an exorbitant, superfluous concept. By failing to listen to the artistic team, and support the flow of creative ideas around the table, she put a low, hard ceiling on the collaborative capabilities of this production.

This example from academia, with a student designer and a guest director, makes an excellent segue into the next section of my discussion of collaboration. How does the organizational structure of academic theatre impact collaboration, and specifically, the director’s role in the creative process?

In my experience, the organizational structure of academic theatre, generally, mirrors the “traditional” structure of professional theatre; there really is no visible difference just looking at the titles on the boxes in the diagram. That said, there are

certain factors unique to academic theatre that do complicate the collaborative process and demand the director reexamine their role in the “traditional” structure.

If a student director, working under the “traditional” organizational structure, is paired with an artistic team comprised of both student and faculty designers, there is an immediate and inherent imbalance of power. The faculty member always has that “card” in their back pocket that they can pull out and play at any time in the process. Now, presumably, most faculty members have a commitment to the education of their students that subsumes their own ego, and if this is the case it is unlikely the faculty member would ever “pull rank” on the other members of the artistic team. If the faculty member does “pull rank”, in these instances, it can be assumed that the value of their superior experience is about to pay big dividends and help the students avoid a tragic error that could irreparably damage the production. That is the simple truth of the matter, but the simple truth does not absolve the situation of its complexity.

The director sees their role as the name in that box at the top of the chart, and despite the undeniable value in the faculty member’s superior years of experience and knowledge, they may at times feel unsure of how to proceed – they are, after all, still the director, and they have been trained that their vision and concept are the production’s guiding light. It can be difficult for the student director to recognize when the “collaborative discussion” (some people say debate), needs to end and deference should be given to the faculty designer. The safe answer would be to always give deference to the faculty designer, but that would not be collaboration. That would be a production ruled by a dictatorial designer, which is no better than one run by a tyrannical director.

I think the best answer in these circumstances is to clearly establish a “chain of command” at the outset of the production. Proactive behavior will usually eliminate the negative repercussions resulting from reactive behavior. I also think, the alternative organizational structure I discussed earlier makes an excellent model for academic theatre and could help eliminate some of the hurdles created by the inherent imbalance of power in student/faculty projects. As discussed by Roznowski and Domer, who’s book focuses largely on academic theatre, the goal should be to create a collaborative environment with a level playing field (9).

Before moving on to the final portion of this discussion, I would like to take another look at the director’s role in the collaborative process, the idea of this circular organizational chart, and some possible obstacles to effective collaboration. One of the ways in which I believe this circular approach to collaboration is advantageous comes in its creation of group accountability. The director is no longer sitting at the end of the table as the only one looking out for a cohesive production. Now, the designers are empowered to help keep the production on track, asking each other questions, making its creation a true collaboration. Bringing ideas one by one to the director for their approval is not collaboration and, more often than not, in my experience, that is how design meetings take place.

I learned a valuable lesson from my conversation with Katy Brown (Associate Artistic Director at an east coast Repertory Theatre). The reason breakdowns at her company were so easily navigated seemed to be that everyone remained aware of one very simple fact: there is *a/ways* another show. This idea impacted me in two ways: 1) it is okay if this show fails to turn out the way you hoped, there will be more pitches to

swing at and, 2) the artistic team is comprised of people, and like I was told on my first day of business school, your most important resource, is your *human* resource. A director is not just responsible for the well-being of the production, they are responsible for the well-being of their artistic partners as well.

I will close this chapter by discussing the organizational hierarchy of state funded academic institutions. I will focus my discussion, in this section, on the efficacy of this hierarchy as it pertains to the success of the institution and its faculty, staff, and students.

I have already discussed, at length, the organizational structure of the collaborative process, and its impact on the success or failure of a production in academic and professional theatre. Throughout the discussion it was made evident that a clear chain of command and adherence to the collaborative hierarchy are crucial to a successful production and the well-being of our collaborative partners. This same chain of command and adherence to hierarchical structure is also imperative to our success as teachers, scholars, students, faculty, and staff in an academic institution.

The structure and collaboration involved in a theatrical production, professional or academic, is miniscule in comparison to the hierarchical structure at a state university. Figure 4.4 shows the total hierarchical structure at West Virginia State University. The chart stops at the individual department levels, but even this broad overview gives a clear indication of the complexity in the structure of this state university.

