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A SCENE DESIGNER'S GUIDE TO EVIL DEAD: THE MUSICAL

by

LeighAnna Victoria Evans

B.A., Northeastern State University, 2017

A Thesis

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

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

A SCENE DESIGNER'S GUIDE TO EVIL DEAD: THE MUSICAL

by

LeighAnna Victoria Evans

A Thesis Submitted in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Master of Fine Arts
in the field of Theater

Approved by:

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Graduate School
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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

LeighAnna Victoria Evans, for the Master of Fine Arts degree in Theater, presented on April 6, 2020, at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

TITLE: A SCENE DESIGNER'S GUIDE TO EVIL DEAD: THE MUSICAL

MAJOR PROFESSOR: Wendi Zea

This thesis encompasses the design and production process for Southern Illinois University Carbondale Department of Theater's production, *Evil Dead: The Musical*. The writing focuses on the scene designer's process of analyzing a script to putting it on stage. Through the document the reader will gain insight into the process of a live production from the pre-design phase to post production.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my guardian angel and grandmother, Joan Willenberg.

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CHAPTER 1

PLAY RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

I proposed to do the scenic design for *Evil Dead: The Musical* for Southern Illinois University 2019-2020 season. *Evil Dead: The Musical* by George Reinblatt is a rock musical parody of the classic Sam Raimi *Evil Dead* films combined into one cohesive comedic show. In *Evil Dead: The Musical*, the 1980s horror movies *Evil Dead*, *Evil Dead 2*, and *Army of Darkness* have been morphed into a musical full of blood, bad puns, a talking moose head, and blood thirsty demons. Since its premiere in 2003, the musical has made its way around the world making people laugh and bringing nostalgia to all who enjoy horror movies. When designing the scenic elements for the show, I found the films were a critical source for bringing the dead back to life.

Script Analysis

The encompassing genre that *Evil Dead: The Musical* falls into is comedy. However, it can be defined a step further as a parody. Drawn from all three films (*Evil Dead*, *Evil Dead II*, and *Army of Darkness*), the plot is derived mainly from *Evil Dead II*, but the characters from *Evil Dead* are integrated, and then jokes, iconic lines, and references are pulled from *Army of Darkness*. Comedy is indeed the appropriate label for *Evil Dead: The Musical* as it was written to make people laugh and enjoy this critically acclaimed franchise.

In order to understand the comedy and style of *Evil Dead: The Musical*, I needed to understand the differences between parody, spoof, and satire— not only the differences among the three, but also what makes a show purely “campy”. A satire typically ridicules politics and religion. Spoof takes a literary work and pokes fun at it, while a parody takes the work and exaggerates the language often making serious situations more comical. Parody and camp go

together since camp is an exaggerated exaggeration. After reading about the differences between parody, spoof, and satire, I decided that the show was a parody. I can see that Reinblatt took the films and made them into a parody while bringing a camp quality to the show.

The musical is made up of two acts and eighteen scenes. Each scene is fairly short, some only lasting a page and most of the scenes include at least one musical number. The slapstick comedy of the show permits a fast-paced flow with smooth transitions. The first act is slightly longer than act two. At the end of act I, the dialogue grants that an intermission can be inserted, or the show may just continue on with no break.

When I analyzed this musical, I had to consider the genre of the musical. Is it a book musical, jukebox musical, or a rock musical? As mentioned in the opening paragraph, *Evil Dead: The Musical* is a rock musical. At its core a rock musical is defined as using modern pop music to tell a story. There is a rock concert-like quality to various musicals of this genre like *American Idiot*, *Spring Awakening*, and *Jesus Christ Superstar*, making them more relatable to a younger audience (Musical Stages). The rock musical genre originated during the 1960s. Previously, musical composers such as Richard Rodgers, John Kander, and Cole Porter used the music genres of jazz and ragtime. The rock genre was looked as music that was too loud and obscene for live theater. The musical *Bye Bye Birdie* helped pave the way for more rock musicals to make it to the stage. While still unsure of departing from the classic nature of a musical, the industry finally took the plunge, and *Hair: The American Tribal Love-Rock Musical* made its debut and made musical theater history (Wollman). *Evil Dead: The Musical* is no exception when it comes to a rock musical. In “Good Old Reliable Jake”, for example, the character “busts out” with a 1980s style rock song explaining how Annie and

Ed can trust him to make it through the woods. I believe that the author's decision to make *Evil Dead: The Musical* into a rock musical stems from when the films were made, in the 1980s. It is only fitting that *Evil Dead: The Musical* pays homage to this popular time for rock music. Additionally, the script has many references to 1980s items and events.

Being a horror movie fan myself, I wanted to see exactly when that genre came to light and the reason for the horror movie's popularity. The first horror film (*Le Manoir du Diable*) appeared in 1898. However, it was not till the 1900s that horror movies finally got their feet under them. The literary tales of *Frankenstein* and *Dracula* helped the genre gain popularity and evolve into the golden age of horror movies between the 1920s and 1930s when the movie *Nosferatu* was created. It was not until the 1930s that the cinema industry coined the word "horror" to describe this type of movie. We progress through time and gain the Alfred Hitchcock films that set the bar for many decades. Fast forward a few decades, and we reach the era when the horror genre explodes. During the 1970s and 1980s there was an obsession with the occult. Hence, this is when the inspiration for our show, *Evil Dead*, materialized. Horror movies declined in the following years, but if there is one thing an audience wants, it is to be frightened, and that is the ultimate appeal of the horror movie (Academy).

The *Evil Dead* franchise originally started with one amateur horror movie and then spurred two more films. As part of my research, I watched other modern classic horror films such as *Scream*, *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *The Blair Witch Project*, and *The Exorcist*. I watched these films for common themes and tropes (universal themes or clichés.). In an article by Matt Loggie, he lists the top six common horror movie tropes: jump scare, no coverage, the abandoned place, the vengeful spirit, death by sex, and the final girl. There are

many more tropes such as a mythological background, the idea that one should not go in the woods alone, being unable to leave, the unhelpful local, the evil hand, the chainsaw, and the dim-witted youth.

The script for *Evil Dead: The Musical* is full of common horror movie tropes. At the top of the show the tropes begin with the introduction of the *Necronomicon* (the fictional book of the dead) and its history. Then there is the upbeat music of the musical number “Cabin in the Woods”. Here we have a group of young college students celebrating their spring break traveling to a creepy cabin located in the woods, a cabin in which they do not have permission to enter. “Cabin in the Woods” introduces the tropes of the dim-witted youth, the woods, the abandoned place, and isolation.

As the musical progresses more tropes are offered. The classic chainsaw Ash uses to cut his evil hand off in “Join Us” can be seen in other films like *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and *The Wizard of Gore*. As mentioned earlier, one of the most common tropes is death by sex. The nature of how Cheryl becomes possessed is altered in the transition from *Evil Dead* the film to the musical. In the original film *Evil Dead*, Cheryl is sexually assaulted by vines and tree branches while the musical tones the sexual content down by having trees just attack Cheryl. Aside from the trees attacking Cheryl, there is the character of Scott who hopes to “do the nasty” while on this trip with Shelly. While neither Scott nor Shelly dies during their sexual acts, there is still the lustful character that is looking to “get laid” as depicted in several horror movies involving teenagers. Nearing the end of the musical there are only two humans alive, Ash and Annie. Annie is the final girl, Ash being the final guy. The trope of final girl normally pertains to the lone surviving female. However, the only living person at the end of *Evil Dead* is Ash. There is a sliver of hope that Annie will make it through the night and

perhaps end up with Ash. That is quickly taken away as she dies just when she is about to say the final incantation to banish the demons into a rift in time.

Another crucial part to my research for the scene design was the *Evil Dead* comic books. I wanted to pay tribute to and stay with the *Evil Dead* roots while using the comic book style for the show. A personal goal of mine was to make the set look like it emerged from the comics with harsh highlights and shadows and a two-dimensional appearance. The comic books cover all three movies and more. There is a series of comics that covers the *Army of Darkness* film meanwhile including tales such as *Montezuma's Revenge*. The artwork used various styles, and I decided that I wanted to use the comic book that pertained to *Army of Darkness*. The comics have a detail oriented quality to them that the film does not. While I could design the set to be hyper realistic, I wanted there to be more of a two dimensional cartoon appeal to it. The comic stylization lends itself more to comedy and lets one see the cabin in a more manipulated and stylized manner. It was not your standard realistic abandoned cabin in the woods from film. While I wanted to pay homage to the film, I also wanted to give credit to the comics that the true "Deadites" (die-hard *Evil Dead* fans) love.

Given Circumstances within Script

When analyzing a play, there are given circumstances throughout the script that help the designer create the world in which the characters interact. In *Evil Dead: The Musical*, we join a group of rowdy college students on their spring break in an old abandoned cabin in the woods.

The opening number, "Cabin in the Woods", establishes that our characters are heading to an old abandoned cabin in the woods. It is revealed in act 1, scene 1 that it is springtime, and the gang is on their spring vacation, breaking into the cabin.

The exact location is never given; however, I know that the characters are from the

state of Michigan because in act 2, scene 3, Annie yells at Ash, “Are all men from Michigan such loud-mouthed braggarts?” (Reinblatt 58). This line helps define where they are coming from and going to. The book *The Unseen Force* tells us that the films have them traveling to a cabin in Tennessee. When I had this information, I researched what the woods and cabins look like in the state of Tennessee. I looked up which species of trees are common in the state and then manipulated this look to become eerie. The unnerving events unravel through one full day and night. Ash and his friends get to the cabin during the day, and as night approaches more and more catastrophes occur.

At the top of the show, the characters start by traveling through the woods first in a car and then on foot to arrive at their cabin destination. The next location that I needed to consider in the design was the airport terminal in scene act 1, scene 6. Annie has arrived from Cairo, Egypt to retrieve pages of the *Necronomicon*, and Ed is waiting at the terminal to greet her. At the top of the scene, an airport announcer says, “Flight 86A the hourly shuttle from Cairo has just landed in Terminal One. Once again, that’s flight 86A, the *hourly* shuttle from Cairo. Terminal One” (25). The scene was done with minimal set change. The solution for the scene change was utilizing an unused space in the theater that was not part of the cabin that served as the production’s major scenic element. The lighting designer was able to isolate the actors with spotlights. The actors were both part of the previous scene, and the area was easily accessible after their costume changes.