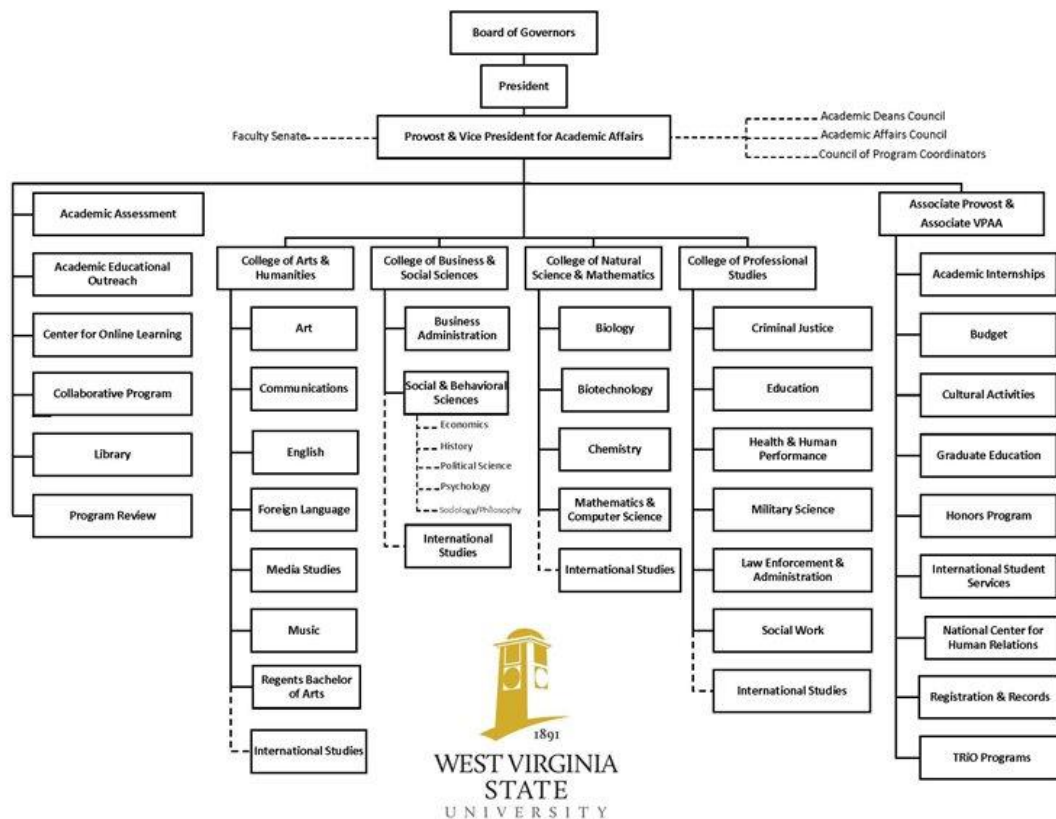


Figure 4.4 Organization Structure chart for West Virginia State University

<http://www.wvstateu.edu/Academics/Academic-Affairs-Office/Organizational-Chart.aspx>

When an element in a theatrical production fails, there is a ripple effect across the entire production, other elements suffer, even if they still succeed. In an academic institution, where so much more than art is on the line, failure to adhere to the prescribed hierarchy can have a ripple effect across multiple departments. It may seem that it would take a sizeable disregard for hierarchy to have a measureable impact on an organization of this size. But, a breach of hierarchy, with an impact limited to the department of origin, still affects a large number of students, faculty, and staff. The breach could disrupt instruction and learning, day to day operations and, depending on

the current economic and political climates on campus, it could even endanger departmental funding and resources.

Figure 4.5, on the next page, illustrates the structure of an academic department. While this figure is a humorous illustration of departmental hierarchy it provides an accessible glance at the number of people impacted by a disregard for the department's procedures and chain of command. I also believe the humor in the figure resonates with those of us who have spent significant time in academia and further supports the idea that the last thing any of us needs is someone "going rogue" and "throwing a monkey wrench" into what is already a precariously balanced set of priorities and personalities.

This chapter represents the distillation of literary research, interviews, and several weeks' contemplation on the subject(s) of collaboration, institutional hierarchy and the symbiotic relationship between them and our individual and collective successes. This work has had a significant impact on my approach to collaboration, as a director interacting with the artistic team, as a teacher interacting with my students, and as a faculty member helping to nurture and care for the growth and well-being of a young theater department at a small university in the Midwest.