Shortly after the airport scene, the next location is a place in the woods. In act 1, scene 9 in parentheses it says, “The woods. ANNIE and ED are walking, lost. JAKE is just standing there” (40). The location is very general in that is just “the woods”. The woods, like the airport scene, is used minimally in the show. For the woods, the opening scene was performed

in front of a drop of painted woods. In the other woods scenes, the lighting designer helped manipulate the cabin with leaf and branch gobos to look like the scene was outside, and the actors utilized the acting area downstage in the front of the cabin itself. The one other time the show takes place outside of the cabin is in act 1, scene 4 when Cheryl is attacked and possessed by the demon trees. Originally the solution for the trees was to create a tree structure in the design that allowed for actors to push their hands into stretch fabric and grab Cheryl. The final design solution ended up with the costume designer creating evil tree costumes that three actors wore on stage and in which they were able to attack Cheryl.

The final scene location in act 2, scene 8 that is needed to complete the show is Ash’s place of employment, S-Mart. After Annie and Ash have sent the demons through a rift in time, the script flashes forward to Ash telling his tale of fighting demons to a group of S-Mart shoppers. In its entirety there are four different locations: multiple sites in the woods, the cabin, airport, and S-Mart. Below is a table that breaks down all of the acts and scenes, the major props, musical numbers, and set changes. This outline assisted me in being able to see how the show flowed and progressed from start to finish.

Table 1.1 Scenic Breakdown

ACT, SCENE	LOCATION	PROPERTIES	Musical Numbers	SETTING CHANGES
Act 1, Scene 1	Inside a car & by a footbridge	Luggage, Chips, Rye, Tropicana, and Beer	“CABIN IN THE WOODS”	The characters start off inside a car while singing then come to the bridge where they must cross by foot to get to the cabin.
Act 1, Scene 2	Inside the cabin	“If Chins Could Kill” book, drinking glass, axe, gun, dagger, <i>Necronomicon</i> , and tape recorder.		This is the initial scene that the cellar door flies open and the men go inside it. A tree crashes through the window.
Act 1, Scene 3	Inside the cabin	Jewelry box and necklace.	“HOUSEWARE EMPLOYEE”	Same location as before but needs a kitchen for exits/entrances.

Act 1, Scene 4	Inside and outside the cabin			Cheryl hears voices and goes outside to investigate where she is attacked by trees.
Act 1, Scene 5	Inside the cabin and outside the cabin	Brownies and caution tape	“IT WON’T LET US LEAVE”	The other characters are inside, and Cheryl pounds on the door to be let in. She tries convincing Ash to take her to a hotel. When they try to leave they learn the bridge is destroyed.
Act 1, Scene 6	Airport	Luggage, flight papers, and missing <i>Necronomicon</i> pages.		Ed is picking Annie up at the airport and about to take her to the cabin.
Act 1, Scene 7	Inside the cabin	Tape recorder, card game, blanket, pencil, chain, padlock, and gun.	“LOOK WHO’S EVIL NOW” “WHAT THE FUCK WAS THAT”	Cheryl becomes possessed and tries to attack everybody. She ends up possessing Shelly and stabbing Linda in the ankle with a pencil. Cheryl is thrown into the cellar and locked up.
Act 1, Scene 8	Inside the cabin	Talking Moose head, stuffed beaver, and chainsaw.	“JOIN US”	The cabin comes to life literally with everything moving to the music. A moose bites Ash’s hand making it possessed and attacks him. Ash cuts his hand off with the chainsaw.
Act 1, Scene 9	The woods	Match and wallet.	“GOOD OLD RELIABLE JAKE”	Annie and Ed met Jake and he takes them on a route to the cabin.
Act 1, Scene 10	Inside the cabin	Duct tape, severed hand, guts, mannequin head, axe, necklace, and chainsaw	“HOUSEWARE EMPLOYEE (REPRISE)” “I’M NOT A KILLER”	Scott has come back with his guts hanging out, Linda has come back to life and possessed, and Annie and Ed walk in on Ash about saw Linda.
Act 2, Scene 1	Inside the cabin	Mannequin head, chain, tape, and tape recorder.	“I’M NOT A KILLER (REPRISE)”	Picks up from Act 1, Scene 10.
Act 2, Scene 2	Inside the cabin	Top hat, cane, and gun.	“BIT PART DEMON”	Ed becomes possessed and has his own song.
Act 2, Scene 3	Inside the cabin	Flashlight		The characters are visited by the ghost of Professor Knowby and given directions on how to banish the demons.
Act 2, Scene 4	Inside the cabin		“ALL THE MEN IN MY LIFE KEEP GETTING KILLED BY CANDARIAN DEMONS”	Annie sings a song about how all the men in her life were killed by Candarian Demons.

Act 2, Scene 5	Inside the cabin	Severed hand, gun, <i>Necronomicon</i> pages, dagger, and axe.	“ODE TO AN ACCIDENTAL STABBING”	Jake cracks and jeopardizes the characters but ends up getting stabbed in the stomach by accident.
Act 2, Scene 6	Inside the cabin	<i>Necronomicon</i> pages		Ash shoots his sister Cheryl.
Act 2, Scene 7	Inside the cabin	Gun, chainsaw, dagger, and <i>Necronomicon</i> pages.	“DO THE NECRONOMICON” “IT’S TIME”	The demons do a special dance, Ash chops them up, and Annie opens a rift sending the demons through it.
Act 2, Scene 8	Inside S- Mart	Gun and chainsaw	“BLEW THAT BITCH AWAY”	Ash has returned to reality and he is telling his story to some customers and demons come back.

While analyzing *Evil Dead: The Musical*, I had to dig deep to figure out the main themes in the play. The major theme that I wanted my design to revolve around was the notion that everything is not as it seems. I came up with this theme from watching the films, reading the script, and listening to the music. There are moments throughout the script where things seem to be ordinary but in a blink of an eye get chaotic. When entering the cabin, it seems like a typical abandoned cabin in woods until the demons wake from their ancient slumber turning everything upside down. When watching a horror movie, one notes that there is rarely a normal day. The movies typically end with the deaths of many, the protagonist barely getting away, or the spirit finally finding its peace. Applying this theme to the design to *Evil Dead: The Musical*, I wanted things to not be what they seem. It is not every day that a moose head comes to life, blood sprays out a window seat, and a geyser of blood shoots up from a cellar. These mechanisms were concealed from the audience to help create the illusion that everything is normal, and when the intense moments occurred, it was unexpected. The humor from each film is fused into one story. Comedic bits with the talking moose head in act 1, scene 8 allow for events that would not happen in reality to become possible.

Author's Intent/Historical Information

Since its conception the *Evil Dead* franchise has become a huge cult classic. The first film *Evil Dead* came out on April 24, 1983, and the sequel *Evil Dead II* followed nearly four years later, on March 13, 1987. Later, the film *Army of Darkness* premiered on February 19, 1993. The first film was intended to be a horror film and was perceived as that. The next two films started to stray away from the horror genre, *Evil Dead II* becoming a comedy horror and *Army of Darkness* being just comedy. It is these three films that inspired *Evil Dead: The Musical* (The Evil Dead).

I believe that the author's intent was to create a musical from this cult classic for die-hard fans to watch and enjoy. It is definitely not a movie you would think would make a good musical, but for a specific audience it is perfect. George Reinblatt and the team wanted to develop a musical that could speak to younger people whether it be the die-hard *Evil Dead* fan, horror movie fanatic, or a person craving a big laugh. Like the film *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, the target audience for *Evil Dead: The Musical* is a younger audience.

The original production of *Evil Dead: The Musical* premiered in 2003 in a small bar in Toronto, Canada. This production took off better than the creators initially thought, and they had crowds lining up down the street to watch the show. After the opening in Toronto, the musical made it to New York's Off-Broadway in 2006 just three years after its premiere (Musical). Since the premiere and its debut on Off-Broadway, the musical has taken the world by storm and has had over 200 productions performed around the globe. According to the musical's website, "From Seoul to Madrid to Tokyo to Las Vegas to Cleveland to Norfolk to Toronto to New York, *Evil Dead: The Musical* has been splattering people with fake blood across the globe" making this production done worldwide. At this writing the show was

recently0 on tour in the United States making stops in big cities like Chicago and Kansas City.

Character Analysis

The characters in the show are from the first two films, while Ash was the protagonist in all three of the films. Listed below is a breakdown of all the characters in the musical, their purpose, and their connection with each other. The character analysis helped me view how the characters function and how they interact throughout the space of the set, the prop items the characters have, and what set décor is appropriate for the cabin.

Table 1.2 Character Descriptions

CHARACTER	QUALITIES/POLAR ATTITUDES
Ash	Ash is the protagonist leading man. He is the brother to Cheryl, boyfriend to Linda, and best friend to Scott. Ash is a tough, handsome, and strong man that fights off all of the Candarian Demons and tries to stay alive till dawn.
Cheryl	Cheryl is the first victim to become possessed in this group of college students. She is the little sister to the leading man, Ash. Cheryl is a prudish, geeky, and skittish young woman. Cheryl is the most evil of the demons at the end and has a ringleader quality to her.
Linda	Linda is the girlfriend of Ash. She met her cute and thin boyfriend at their place of employment, S-Mart. Linda is a smart and caring woman that adores her boyfriend for every little thing he does. Linda is stabbed in the ankle with a pencil by Cheryl and becomes evil.
Scott	Scott is the best friend of Ash and the current lover to Shelly. He is a sex-driven, arrogant, and amusing male. Scott has brought Shelly out to the woods to get lucky and have a good time. He has nobody’s best interests at heart. Scott is killed by the evil trees inhabited by the demons and returns to life as a demon.
Shelly	Shelly is the “slutty tramp” that Scott brings along for solely for his pleasure. Shelly is the stereotypical blonde girl that gets killed early in the show and turns into a Candarian Demon.

Annie	Annie is the daughter of the cabin’s owner and the girlfriend to Ed. She fulfills the role the heroine that sweeps in with the solution to the nightmare and the final female role. Annie is killed by Ash’s dismembered hand.
Jake	Jake is the unhelpful local that helps take Annie and Ed through the woods. He doesn’t like anybody, is a hillbilly, and easily offended. Jake is dragged into the cellar and consumed by Cheryl and joins the Candarian demon crew.
Ed	Ed is the always interrupted, second fiddle to Annie. He can never get one sentence in without being cut-off. Ed turns evil and becomes part of the evil dead.
Candarian Demons	The evil forces that are brought to life after the college students discover artifacts left behind from Professor Knowby. They take over the bodies of Ash’s friends and sister. Once the characters become possessed they all turn into antagonists try to kill Ash.

The writer created several iconic lines that appear in all three films. For example, Ash’s line in act 2, scene 6 “See this? This is my boomstick!” (Reinblatt 70) comes from the film *Army of Darkness*. There is a plethora of puns that refer to food, actors, and movies within the script. The pro wrestler Hulk Hogan is mentioned by the possessed kid sister Cheryl as she expels a list of corny puns. The cheerleading film *Bring It On* is referenced during the song “Look Who’s Evil Now” when Shelly becomes possessed by the demons. During Jake’s song “Good Old Reliable Jake”, countless references are made to popular culture, like the fast food restaurant McDonald’s and Shamrock Shake and the morning television show *The View*. *Evil Dead: The Musical* combines all these components: the films, pop culture references, and comedy.

Production Goals

Evil Dead: The Musical was selected to be my thesis production and, as a young designer, I designated goals that I wanted to achieve through the design process. Originally, I set three goals, but as I delved into the design phase I saw an opportunity to add a fourth. In

the theater, collaboration and communication between designers, director, and other members of a production team is vital to a smooth design process and production. I wanted to enhance my presentation skills, meaning I wanted to present my designs with more confidence and communication between team members. Along with maintaining open communication between members, I wanted to improve my drafting. The drafting for a show correlates with the previous mentioned goal because the drawings are a visual representation of what a designer wants the set to look like. The technical director, director, lighting designer, and sound designer use the drafting when deciding how to build the set, plan blocking for actors, determine the placement of light fixtures, and to pinpoint where to place speakers. I wanted to complete a design package that was functional for the entire team and gave the essential and appropriate information.

Now moving from paper to the shop, I wanted to monitor and implement smooth operations within the scene shop. *Evil Dead: The Musical* is a madcap show with numerous and complex properties and special effects. Without careful monitoring, the teams can easily fall behind, hindering the entire process. While I am a scene designer, I am also a mentor to the undergraduate population in the shop, and I wanted to grant them ample opportunities to learn, but to also complete tasks for a show in a timely manner.

As I mentioned earlier, I wanted to implement one more goal to *Evil Dead: The Musical*. Being a young and new designer, I had not yet established a practical and methodical design process for myself. I wanted to be able to develop my own process and learn what it is to be a scenic designer.

CHAPTER 2

PRE-PRODUCTION

After I researched and had a solid foundation on *Evil Dead: The Musical*, the pre-design and design phase activated. The pre-design phase contains meetings that allow for the production team to meet and discuss logistics of the designs and what needs to be achieved. After the pre-design phase, we move into the design phase where the designers bring their concepts for the design and present them to the team. The *Evil Dead: The Musical* team consisted of Tom Kidd, Director; Jeff Richardson, Technical Director; Jessica Rigdon, Costume Designer; Mark Varns, Lighting Designer; Alex Brue, Props Master, and Alexis Wiley, Stage Manager.

As a scenic designer for SIUC Theater I follow specific guidelines that assist the team in the design process, with specific requirements for designers in each area (See Appendix A for SIU Theater Production Guidelines). The initial pre-design meeting allows for the director to share their production concept with the team and for the other members to share their initial thoughts on the script. After the pre-design meeting, there are five design meetings to collaborate and develop these designs for the show. For each design meeting there are checkpoints for the designers to bring in materials to assure the design is completed on time. For the first design meeting the scene designer is to bring in the script analysis, scene breakdown, and inspiration images. The second design meeting is for sharing research images and preliminary sketches. The third design meeting is where the designer presents a preliminary ground plan, scene sketches, and/or a white model. The fourth design meeting is to review revisions from design meeting three with in-scale drawings with sufficient detail necessary for the technical director to draw up a budget. The fifth and last design meeting is

when the final design is approved by the director and the scene design package is to be handed over to the technical director to create the final bid for the show. Beyond this point the production preparation starts and production meetings begin.

Our first pre-design meeting took place on March 4, 2019. This was the first meeting between the director, Tom Kidd, and designers. The meeting began with Kidd sharing his ideas and thoughts for the production. The biggest question he had was about the constraints if the show moved from the Christian H. Moe Laboratory Theater to the McLeod Theater.

The McLeod Theater is a proscenium style theater that has amenities such as a fly system, traps in the floor, more seating, and exceedingly more lighting circuits. The Moe Laboratory is an intimate black box theater that has a fixed lighting grid, limited space, and is not as technically up to date as its counterpart in terms of lighting and sound.

This discussion started a trend that continued throughout the pre-production and production phase. Aside from speaking about the possibility of switching stages, Kidd shared the themes and inspirations that he wanted the production team to use as stimuli. He spoke about the horror movie tropes, the theme of everything is not as it seems, and how to change from happy to demonic.

Throughout the design meetings, the other designers and I presented an assortment of research and inspiration boards. While reading the musical, I jotted down elements that stood out to me and were important to the show. Aside from pulling from the text, I visualized what it was that I pictured *Evil Dead: The Musical* to look like. When I created my research board I concentrated on images of old cabins, taxidermy animals, the *Evil Dead* comics, and past productions. The images prompted Kidd to talk about the “musts” that the scenic design needed. For the first design meeting, the designers brought in inspiration boards that

embodied their ideas of the show. My inspiration board had influences of the *Evil Dead* comic books, eerie dilapidated cabins, blood, and demons. The board had an overarching comic/cartoon appearance. The comic book look played into the final design and style of how it was painted. When I decided the color palette for the set, I went through my inspiration board and pulled the colors that stuck out the most to me. The colors that spoke to me were earthy tones of red, green, and brown. Below are the inspiration board and research board:



Figure 2.1 Inspiration Board



Figure 2.2 Research Board

Kidd gave the team his list of “musts” that were crucial to the show and how the show functioned. First, there had to be a cellar door. Whether the cellar door was in the floor, on a raised platform, or built into the wall, the cellar door had to be on the set. The final design had the cellar on a raised platform, and actors descended into the hole. Second, the scene shifts needed be fluid and look effortless. The most extensive scene shifts were 1) from “Cabin In The Woods” to cabin reveal and 2) from the cabin to S-Mart at the end of the epic battle. Each of these shifts brought about creative discussions. The first shift was resolved with a rip-away drop. At the end of the song “Cabin in the Woods” the Dark Ones (the mythological writers of the *Necronomicon*) pulled the tree drop down to reveal the cabin. The shift into S-Mart was established by a kabuki drop (a special effect that drops the fabric to create a new scene) painted with the S-Mart logo that was triggered after the final battle scene with a voiceover of Ash talking to the S-Mart customers. The third “must” was having at least 120 audience seats including the spatter zone. The spatter zone was an area of seating where audiences would get spattered with blood by the actors, which was part of the original production. The number of seats was achieved with the general seating, handicapped seating, and the special spatter zone seats. The fourth “must” was the execution of the blood effects: where would the blood come from and how was it going to work?

This challenge with the blood became a common topic of discussion throughout the production process. The blood effects had to come from five main areas: the cellar, entrance into the cabin, the kitchen counter, the fireplace, and the bench seat. The technical director, with the help of the faculty technical director created blood delivery systems out of old automobile windshield wiper pumps. The actors were able to push a button at each location and the pumps spewed blood onto the actors and into the spatter zone. Along with the

pumps, the actors had ketchup bottles filled with blood to spray during the final gory battle.

The fifth “must” concerned what items in the cabin become possessed by demons during “Join Us” and how are they controlled. I knew early on that the only people that would be able to operate the items were the actors due to the low number of run crew available backstage. Except for the talking moose operator (he only operated the moose head), each actor had two items that they had to control. The talking moose was operated like a sock puppet; the actor put his hand in the head and controlled the mouth and neck with his hand and arm. The other possessed items including pots, stuffed animals, and picture frames that were animated with wooden rods that poked through the cabin walls that the actors either twisted or pushed in and out. Figure 2.3 is an image of the moose head puppet that was created for the show:



Figure 2.3 The Talking Moose Head

The sixth “must” had to do with the acting/dancing space. The area created for the dancing and acting space was limited due to the size of the set and the audience seating. However, we, the team, made do with space in front of the show deck and the show deck itself. It was a cramped space for the small cast, but I think it served the show well and made

the production more intimate.

The seventh “must” was the backstage space. The space backstage was very limited due to the size constraints of the Moe Laboratory Theater, the size of the set, and the seating accommodations. However, even with all the constraints, we designed spaces for quick changes to happen and easy access for actors to get from one place to another in a matter of seconds. Ideally the backstage should have been bigger, but what we created served the technicians and actors well.

The eighth and final “must” was finding a home for the five-piece band. We knew from the beginning that we needed and wanted a live band to accompany the show. The team had contemplated putting the band in the sound lock, in a separate room and feeding the music in through speakers or figuring a way to have them in the theater. The way that I solved the placement of the band was by creating an attic like structure above and behind the set. The audience was able to see the band, and the actors were able to hear the music.

While there were many “musts” for *Evil Dead: The Musical*, each was an important necessity to its success. In the end, with the work of a great and hardworking team these needs were met, and the show was successful.

The Design Process

Having received feedback from the director, I was able to move into drawing up initial designs. I began with designing the cabin since this is where most of the show takes place. I developed three different designs, each having a special feature.

In the following meeting I explained each concept to Kidd and what he would be able to do with his blocking and where scenes could be placed. Below are three concepts I sent to Kidd to receive feedback at the design meeting.

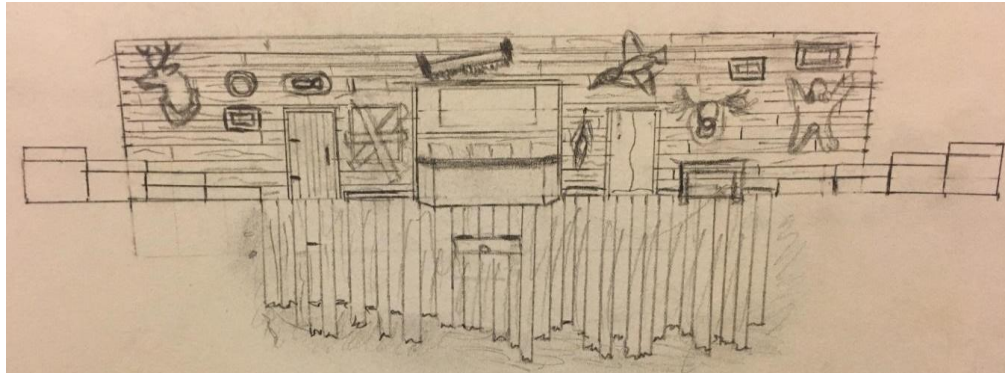


Figure 2.4 Concept One Drawing of the Cabin

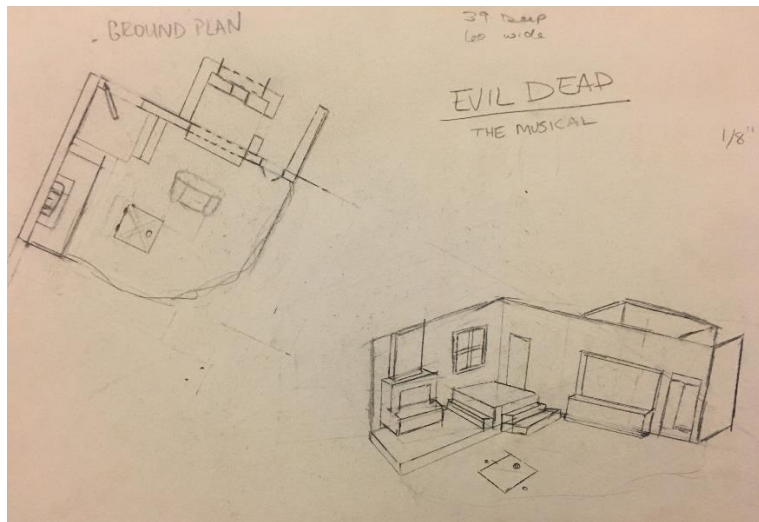


Figure 2.5 Concept Two Drawing of the Cabin



Figure 2.6 Concept Three Drawing of the Cabin.