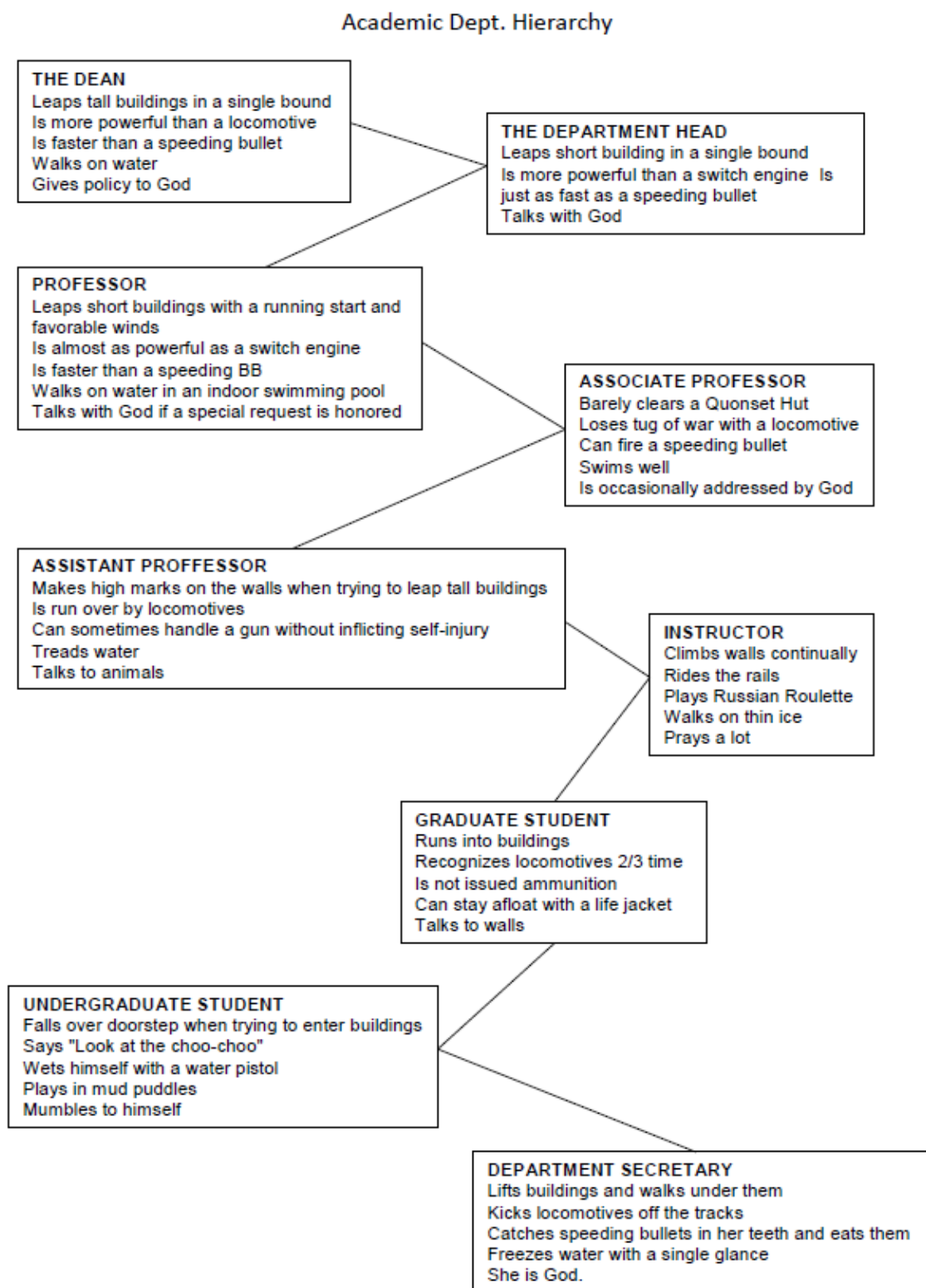


Figure 4.5 Academic Department Hierarchy Chart (Modified from similar charts found in multiple publications and on various academic websites)



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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A: Physical Technique

The physical process detailed in this appendix has developed and evolved over a series of production processes. Originally developed to circumvent the challenges of actor training in the era of No-Child-Left-Behind, it has since become the foundation for the aesthetic of physicality and movement in the productions under my direction. The foundation for this process can be found in the Viewpoints work of Tina Landau and Ann Bogart, but it has also been heavily influenced by my studies in circus arts, Meyerhold's biomechanics and the work of Grotowski's Lab Theatre.

I begin with lane work typical of the Viewpoints technique. I ask the actors to explore their own posture. Specifically, they are instructed to identify what part of their body they lead with (head, chest, pelvis, etc.). Then, I encourage the students to experiment with tempo and to be mindful of how those experiments impact the rest of their body. The goal is for the actors to gain a basic understanding of the relationship between their natural posture and their bodies' involuntary response(s) to their conscious changes in tempo.

The next step is for the actors to explore the possibilities of leading with different parts of their body and then, within each of those choices, to once again, experiment with tempo. I usually spend an entire rehearsal, two to three hours, in these two exercises. By the end of this round the actors have, usually, discovered a whole new world of possibilities. The aim is for the students to discover that their physical instrument has greater coordination, flexibility, balance and range of motion than they anticipated.

The second night I move into animal work. Using the same lane work as the night before, the actors are asked to choose an animal. After they have an animal in mind they are instructed to physically embody this animal. Specificity is crucial; the actors should pay close attention to the articulation of the shoulders, paws, neck etc. They are given significant time to explore, what I define as, the fundamentals of physicality (tempo, duration, rhythm, shape, gesture, repetition) while they embody their animal alter ego, and also to explore the animal's natural environment. How does this animal hunt, eat, sleep, and bathe? I ask them to go back in their minds eye and remember the images and video footage they have seen, or better yet, to recall their own personal experiences at the zoo or in the wild. This process usually lasts for an hour and a half to two hours.

I typically use the second half of the night for the next stage of the process. I ask the actors to roll their animal up and "let this animal become a person". I ask them not to worry about feeling or looking natural. Then I ask them to think about how it feels inside this character. How old does this person feel? What gender are they? What is their age? I continue to ask the actors to consider these types of questions, and develop answers, based on how they feel moving as this rolled up animal. Eventually these questions create the narrative for a fully defined character. The physicality of these newly discovered characters will naturally refine and specify as the actors continue to answer the questions I pose to them.

After the characters are clearly defined, I ask the actors to open up their soft focus and allow the characters around them to influence their work. The actors should do this without thinking, they should simply respond on an instinctual visceral level,

reacting to the other characters in the lanes around them. The only rules are, stay in your lane, no talking and no touching; anything else is fair game. After several minutes, I will take two or three of the actors and turn them so that their path now crosses the lanes of every other person in the ensemble. This forces any actors tunneling their vision to at least react/respond to the two or three actors crossing their path. We spend the rest of the night watching this community develop and evolve.

The next, and final, night of this work is focused on their characters in the play. The actors have now, in theory, had enough time since casting to do some private study, have one or two read-throughs with their cast mates, and they have had six hours of focused work inside their bodies. They should now have enough understanding of their own physical instrument in relation to character to begin to make textually rooted choices about the roles they must concretize for the audience.

The actors are now asked to consider age: How does that age feel? What does it do to the body? Consider occupation. How does what this person does every day for eight or more hours impact the way they move? We continue this way for some time, asking, answering, and exploring the possibilities in these questions. The choices they make tonight do not have to be the final answer, although many of them will be, but mostly they give the actor a foundation for the next six weeks of exploration.

After the actors have had significant time to explore their characters in the seclusion of their lanes, I repeat the steps from the second half of the previous night's rehearsal. They open up their soft focus and begin responding to the characters around them, after some time, I turn two or three of the actors — but this time I select the people to turn based on their role in the show. The more focal the character, the more



important it is to give them this time to interact with everyone.

Moving forward, I select words from the script crucial to the plays central conflict. I ask the actors to allow themselves to have visceral, physical, responses, as their character, to the word(s) I say. This is an excellent time to introduce gesture. Some words create a flight or fight response in a character, but other words initiate a more gesture like response. These gestures can be held over and used throughout the rehearsal process to create a physical vocabulary for the production.

At the end of this third night the actors, and I, are well prepared for our work together in the staging of the play and the further development of the production's overall physical aesthetic.