He expressed his concerns and thoughts about each idea. We discussed what did not work for him and in what direction he would like for me to go. While all three were interesting, the design still was not what he wanted. The first image above was too linear and lent itself to wasted space around the set and seating. His idea was to design the seating and have the seating configuration dictate the cabin layout. I took his critiques and the advice given and created more versions of the set design. He did approve of the color palette that I brought containing various shades of browns, yellows, and reds.

After this meeting I went back to the drawing board with my new feedback from Kidd. He suggested I look at the television show *Pee-Wee's Playhouse*. He wanted me to observe the irregularity of the design and see how the house comes alive with inanimate objects. When I received this inspiration, I drew up a set concept in the CAD program Vectorworks that had slanted walls, various acting spaces, and opportunity for objects to move around during the music number "Join Us". I decided to draw in CAD for this concept to increase my proficiency in the program and to get the drawing out quicker. Below is the drawing that was created in Vectorworks and shown to Kidd at the next design meeting:

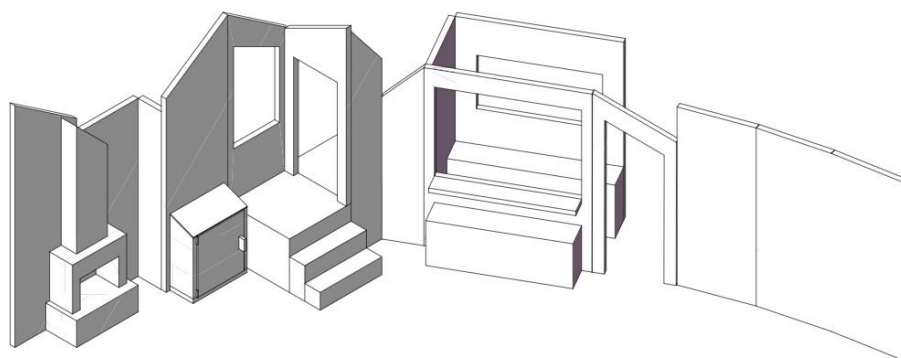


Figure 2.7 Concept Drawing Four of the Cabin

After I reviewed my notes, Kidd's critiques, and developed more ideas, I presented the drawings at the final design meeting. The meeting concluded with Kidd still feeling that the designs lacked the layout, seat capacity, and style of cellar desired he wanted. Since this was the final meeting, I had to schedule outside meetings with him during the summer with the goal of having a final design to the technical director by June 1. I sent more images to Kidd via e-mail to get his feedback. On May 27, he and I met over a video call to discuss the latest design. He liked what he saw and gave a few minor changes. The small changes were made and a design package was drafted and sent to the technical director by the June 1 deadline. The technical director had the paperwork to move forward and to prepare for production upon arriving back from the summer break (See Appendix D for Final Design Plates).

Promptly with school starting, the first production meeting was held on August 19, 2019. Once again, the production ran into the issue of potentially switching theaters due to the lack of sound equipment in the Moe Laboratory Theater. The issue was reviewed by the production manager and sound designer resulting in the production staying in the Moe Laboratory Theater. The location of the show was finalized, but Kidd wanted to change the layout of the set itself. Instead of having the angled wall into the kitchen area, he wanted to flatten the wall and angle it at 45 degrees. This would allow scenes to be viewed better by the audience. That was shortly dismissed when Kidd realized that the return wall would help to conceal effects. This small delay resulted in the build process starting a week late due to having to reconfigure the design only days later to return to the original ground plan.

Collaborating With The Design Team

Throughout the design process, I tried my best to communicate with the other designers. I understood that Rigdon, the costume designer, needed a decent amount of room

backstage for quick changes. The tree costumes created a large footprint backstage, and the actors wearing them needed ample room to move around on stage. Along with enough room backstage, I had to make sure to double check that there was adequate masking to block the quick-change stations. Even though there was limited space backstage, there was enough to do the changes and for actors to get onstage and offstage quickly.

There were a few concerns I initially had with the lighting design for the show. One of the requests Varns, the lighting designer, made was for some up lighting to create a ghoulish effect. This meant the audience seating had to be a certain height to accommodate the lighting fixtures underneath it and be covered with Plexiglass to prevent blood from getting on the lights. Along with the fixtures under the audience, there were sidelights behind the splatter zone and by the stage right entrance. I was worried that blood would cover the fixtures and ruin them. In the long haul of the show, all lighting fixtures survived and were returned safely to storage.

The designer I wish I would have collaborated with more was Gary Griffith, the sound designer. If I had been in better contact with him, the speakers could have been placed in spots where they would not have been at risk of being ruined by the blood splatter or cause major feedback. One speaker placement was directly over the cellar door where the blood geyser occurred. We solved this issue by attaching a piece of Plexiglass to the bottom of the speaker and covering the speaker with plastic when testing the geyser. The second speaker placement was right outside the entrance into the cabin. The issue that arose with this placement was microphone pick-up and feedback. The issue resolved itself during the technical rehearsals as Griffith became more familiar with the actors' blocking.

Model and Rendering Work

Upon returning from my summer job in New York, I completed a white model of the cabin, paint elevations, and a painted rendering of the cabin. The purpose of the white model is to translate the two-dimensional design into a three-dimensional environment fashion, allowing the director to see the set from multiple angles and how it was going to sit within the theater space. Kidd prefers a model so he can plan his blocking and play with the set. I also made paint elevations for the paint charge to use when painting the set. Finally, I painted a rendering to show Kidd and the rest of the design team what the final product was going to look like (See Appendix H for Design Renderings). Once I had all of these components, the other designers and I went to a rehearsal to present the design to the cast. Showing the design helps the cast get even more excited to see the final product, inform them on the environment that will be working in and assist them in the rehearsal process.

In conclusion, after each team member had their materials for the show ready, the show went into production. After months of prepping, the *Evil Dead: The Musical* design process was over, and it was time to proceed into the build and production phase of the process.

CHAPTER 3

BUILD AND PRODUCTION

Challenges during Build Process

The build process for *Evil Dead: The Musical* was not an easy task. There were many challenges that the team had to overcome to make it to opening night and beyond. *Evil Dead: The Musical* was the first show of SIU Theater's season, but that did not mean we had ample time to get everything built. The build time for the show would be cut short due to the production *To Kill a Mockingbird* that would follow. The two build times would overlap, which meant that labor would be pulled from *Evil Dead: The Musical* right before opening night as we moved on to the next show. We had been told this in previous meetings, but it slipped our minds by the time we came back in August. This information was vital to making sure the show was ready for tech week and an audience.

We, as a team, combated the overlapping productions by keeping the technical director (Richardson), assistant technical director (Mohlman) and me working on *Evil Dead: The Musical* while the other production staff directed their attention to *To Kill a Mockingbird*. In the beginning, the thought of losing hands was very frightening, but as a team of three, we were able to complete everything for the show on time. The team of three finished all notes and building that affected actors and crew before tech. The only things we had remaining to add were very fine details and to address notes from rehearsals.

As stated in the last chapter, when we returned to school the scene design for the show had to be altered. Kidd saw that a wall in the set was going to be problematic to the flow of the show. In reaction to this news, I took the director's wishes and gave the technical director a new ground plan for the altered set. However, as Kidd thought more, he decided that we

needed to adhere to the original design. The decision caused the work in the shop to be delayed, and we had to make up for the lost time. In order to catch up we arranged to have one Saturday work-call. During that work-call, the stage deck floor was installed, walls of the cabin were assembled, the pipe for the rip-away drop hoisted up and attached to the lighting grid, and the snap tape (tape that has little plastic snaps attached) applied to the rip-away drop. At the end of the workday, the team tested the rip-away drop, and it was successful for the needed effect.

Throughout the process there was a common trend of getting scenic units approved, making the unit, and having to re-make the unit. This was frustrating to the team since it pushed us further back in our work. This could have been avoided if I had given the director clearer drawings and found better ways to communicate with him. Once the scenic piece was made correctly, Kidd was thrilled to have the object so that the actors could get acclimated to it.

The biggest challenge was the kitchen counter. I had originally made a drafting plate to demonstrate how the kitchen counter and bookshelf would work (See Appendix F Miscellaneous Drafting). This scenic element was a critical piece to many scenes. This area is where Linda's head is "cut off" with a chainsaw, Ash "cuts off" his hand, the hand comes to life running across the counter, and household objects become possessed and come to life. Three people also had to be shoved under the counter at one point in the show to animate the possessed objects. Kidd was worried that there would not be enough room for the actors to be under the counter and concerned that parts would not work like he needed them. There were a few accommodations that we had to make to the counter including building a section out of steel box tubing for stability. The counter was made structurally sound so that Ash could

stand on top of it during the final battle. After we completed the counter, the actors and Kidd were satisfied with how it would work with their staging.

Evil Dead: The Musical is a show full of special effects ranging from a hand being cut off to blood shooting out of a bench seat. It was vital that we, as a team, knew where the effects were happening, how they were operated, and when they were happening. Kidd helped by creating an effects breakdown. The breakdown specifically indicated which character had control over the effect, where it happened, which department was responsible for creating the effect, and a description of the desired effect. From here, Rigdon, Richardson, and I met and discussed the list determining who should be responsible for each effect. We concluded that the costume department would handle any effect attached to a costume or driven by an actor. Then, the scene shop would be responsible for any effect that would be built into the set. In order to make it more comfortable for actors, we made holes in the set for them to hide their bottles of blood on stage. In making the holes, Mohlman cut a cavity and concealed it with a little door for the actor to reach through to grab their masks or blood.

Two of the biggest issues that we had with the blood effects were finding the right consistency for the blood and aiming the blood to hit the audience in the spatter zone. The blood consistency remained an issue throughout the testing process. The mechanisms that we used for delivering the blood required that the mixture be water and red food coloring or else it would clog. The red food coloring and water mixture was not what Kidd wanted, but we had to explain that if we put corn syrup in the pumps it would ruin the entire machine. The solution for the blood was to keep the red food coloring and water mixture in the windshield wiper pumps, making a thicker consistency for the pressurized sprayers used under the counter, and keeping the water and red food coloring mixture for the geyser created by a

submersible sump pump in the cellar. While the blood was a challenge, we created a mixture that worked for each blood delivery system. Aiming the blood at the audience was difficult, particularly with the bench seat. The bench seat had to be in an exact spot in order for the blood to spray the audience in the spatter zone and not the audience in the general seating. Richardson helped alleviate some of the issues by manipulating copper pieces attached to the tubing that fed the blood from the windshield wiper pump and adding spike marks on the floor for the actors to use in aligning the window seat.

The blood delivery systems were installed in concealed areas of the set. The windshield wiper pumps were placed inside the window seat, the door frame into the cabin, and the fireplace. The pressurized sprayers were confined to under the kitchen counter. The biggest blood delivery system was inside of the cellar. The sprayers were filled with the same formula as the windshield wiper pumps. Like the pump, the sprayers could not handle the thick consistency of the corn syrup. The blood delivery system in the cellar was composed of a five-gallon bucket filled with water and red food coloring that was sprayed with a modified garden hose connected to a submersible pump. The watered-down formula did not clog the sump pump and allowed a huge burst of blood to spew from the cellar in a geyser-like fashion. All of the other blood effects were handled by Rigdon and the costume department. Those effects consisted of ketchup bottles filled with a water, red food coloring, chocolate, and corn syrup formula, making a thicker, richer, and more realistic blood.

One other encounter that arose with the production was the seating configuration, specifically with the blood spatter zone seating. Originally, I planned to have one blood spatter zone on house right. In the second design, I planned two blood spatter zones, one on house left and one on house right. This would enable us to sell more tickets for the spatter

areas and give more opportunities for the audience members to be covered with blood. However, having the spatter zone on house left did not allow adequate room for patrons with wheelchairs, or other mobility equipment. This was solved by eliminating the house left blood area completely. In the bigger picture, because of the fewer number of spatter zone seats, this meant the audience members had to reserve their tickets in advance to be guaranteed seating there.

Production Meetings

Production meetings began at the beginning of the fall semester. These meetings happened every Monday that school was in session until the tech week of the show. During the meetings, the team was able to report progress on the build, pose questions to Kidd, and talk about issues that came up. For example, we determined that the set needed to be safe for barefooted actors. As the scenic team, we had to sweep with the broom, run a magnetic over the stage, and mop the floor both onstage and offstage before every rehearsal and performance to assure that actors were not going to cut themselves or have a screw lodge into their feet.

Aside from the production meetings, I attended all of the run throughs of the show in Altgeld Hall. The runs helped me see how they were using specific props and catch issues before the actors moved into the Moe Laboratory Theater space. One of the issues I foresaw was the bench seat sliding off the stage deck from actor manipulation. To counter this issue, I installed a kick strip along the edge of the stage that would prevent the seat from falling off the stage deck. Overall, the runs went well and there were few issues.

Production Phase

All of our hard work led us up to this time. But, before a show can open, the

production team and the actors must assemble all the elements of the show in technical rehearsals. Tech week is where everything gets merged: scenery, lights, sound, actors, costumes, music, and special effects. In earlier rehearsals, the actors do not have the luxury of having every aspect of tech. We generally have five days to refine the show through tech; however, with the complexity of this show we began rehearsals with blood a few days earlier. Including tech week, I attended eight nights of tech.

On Saturday, October 12, 2019, we began cue-to-cue rehearsals. Cue-to-cue is a time for the stage manager and other technicians to iron out all of the cues (lightings, sound, and special effects) for the show. When the team goes through cue-to-cue, we go at a speed below the actual show pace. The reason for this pace is to work from moment to moment to catch and fix any problems as they arise. The time can vary from show to show, but the stop and start process is the main reason that cue-to-cues tend to take a long time. Cue-to-cue was finished by the end of the day Saturday.

Now that the stage manager knows how to call the show, the crew has learned what they have to do, and the actors understand when the technical effects happen and how this affects their timing, we are able to do full tech runs. Tech runs give designers and other production members the opportunity to see what still needs to be done for the show in terms of paint touch ups, set dressing, properties notes and allow the director to adjust blocking if needed. It was during the tech runs that I looked at the masking and found spots where more was needed to conceal the actors backstage.

The most critical period of production are the technical rehearsals. As the scenic designer, they allow me to see what works and what does not work both for the actors and crew and, for me, visually in the design. I can fix complications for the performers and

heighten the scenic environment. For example, I arranged pieces of camouflage netting and erosion cloth around the theater space; the fabric helped in masking and gave the theater a more ominous feeling. Along with hanging fabric, I added set dressing like vintage board games that gave the cabin the impression that this used to be a place of fun. In “All the Men in my Life Keep Getting Killed by Candarian Demons” Annie mentions that her father loved playing board games, so I added the games as a reference to this line in the song as well as a poster of Sam Raimi’s movie *Drag Me to Hell*. This time is when we see the full realm in which the musical exists and what can be adjusted to make it better.

Finally, it’s the time that everybody has been waiting for: opening night! It is time for the audience to see all of the hard work the production team has completed. All of the design meetings, production meetings, research, nights of watching show runs, and exhausting technical rehearsals led us here. The last element a production needs to be complete is an audience to watch it (See Appendix I for Production Images) Then in a short two weeks, we closed *Evil Dead: The Musical* and had more knowledge than what we had in the beginning.

CHAPTER 4

REFLECTION

Evil Dead: The Musical has ended, the blood has been scrubbed off the theater floor, and the team is moving on to the next show. The final item on my list was to see how the audience reacted to the show and receive feedback about what I needed to improve for my next design. The three ways I received feedback and evaluated myself were from the Production Design Seminar class's post-mortem (a class taken by the graduate students that allows for exploration and preparing for a professional career in theater design and technology), my thesis committee post-production meeting, and personally stepping back to analyze my own growth and progress.

Production Design Seminar

Production Design Seminar is a class that consists of the graduate students in the design and production area that facilitates a post mortem following the closing of each show. During the post-mortem the students provide criticism about what went well, what did not go well, and what we could improve on in each department. As we progress through discussion of each category, the designer of the show is not allowed to speak until the others have given their critiques.

For *Evil Dead: The Musical* the students and faculty present provided feedback that was informative to each of us. There were many critiques regarding the construction of the cellar door. Throughout the technical rehearsals and show the cellar faced swelling from the blood delivery system soaking into the wood and hinges snapping due to impact and constant use. In the future, we learned that we should make a frame out of steel tubing to combat the deteriorating cellar frame and install new hinges when implementing an element that is

constantly operated.

Those in the room thought the blood systems achieved what was needed but still could have been improved on. In some of the blood delivery systems the blood was not very visible due to its thin transparent consistency (a water-based formula). The ways we can learn from this is to plan ahead and allot more time for experimentation on effects such as those applied in the show with the blood.

As a class we spoke about the frustrations with the build phase of the show. Those working in the shop experienced firsthand the chaotic nature of the *Evil Dead: The Musical*. They felt as if the shop was ill-prepared going into the build phase, and I agreed completely with the comments. Scenic units were built then sent back into the shop to have modifications or complete re-designs creating frustration amongst the workers. The overall morale of the shop sank to the lowest degree, and the attitude of the students became almost hostile. The mood and the frustrations of the shop could have been mediated through my communicating better with the director by asking more questions and presenting clearer drawings. If I had been more proactive in the beginning, then the technical director could have efficiently carried out his job ensuring a smooth building phase resulting in higher staff morale.

Overall, the class thought the entire design for scenic, costumes, properties, and lighting meshed into the same universe. In the past, shows at SIU have had a distinct line of where certain areas lacked communication ending in realistic setting with colorful comedic costumes. The class all thought even with facing the above adversities that the show was enjoyed by the audience and was therefore successful.

Thesis Committee Meeting

As part of our thesis and qualifier requirements, we are required to meet with our

thesis committee members within two weeks following the close of our show. The committee consists of our area specific professor, an assigned faculty member, and one chosen by the student. My thesis committee changed due to my area professor accepting a new job and another being on sabbatical for the semester. In gathering my committee members, I had to find two new people. The faculty that are now on my committee are Wendi Zea, Dr. Anne Fletcher, and Mark Varns. Dr. Ron Naversen joined the meeting to help with feedback.

On October 21, 2019, I arranged for my committee members to meet in the Observation Room to discuss my set design and execution for *Evil Dead: The Musical*.

I gave my own thoughts regarding how the show went and showed production photographs of the show that I had personally taken. I explained about the lack of communication between the production team. I could have avoided some of the conflict if had I developed more and clearer drawings (i.e, the car, talking moose head, and small footbridge), been more prepared in the design phase to diffuse confusion in the build phase, and not let these mishaps dictate my emotions and attitude. The photos helped me demonstrate the parts that I thought went well and those that did not go so well.

An example of what I thought was not successful was the sealing of the stage deck. The paint crew sealed the floor three times. The two issues that came as a result of the sealing was that the floor was not slick enough for Ash to slide on during his duel with his severed hand, and it being too slippery when wet with blood, resulting in an injured actor. One of the elements that I believe was successful was the moose head that hung on the chimney of the fireplace. The actors were able to operate it easily, and it stayed intact through technical rehearsals and the show. Below is an image demonstrating what the final design looked like under stage lighting.



Figure 4.1 Image of Final Product of the Design

Finally, to conclude my defense to the committee, I confessed the problems that I could have navigated better: the most important being that I could have given Kidd more renderings and a more detailed design package to avoid confusion and prevent units from being built twice. But in my defense, I learned how to work with a very hands-on director, how I could better prepare myself for future designs, and not let a show emotionally affect me regardless of what problems are thrown at me.