## APPENDIX B: Punctuation Technique

My undergraduate training in Shakespeare grew out of RSC founder, John Barton's, book and accompanying BBC mini-series, *Playing Shakespeare*. The collection is comprehensive but the aspect I have "made my own" is a codified system of punctuation. This codified system turns any theatrical text, modern or classic, into a sort of musical score, concretizing the dynamics of single sentences and longer monologues. Cicely Berry, who worked with Barton at the RSC, writes about a similar type of scoring in her book, *The Actor and The Text*. In *Tackling Text [and subtext]*, Barbara Houseman provides exercises that use the punctuation in the playwrights language as a cue for movement or changes in delivery. But both of these remain general and lump the punctuation into two categories — full stops and everything else.

The system I employ codifies, with greater specificity, the major pieces of punctuation in the western language. The chart below provides a simple explanation.

Punctuation	Action
,	Springboard, intensify what follows. A series of commas will indicate a building of tension, or an increase in emotion or desperation.
;	Emotional or psychological shift.
:	Explanation or an answer to your own question.
—	Serves up or sets up what follows. In comedy – a punchline. Shows the most variance from playwright to playwright.
...	A trailing thought. Can be used to build tension, as a "moving pause".
. ? !	FULL STOP. Breathe.

Table Appendix B.1

I encourage you to pull a script, ANY script, off your book shelf and read any passage applying the system above. In all likelihood you will discover something in that text that had yet to reveal itself to you. I have unlocked some of the most challenging passages I have ever encountered using this system.

This system allows the actor to get up on their feet right away and PLAY the text. Using the punctuation in this manner enables the actor to make choices in the scene the very first time they read it. After having this type of visceral interaction with the playwright's dialogue, the actor can discuss the scene in much less intellectual and far moreactable terms. This system is not meant to be a substitute or replacement for intention based acting (Stanislavksi, Chekhov, Meisner etc). It is intended to be another path, an instinctual, visceral path to the same destination.

## APPENDIX C: Callback Materials

Remember – Christina Rossetti

Remember me when I am gone away,  
Gone far away into the silent land;  
When you can no more hold me by the hand,  
Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.  
Remember me when no more day by day  
You tell me of our future that you plann'd:  
Only remember me; you understand  
It will be late to counsel then or pray.  
Yet if you should forget me for a while  
And afterwards remember, do not grieve:  
For if the darkness and corruption leave  
A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,  
Better by far you should forget and smile  
Than that you should remember and be sad.

<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/174266>

*POEM FOR CERTAIN CRITICS*

Ears listening to only their lies,  
And their lies speaking only to them,  
Trying to be quiet yet still screaming,  
Drowning in rants never heard,  
So concise but not too clear,  
Imprisoned in thoughts of obsession,  
Muttering useless ancient literary rules,  
In love with yet hating poetic expressions,  
Foreign to their limited constrained imaginations,  
Trapped behind walls of old thought,  
Grasping yet never holding reality,  
While visions of punctuation and conformity crowd their tiny unexpanded  
minds,  
Judging without thinking one step ahead,  
Thinking thoughts that kill their judgement,  
Still their bodies move forward to nowhere,  
Their voices the only sound left to comfort them,  
Unaware of love just beneath their windows,  
Desolation blinds their desperate micro-management brains,  
In pathetic awe of ancient written rules,  
Never really meant for ones of their ilk,  
For they were penned for poets of consciousness,

Aware their times and rules would surely end,  
Were never truly meant for all the centuries,  
Suffocating in the dust of a past they never lived,  
Afraid of new ideas of written expression,  
Created from the minds of what they fear most,  
Free thinking writers unafraid of literary change,  
And still,  
They talk and talk and talk, saying absolutely nothing.

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*She Walks in Beauty*

By Lord Byron (George Gordon)

She walks in beauty, like the night  
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;  
And all that's best of dark and bright  
Meet in her aspect and her eyes;  
Thus mellowed to that tender light  
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

One shade the more, one ray the less,  
Had half impaired the nameless grace  
Which waves in every raven tress,  
Or softly lightens o'er her face;  
Where thoughts serenely sweet express,  
How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,  
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,  
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,  
But tell of days in goodness spent,  
A mind at peace with all below,  
A heart whose love is innocent!

*My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun* (Sonnet 130)

William Shakespeare, 1564 - 1616

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;  
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;  
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;  
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.  
I have seen roses damasked, red and white,  
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;  
And in some perfumes is there more delight  
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.  
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know  
That music hath a far more pleasing sound;  
I grant I never saw a goddess go;  
My mistress when she walks treads on the ground.  
And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare  
As any she belied with false compare.



*Do not go gentle into that good night*

Dylan Thomas, 1914 - 1953

Do not go gentle into that good night,  
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,  
Because their words had forked no lightning they  
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright  
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,  
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,  
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight  
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

From *The Poems of Dylan Thomas*, published by New Directions. Copyright © 1952, 1953 Dylan Thomas. Copyright © 1937, 1945, 1955, 1962, 1966, 1967 the Trustees for the Copyrights of Dylan Thomas. Copyright © 1938, 1939, 1943, 1946, 1971 New Directions Publishing Corp

*The Kiss*

Stephen Dunn, 1939

She pressed her lips to mind.

—a typo

How many years I must have yearned

for someone's lips against mind.

Pheromones, newly born, were floating

between us. There was hardly any air.

She kissed me again, reaching that place

that sends messages to toes and fingertips,

then all the way to something like home.

Some music was playing on its own.

Nothing like a woman who knows

to kiss the right thing at the right time,

then kisses the things she's missed.

How had I ever settled for less?

I was thinking this is intelligence,

this is the wisest tongue

since the Oracle got into a Greek's ear,

speaking sense. It's the Good,

defining itself. I was out of my mind.

She was in. We married as soon as we could.

<http://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/kiss>

*Eldorado*

By Edgar Allan Poe

Gaily bedight,

A gallant knight,

In sunshine and in shadow,

Had journeyed long,

Singing a song,

In search of Eldorado.

But he grew old—

This knight so bold—

And o'er his heart a shadow—

Fell as he found

No spot of ground

That looked like Eldorado.

And, as his strength

Failed him at length,

He met a pilgrim shadow—

'Shadow,' said he,

'Where can it be—

This land of Eldorado?'

‘Over the Mountains  
Of the Moon,  
Down the Valley of the Shadow,  
Ride, boldly ride,’  
The shade replied,—  
‘If you seek for Eldorado!’

*Life is fine*

by Langston Hughes

I went down to the river,

I set down on the bank.

I tried to think but couldn't,

So I jumped in and sank.

I came up once and hollered!

I came up twice and cried!

If that water hadn't a-been so cold

I might've sunk and died.

But it was Cold in that water! It was cold!

I took the elevator

Sixteen floors above the ground.

I thought about my baby

And thought I would jump down.

I stood there and I hollered!

I stood there and I cried!

If it hadn't a-been so high

I might've jumped and died.

But it was High up there! It was high!

So since I'm still here livin',

I guess I will live on.

I could've died for love--

But for livin' I was born  
Though you may hear me holler,  
And you may see me cry--  
I'll be dogged, sweet baby,  
If you gonna see me die.  
Life is fine! Fine as wine! Life is fine!



*I carry your heart with me*

by E. E. Cummings

I carry your heart with me (i carry it in  
my heart) i am never without it(anywhere  
i go you go, my dear; and whatever is done  
by only me is your doing, my darling)  
i fear  
no fate(for you are my fate, my sweet)i want  
no world(for beautiful you are my world, my true)  
and it's you are whatever a moon has always meant  
and whatever a sun will always sing is you  
here is the deepest secret nobody knows  
(here is the root of the root and the bud of the bud  
and the sky of the sky of a tree called life; which grows  
higher than the soul can hope or mind can hide)  
and this is the wonder that's keeping the stars apart  
i carry your heart(i carry it in my heart)

*I Wandered Lonely As A Cloud*

by William Wordsworth

I wandered lonely as a cloud  
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,  
When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host, of golden daffodils;  
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.  
Continuous as the stars that shine  
And twinkle on the milky way,  
They stretched in never-ending line  
Along the margin of a bay:  
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,  
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.  
The waves beside them danced, but they  
Out-did the sparkling leaves in glee;  
A poet could not be but gay,  
In such a jocund company!  
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought  
What wealth the show to me had brought:  
For oft, when on my couch I lie  
In vacant or in pensive mood,

They flash upon that inward eye  
Which is the bliss of solitude;  
And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
And dances with the daffodils.