As mentioned in Chapter One, when beginning my proposal for *Evil Dead: The Musical*, I constructed a list of production goals for myself. These were important to reiterate to my committee to remind them of my goals and how to assist them in evaluating my work. The goals for the production, again, were as follows:

1. To improve my presentation skills to the design team and those associated with the production. This is in correlation to my communication between the team as well.
2. To further my competence with drafting a show. As part of the responsibilities

of the scene designer, I need to give my technical director plates with accurate dimensions of units, correct sizes and shapes, and what materials I want used for building the show. I need proper notations to inform the Technical Director if anything is stood on, needs to be moved by actors, and to keep the build within the design's intent. I learned to draft in the AutoCAD program when I joined the SIUC Theater Department and knew that I needed to get better in order to communicate more effectively.

3. To monitor and implement smooth scene shop operations. Since I was in the shop for the show, I wanted to make sure I split my time between the teams that needed help and prevent the show from being thrown into crisis mode.
4. To expand my design process. This goal was initially not included in my proposal, but I found it critical to improve my future process.

I thought that I achieved three out of four of my goals for my production. In response to goal one, I felt like I improved my presentation skills throughout the process. When I say presentation skills, I am referring to feeling more relaxed with orally presenting my ideas and helping people to understand my design concepts through means of renderings and CAD drawings. I was not as nervous as I used to be and started to be confident enough in my designs that I was proud to present them. If one is proud of what one has made it makes it easier to present. As I progressed, I was able to communicate better through different media as listed above.

I drew from an educational psychology course in my past that covered people's different learning styles. Having the knowledge from this course helped me examine what directors respond to and which learning style best suits them. For example, the director for

Evil Dead: Musical is very kinesthetic. When given a model, the director has an enhanced idea of how the set sits in the space and how he is able to plan blocking for the actors. For other directors, I am better able to verbally discuss how the design will flow and function.

Regarding goal two, I have grown exponentially since starting at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. I arrived here having zero experience using any CAD programs. Through the assistance of the Drafting for Theater class, I learned how to use Auto CAD and Vectorworks. I drafted my qualifier *Julius Caesar* and then drafted *Evil Dead: The Musical* using the computer-aided design program Vectorworks for all my design plates. The improvement from one project to the next was noticeable. I went from not knowing how to draft at all to drafting a complete package for a design. My *Julius Caesar* design plates lacked important dimensions, specific plates such as a section view, and notations were not thorough, causing the technical director to contact me frequently with questions. In order to better my competence in drafting, I took the advanced section of the Drafting for Theater class over the fall semester. My final assignment was to take my initial design package from *Evil Dead: The Musical* and apply my newly acquired knowledge to make a higher quality design package (See Appendix E for Revised Design Plates).

I did my best to achieve goal three. Due to the low numbers of workers in the shop, I had to triage multiple areas to get tasks accomplished. In the end, everything was completed to the standard that I wanted. The paint team was able to get each surface completed, the props were constructed to withstand an active show, and the scenery was installed before the technical rehearsals started, allowing the lighting designer enough time to properly light the scenery.

With regard to goal four, while not a pre-determined goal in the proposal, I desired to

improve my overall design process. As to obtaining the goal, I felt that this was a major flaw, and I did not succeed in this achievement. Yes, I have learned many things about myself as a designer, but I still have ample room to learn and grow as an artist. I saw many flaws within my design process of *Evil Dead: The Musical*, but I do not look at them as a failure as a designer. I look at them as opportunities to acknowledge where I need to improve. During the design process, I did not produce drawings with the correct dimensions and notations. Due to the design phase being jumbled, I did not have a fluid thought process and was not communicating with my team as well as I should have been. When there was a change in the walls, I neglected to relay the information to the lighting designer, and I did not plan out the location of the masking backstage. If had taken better precautions in the beginning and thought more methodically, the design process could have been more successful. There were a few highlights that made the process redeemable. I did complete a rendering of the set that I displayed for the director, and I sent updates to the director as items were being completed in the shop.

After I communicated my thoughts and feelings about *Evil Dead: The Musical*, the committee was given the chance to comment on how the show went and where they thought I could improve myself. A few concerns and critiques that were given were about my design process, thinking of technical aspects ahead of time to avoid problems later, and the disconnection between the project and my thesis proposal. I had created a proposal that helped me break down all of the scenes, formulate possible configurations of the set, and list the limitations to theater space along with the director's "musts." As I switched into the design phase and beyond, I did not look back at the information I gathered. If I had referenced my proposal, I would have been more prepared and not succumbed to stress as all of the technical

aspects of the show needed to come together.

It was explained that my design process was not thought through leaving me in predicaments that could have been avoided. I did not produce adequate drafting and renderings that communicated my design ideas and if had spent more time making them, I might have had a design by the original due date. I did not think the changes to the design through to their best potential, and I left questions about where the airport and the woods scenes would occur. The location of the airport was solved by the director blocking the scene in an unused neutral area of the stage and the lighting designer isolating light to only that area.

Personal Evaluation

After the show ended and even while I am writing, I am continuously looking back at my experience with *Evil Dead: The Musical*. After retaining information from Production Design Seminar, my thesis committee, and experience from designing *Musical of Musicals: The Musical*, I now feel that I have grown as a designer and discovered other facets to scene design.

As per the results of my thesis committee, I needed to report back to them after the design process for *Musical of Musicals* was complete. At this meeting, I presented materials from the design process and explained what I had done differently from *Evil Dead: The Musical*. I exhibited my research/inspiration for the show that contained images from many of the musicals referenced in the show. I pointed out the key features of each composer: for example, Jerry Herman has the classic scene of the leading lady walking down a large staircase making her grand entrance.

I then displayed thumbnails of each scene created with an eraser rendering technique Dr. Naversen had demonstrated in Production Design Seminar during the fall semester. In

using this technique, I gained a new quick way to convey my ideas for designs. I created eraser rendering for all five scenes of the show then arranged a meeting with the director Assistant Professor, Musical Theater/ Dance, Darryl Kent Clark. I explained how the show would flow and how it would work with the styles of dance for each section. Clark loved the design and wanted to move forward with the concept.

At the following meeting, I walked through the design with the team while also showing an alternative design that could be used if the first design was not approved. Nate Mohlman (Technical Director) received design plates with notations and accurate dimensions for each unit. Once the design was approved, I made a model using 3D printing with traditional modeling techniques and paint treatments for each scenic unit. Finally, I gave Mohlman a fully finished design packet and painted elevations for the paint charge. After returning from winter break, the shop started the build process.

During *Musical of Musicals: The Musical*, I started with a clean slate and delved into a process that allowed time for me dig deeper into the purpose of the show and actually find my own design process. I learned from *Musical of Musicals: The Musical* to engage with my director and be proactive from the beginning. By taking precautions early on, I was able to prevent confusion and frustration.

Aside from engaging with the director and being proactive in solving problems, I integrated myself more with my fellow designers. The costume designer, Jessica Rigdon, and I took a trip to Lowes where we pulled paint chip cards for each scene of the show allowing us to compare the colors of the costumes and the set. This insured that our color schemes were not going to clash, or that the costumes would not blend into the scenery. As before, I had Mark Varns for my Lighting Designer, and, learning from past mistakes, I communicated

with him more closely. Anytime there was a color change, platform heights were adjusted, or scheduling was altered, I reported to Varns to inform him. My relationship with Mohlman was different from that of *Evil Dead: The Musical*. Mohlman and I would meet in the evenings in our office or in our homes to discuss and finalize details of the design. Whenever he or I had a question, we contacted each other to assure that we had everything covered. From *Evil Dead: The Musical* to *Musical of Musicals: The Musical*, I became more immersed with conversing with my teammates. My overall conveyance of information between all members of the team increased and limited misunderstandings.

After speaking of the process of *Musical of Musicals: The Musical* to my thesis committee, they recognized the evolution in my design process and saw I had fulfilled what they yearned for me to understand. Not only they, but I had an overwhelming amount of confidence in myself again, and I felt that I progressed as a designer. I went from having a difficult process with an array of complications to a process that is more refined and precise.

After thinking through everything, I can see that it was pointless for me to let a show break me down emotionally. There will undoubtedly be more times in the professional world where a show will be difficult, but I must let the attitudes of others and comments roll off my back, not take them personally, and move forward with the design. In the future, I will take a step back and think about where the train derailed. By stopping and analyzing, I can better determine the issues and how I can correct the situation.

The information from my thesis committee, my peers in Production Design Seminar, and the process of *Musical of Musicals: The Musical* has given me a world of ideas and lessons to think about as I grow as an artist. Overall, after *Musical of Musicals: The Musical*, my committee was pleased with my growth and understanding of developing a good process.

Through all the blood, sweat, and laughter, I will always remember *Evil Dead: The Musical*, and it will always have a special place in my heart. If I were asked to do the show again, I would gladly accept and apply what I have learned in the process to make it a better and bloodier experience. I can officially say I am a true “Deadite”.

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APPENDIX A

DEPARTMENT OF THEATER COLLABORATION GUIDELINES

SIU DEPARTMENT OF THEATER COLLABORATION GUIDELINES 2019/2020								
		Director	Scenery	Tech. Direction	Costumes	Lighting	Sound	Dramaturg
Week 1	Design Meeting 1	Shares production concept with design team. Shares reactions to design team's presentations	Scene Breakdown, Play Analysis, Initial Impression Images	Production Calendar, Scene Breakdown	Inspiration Board, Character and Play Analysis	Scene Breakdown, Play Analysis, Impression Images	Scene Breakdown, Analysis, Impression Images or Sounds/ inspiration board	Share initial thoughts on production and any questions regarding the director's concept. Preliminary talking points based on participants' needs from discussion.
<i>For Qualifying and Thesis projects, written proposals should be completed and approved prior to Design Meeting 1</i>								
Week 2	Design Meeting 2	Respond to and facilitate discussion among designers. Set tasks for next meeting & set individual designer/ playwright/ dramaturge mtgs as needed. Present info based on tasks from previous meeting.	Research Images, Preliminary Sketches	Observe, provide technical advice as needed or requested	Research and Color Images, Costume Plot, Thumbnail Sketches	Research and Mood Images	Research/Mood Images or sounds List of sound effects from text	Information in response to requests from team and follow-up material based on Director's Vision & Concept; Post info requested on Box; Meet with Director or Designers as needed
Week 3	Design Meeting 3	Same as above	Preliminary ground plan, scene sketches and/or white model	Observe, provide technical advice as needed or requested	Color Roughs and Swatches	Sketches and/or diagrams relevant to color & direction of light & possible special effects	Examples-sound/music: How can/will sound help tell story	Gather materials in response to requests; Bring ideas, questions, re: Pre-Show Lecture, Lobby Display, etc. Post info requested on Box
Week 4	No collective design meetings this week. Meetings between Director and individual Designer or between various areas as needed							
Week 5	Design Meeting 4	Same as above	Revisions from previous week with in-scale drawings with sufficient detail for a preliminary bid	Preliminary scenic Bid (Material & Labor). Preliminary build schedule.	Revised Color Roughs and Swatches	Discuss possible lighting design approaches, and how they would interact with scenic ideas	Location Sound Effects & special needs, Speaker Placement ideas, Intermission music/themes	Be working on Glossary and Resource Packet; Ascertain needs for program (Director's Notes, etc.); Meet with Director or Designers as needed; Post info requested on Box
Week 6	No collective design meetings this week. Meetings between Director and individual Designer or between various areas as needed							
Week 7	Design Meeting 5	Tentative Master Rehearsal Plan	Design Due. GP, Section, Elevations and all other materials necessary for bid confirmation and construction Drafting	Final scenic Bid (Material & Labor). Updated build schedule.	Designs Due (final renderings & swatches)	Sketches and/or diagrams relevant to color & direction of light as related to scenic materials provided at previous meeting	Preliminary Sound Plot Due Preliminary Sound Budget	Bring questions re: Resource Packet; Continue to respond to production team needs
Weeks 8 & 9	Production Prep	Revised Master Rehearsal Plan	Complete detailed Model and/or renderings and all paint elevations	Complete working drawings and build schedule	Paperwork to Shop	Light plot due	Final Sound Plot Due, Speaker Plot Due Final Sound Budget	Resource Packet DUE when cast receives script; Continue to respond throughout process; Student Matinee material (if applicable DUE one month before production); Lobby Display DUE by Tech Weekend
Build/Rehearsals begin								
<p>Prior to Design meetings the Director and Playwright (if available) will have met and agreed on creative interpretation & how to communicate with each other during these meetings. Playwrights may attend design and later production meetings to be informed to what is developing, offer suggestions and answer questions as agreed above. Director and Playwright will discuss in private any problematic issues that arise during meetings.</p>								