## APPENDIX D: Correspondence

From:  
Nicholas Bernette Radcliffe  
Sent: Tue 2/9/2016 3:27 PM  
To:  
Tatiana Vintu;

Professor Vintu

I am writing to, once again, extend my sincerest apologies for losing my temper during our last conversation in November. I would, truly, like to repair our creative/collaborative partnership, as it had been quite positive and fruitful up to that day.

I would also like to ask if you would be willing to answer some questions that I have crafted as a part of the research I am conducting for a thesis chapter on the collaborative process between directors and designers? The focus of this chapter is to study the collaborative process, in both professional and educational theater, and gain a better understanding of the etiquette, similarities and differences in those collaborative processes. The conclusion of this writing and research would be to develop strategies, for both myself and my readers, for preventing a breakdown in the collaborative process/partnership, like the one you and I experienced.

Thank you again for all of your work on *Beyond the Horizon*.

Sincerely,

Nich Radcliffe

## APPENDIX E: Production Photographs



Figure E.1: Pre-Show Look.



Figure E.2: Robert, Act 1, Scene 1.





Figure E.3: Robert, Andrew, Act 1, Scene 1.



Figure E.4: Ruth, Act 1, Scene 1.



Figure E.5: Robert and Ruth Act 1, Scene 1.



Figure E.6: Ruth and Robert embrace, Act 1, Scene 1.





Figure E.7: Ruth and Robert on the stone fence, Act 1, Scene 1.



Figure E.8: Mr. Mayo, Andrew, Uncle Dick, Mrs. Mayo, Act 1, Scene 2.





Figure E.9: Mrs. Mayo, Mr. Mayo, Andrew, Uncle Dick later in Act 1, Scene 2.



Figure E.10: Robert, Mr. and Mrs. Mayo, Andrew, Uncle Dick, Act 1, Scene 2.



Figure E.11: Robert, Mr. and Mrs. Mayo, Andrew, Uncle Dick, later in Act 1, Scene 2.



Figure E.12: Andrew, Robert, Mr. Mayo, Uncle Dick, Mrs. Mayo again in Act 1, Scene 2.





Figure E.13: Andrew, Robert, Uncle Dick, Mrs. and Mr. Mayo the final time in Act 1, Scene 2.



Figure E.14: Mrs. Mayo and Mrs. Atkins, Act 2, Scene 1.





Figure E.15: Mrs. Mayo, Mary, Ruth, Mrs. Atkins, Act 2, Scene 1.



Figure E.16: Mrs. Mayo, Mary, Ruth, Mrs. Atkins, later in Act 2, Scene 1.





Figure E.17: Robert, Mary, Ruth, Act 2, Scene 1.



Figure E.18: Mary, Robert, Ruth, later in Act 2, Scene 1.





Figure E.19: Robert and Ruth, Act 2, Scene 1.



Figure E.20: Robert and Ruth, later in Act 2, Scene 1.





Figure E.21: Ben, Robert, Ruth, Act 2, Scene 1.



Figure E.22: Ben, Robert, Ruth, later in Act 2, Scene 1.





Figure E.23: Robert, Act 2, Scene 2.



Figure E.24: Robert, Andrew, Act 2, Scene 2.





Figure E.25: Mary, Robert, Andrew, Act 2, Scene 2.



Figure E.26: Andrew, Ruth, Act 2, Scene 2.





Figure E.27: Andrew, Act 2, Scene 2.



Figure E.28: Mary, Ruth, Robert, Andrew, Uncle Dick, Act 2, Scene 2.





Figure E.29: Mrs. Atkins, Ruth, Act 3, Scene 1.



Figure E.30: Mrs. Atkins, Robert, Ruth, Act 3, Scene 1.





Figure E.31: Robert, Mrs. Atkins, Ruth, Act 3, Scene 1.



Figure E.32: Robert, Ruth, Act 3, Scene 1.





Figure E.33: Ruth and Robert later in Act 3, Scene 1.



Figure E.34: Ruth, Andrew, Act 3, Scene 1.





Figure E.35: Mrs. Atkins, Robert, Ruth, later in Act 3, Scene 1.



Figure E.36: Andrew, Ruth, Robert, Act 3, Scene 1.