APPENDIX B

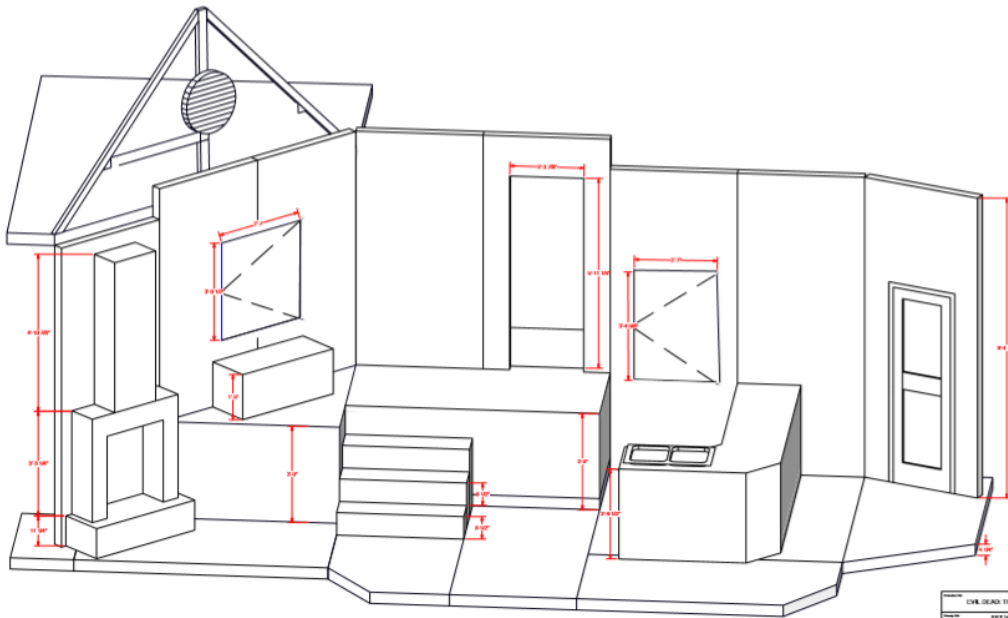
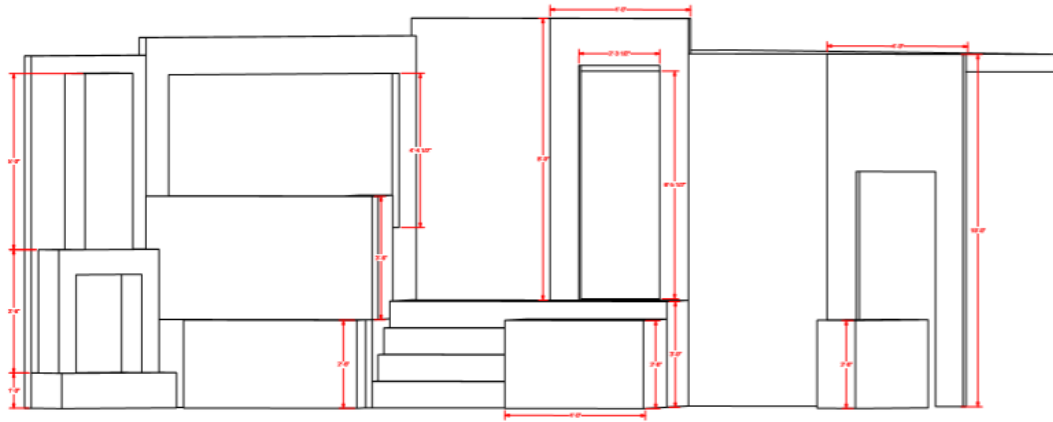
PROPERTIES LIST

EVIL DEAD PROPS LIST												
PURPLE: CONSUMABLE												
PINK: COSTUME CROSSOVER												
RED: CUT												
BLUE: IMPORTANT CHANGE OR NOTE												
#	ACT/SCENE	PG	QTY	ITEM	TYPE	CHARACTER	REH	RENT	BUY	PULL	MAKE	Special Notes
1	1.1	7	1	Large Necronomicon	Scenic Item	All	X				X	This will probably be a crossover with scenic to cut the book out on the CNC.
2	1.1	7	1	Car	Scenic Item	All	X				X	This will probably be a crossover with scenic to cut the car shape out on the CNC.
3	1.1	8	5	Luggage	Hand Props	All	X			X		Characters are on spring break and probably need bags for the trip. Maybe athletic bags. Typical college student luggage.
4	1.2	12	1	Book	Hand Props	Cheryl	X		X			Bruce Campbell's book "If Chins Could Kill".
5	1.2	13	8	Glasses	Hand Props	All	X			X		The characters cheer with drinks. Might be able to use red solo cups since they are college students.
6	1.2	14	1	Axe	Hand Props	Scott	X				X	Scott pulls item from the cellar. Refer to movie for looks.
7	1.2	14	1	Gun	Hand Props	Scott	X	X				We may be able to rent the gun. But there is a specific type of rifle. Scott pulls item from cellar.
8	1.2	14	2	Dagger	Hand Props	Scott	X				X	This has specific look. Refer to film. Scott pulls item from cellar. One being the real dagger and one a trick dagger to stab Jake.
9	1.2	14	1	Necronomicon	Hand Props	Ash	X				X	Specific look of book. Refer to film. Ash pulls item from cellar.
10	1.2	15	1	Tape Recorder	Hand Props	Scott	X			X		Scott pulls item from the cellar. Kidd may want this to actually work?
11	1.3	17	1	Jewelry Box	Hand Props	Linda	X			X		This is what Ash would buy the necklace in. The little cardboard box.
12	1.3	17	1	Necklace	Costume Crossover	Linda						Costumes will most likely take care of this prop since Linda wears it throughout the show.

13	1.5	22	1	Brownies	Consumables	All			X			Consumables. Maybe put them in a metal pan like they baked them at the cabin.
14	1.5	23	1	Caution Tape	Set Dressing					X		Believe we have caution tape
15	1.6	25	1	Luggage	Suitcase	Annie	X			X		Annie has just arrived from Cairo
16	1.6	25	1	Pages from Necronomicon	Hand Props	Annie	X				X	Annie has missing pages from Necronomicon.
17	1.7	27	1	Card game	Hand Props	Linda	X			X		
18	1.7	29	1	Blanket	Hand Props	Ash & Cheryl	X			X		Cheryl is covered up with this after she passes out during <i>Look Who's Evil Now</i>
19	1.7	30	3	Rigged Pencil	Hand Props	Cheryl	X				X	The pencil part will probably be part of props while the other part being costumes. Linda is stabbed in the ankle with pencil. Rig a pencil with a strong magnet. Make a few just in case of damage or lost.
20	1.7	31	1	Chain for Cellar	Set Dressing	Ash & Scott	X			X		This should be one continuous chain so it can go through each hole on the cellar. Will get dimensions when the cellar is drafted.
21	1.7	32	2	Gun	Hand Props	Ash	X	X			X	There is two guns. One is for inside the cabin and there is a specific look for the gun. Will give reference images. The other gun is for the final scene at S-Mart. This will have a huge price tag hanging off of it.
22	1.8	37	1	Moose Head	Set Dressing/Puppet		X				X	We might be able to purchase a moose head form used for taxidermy then add our own fur and horns. This is a puppet and talks and bites during <i>Join Us</i> . Would like red glowing eyes as well.
23	1.8	39	1	Beaver	Set Dressing		X				X	This should look as real as possible. He supposed to spring to life and move around.