Figure E.37: Ruth, Robert, Andrew, later in Act 3, Scene 1.



Figure E.38: Andrew, Dr. Fawcett, Ruth, Act 3, Scene 1.



Figure E.39: Ruth, Andrew, Robert, Act 3, Scene 2.



Figure E.40: Ruth, Andrew, Robert, later in Act 3, Scene 2.





Figure E.41: Andrew and Robert, Act 3, Scene 2.



Figure E.42: Andrew, Robert, Ruth, Act 3, Scene 2.



Figure E.43: Ruth, Robert, Andrew, Act 3, Scene 2.



Figure E.44: Ruth, Robert, Andrew, Act 3, Scene 2.





Figure E.45: Ruth, Robert, Act 3, Scene 2.



Figure E.46: Ruth, Robert, Andrew, Act 3, Scene 2.



Figure E.47: Ruth, Robert, Andrew, Act 3, Scene 2.



Figure E.48: Sunrise.

## APPENDIX F: Permission of Image Use

Email correspondence with Karen Winters obtaining permission to use a digital image of her painting, Eucalyptus Sunset, within my inspirational image research.

On Aug 11, 2015, at 7:24 PM, "nradcliffe@siu.edu" <nradcliffe@siu.edu> wrote:

Hi Karen -

I am a graduate student in Theatre at Southern Illinois University. I am currently working on my thesis production and would like to use an electronic image of your painting in the written document. We are typically advised to use royalty free images, but in this instance I am having a difficult time finding royalty free images that truly informs the visual aspects of the production.

Would you be willing to allow me to use this image without royalty?

Thanks -

Nich Radcliffe

**From:** Karen Winters <gwprod@pacbell.net>

**Sent:** Tuesday, August 11, 2015 10:40 PM

**To:** Nicholas Bernette Radcliffe

**Subject:** Re: Contact Form from DailyPainters.com - California Sunset Oil Painting - Impressionist Landscape - Eucalyptus Sunset by Karen Winters

Great! Use the image and enjoy! Thanks for asking. Karen

Sent from my iPhone

Email correspondence with Arthur Egeli obtaining permission to use a digital image of his painting, Dune Road, Truro, within my inspirational image research.

On Aug 11, 2015, at 10:32 PM, Nicholas Bernette Radcliffe <nradcliffe@siu.edu> wrote:

Hello -

My name is Nich Radcliffe. I am a graduate student in Theatre at Southern Illinois University. I am currently working on my thesis and am collecting research images as inspiration for the visual aspects of the production. We are typically advised to use royalty free images. However, in this instance I am having difficulty finding royalty free images that are truly informative to the concept. I was wondering if you would be willing to allow me the use of Dune Road, Truro royalty free for the purposes of my thesis document?

Thank you sir, I look forward to your response,

Nich Radcliffe

**From:** Arthur Egeli <arthuregeli@earthlink.net>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 12, 2015 8:46 PM  
**To:** Nicholas Bernette Radcliffe  
**Subject:** Re: Dune Road, Truro

Hi Nich,

Yes, no problem, you may use the image for your thesis. What is the subject of your thesis?

Best,

Arthur Egeli

## VITA

Graduate School  
Southern Illinois University

Nicholas B. Radcliffe

nbradcliffe@gmail.com

National-Louis University  
Bachelor of Arts, Theater, May 2001

### Professional Development

“Theatre 101: Meeting Course Goals in Assessing on a Daily Basis – Costume Group Activity” Assessment Day Conference; Southern Illinois University, 2014

“Performance of Punctuation: Codified Punctuation as a Tool for the Actor” University of Dubuque, Dubuque, IA. 2014

“Physicality as a Foundation for Character Development” University of Dubuque, Dubuque, IA 2014

“Demystifying Design: Inspiring Instructors and Students to Tackle Projects Outside Their Area of Study” Mid America Theatre Conference; Kansas City, MO. 2015

O’Neill in Production: Pre-Show Lecture, *Beyond the Horizon*, Southern Illinois University. 2015

### Thesis Title:

The Hopeless Hope or The Poet’s Passion in The Farmer’s Pragmatic World:  
Directing Eugene O’Neill’s *Beyond the Horizon*.

Major Professor: Olusegun Ojewuyi

### Professional and Scholastic Associations:

American Theater and Drama Society  
Mid America Theater Conference