24	1.8	39	2?	Chainsaw	Hand Prop/Costume X	Ash	X				X	Perhaps have one without hand attachment and then one with the hand attachment. This will need to operate and sound like a chainsaw and costumes will need to be updated.
25	1.9	40	1	match	Hand Props	Jake	X				X	This probably won't be a real match. Ask lighting to help make a match like used for Pippin and Gem of the Ocean.
26	1.9	41	1	Wallet	Costume Crossover	Ed	X			X		Check with costumes. They usually have the wallets.
27	1.9	41	1	Money	Hand Prop	Ed	X			X		Money for inside wallet?
28	1.10	43	1	Roll of Duct Tape	Hand Prop	Ash	X		X			For Ash when he is duct taping his stump
29	1.10	43	1	Severed Hand	Hand Prop	Ash	X				X	Will be half actor and half prop rigging. Look at Addams Family smugmug.
30	1.10	45	1	Guts	Costume Crossover	Scott	X				X	Check with costumes to see if they will handle this or you make the guts and intestines.
31	1.10	47	1	Linda Mannequin Head	Hand Prop	Ash & Linda	X				X	This does not to look accurate to the actor's head. Make it cheesy with chainsaw path.
32	2.1	52	1	Chain for door	Hand Prop	Annie	X			X		Chain is for the entrance door.
33	2.2	57	1	Cane	Hand Prop	Ed	X			X		This is like the classic Broadway cane that goes with a top hat.
34	2.2	57	1	Top Hat	Costume Crossover	Ed	X					Ask costumes for this costume piece.
35	2.3	59	1	Flashlight	Hand Prop	Knowby	X			X		Has to actually work. Make sure the lens is frosted so its not overly bright.
36	2.7	72	1	Large rolling Shark	Set Dressing		X				X	The shark is jumped over during "Do the Necronomicon". Kidd wants to add this for a gag with Henry Winkler.
37	2.8	80	1	Shopping Cart	Set Dressing	Customer	X			X		
38	2.8	80	1	Fake Baby	Hand Prop	Customer	X			X		
39												
40												
41												

APPENDIX C
DESIGN SKETCHES



CIVIL DEAD THE MUSICAL	
SET VIEW	
Scale	1/8" = 1'-0"
Author	J. H. H. H.
Designer	J. H. H.
Client	SN-2
Date	1/1/00



CIVIL DEAD THE MUSICAL	
SET VIEW	
DATE	
SCALE	1/8" = 1'-0"
PROJECT	2024
DESIGNER	1
DATE	

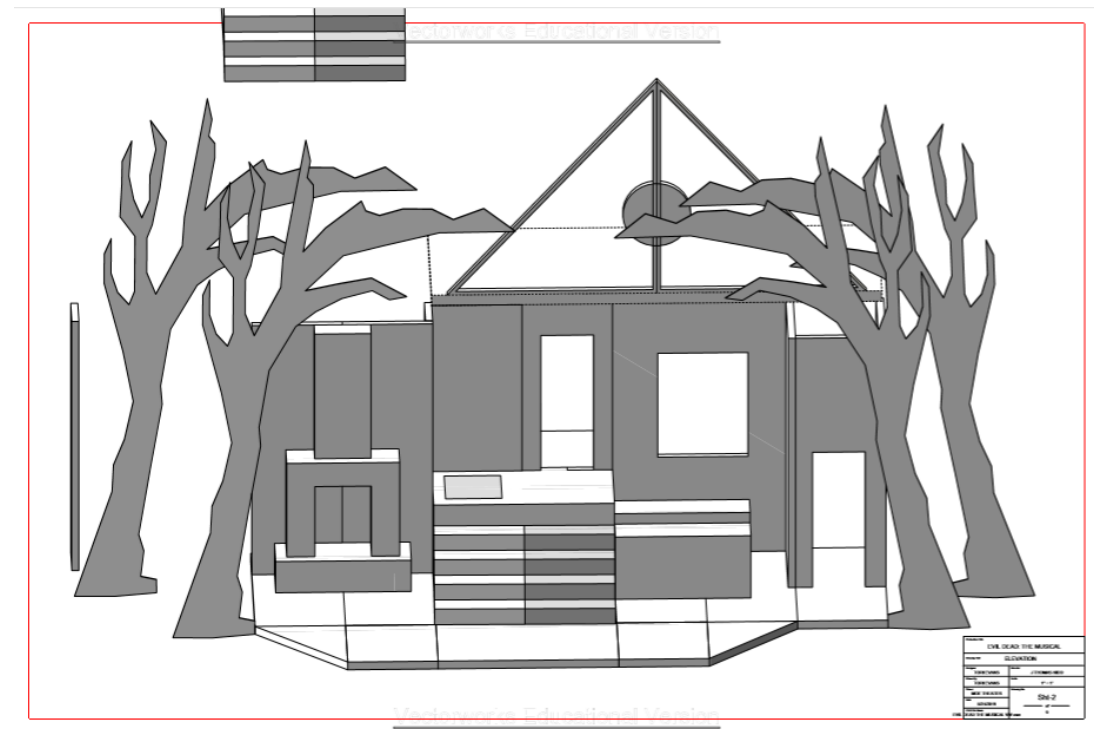
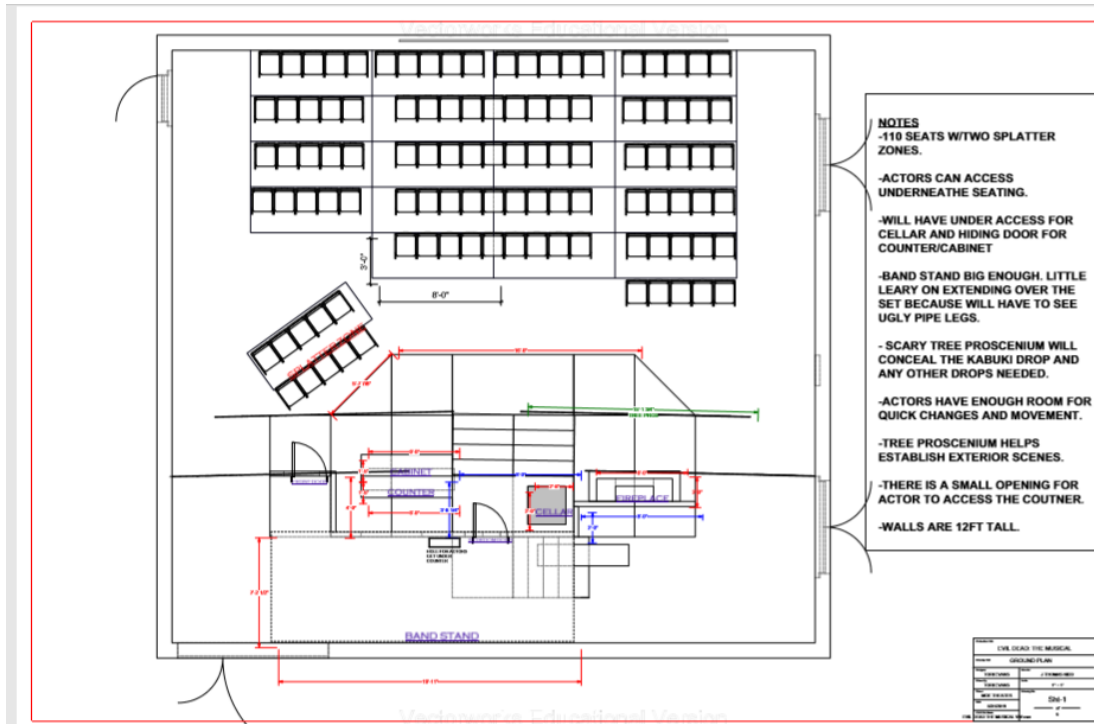
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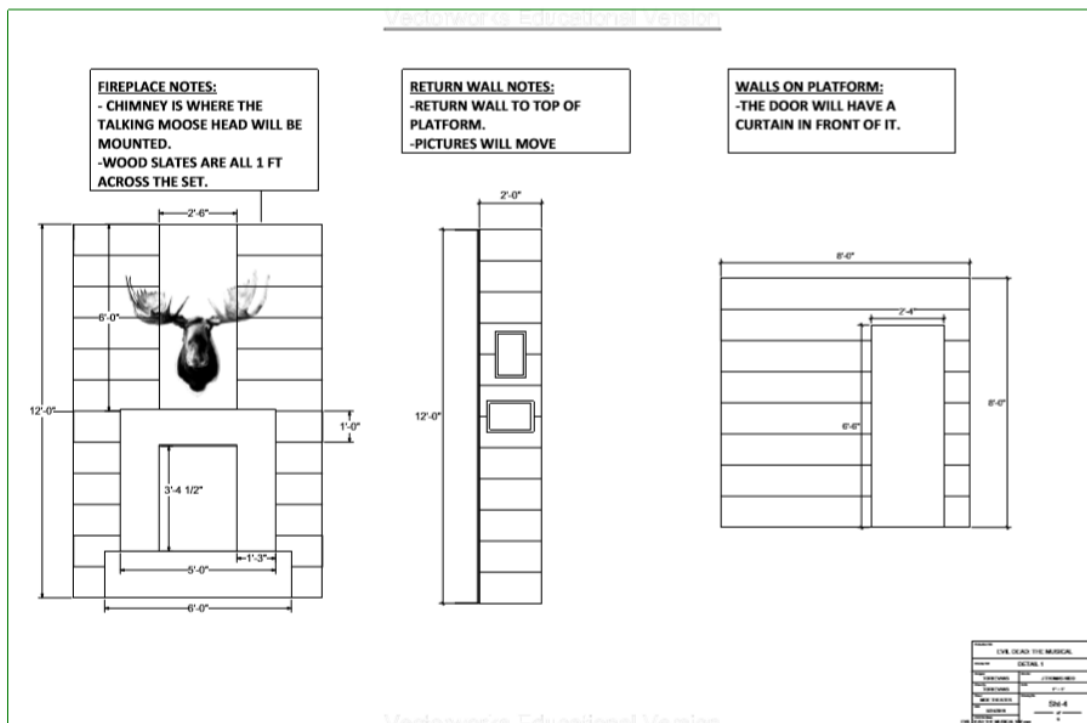
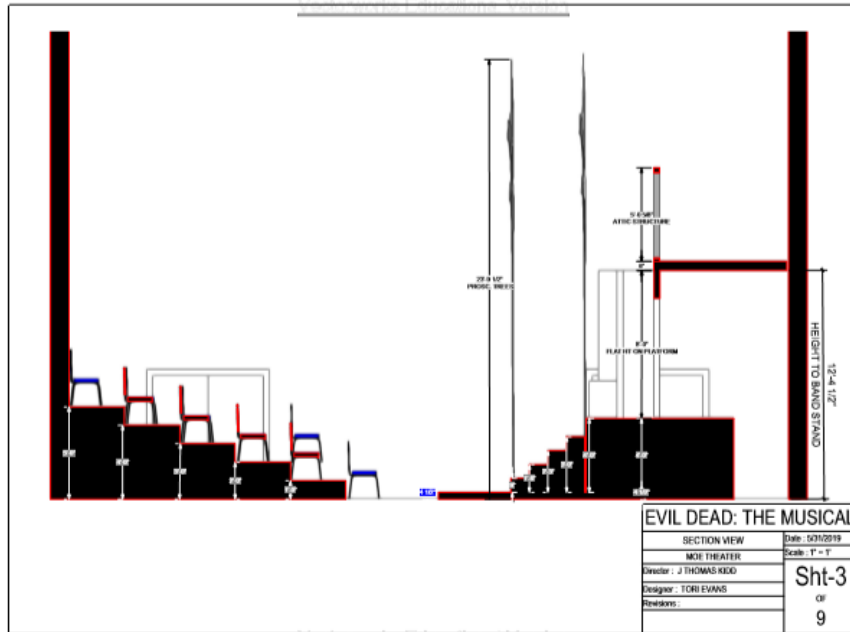


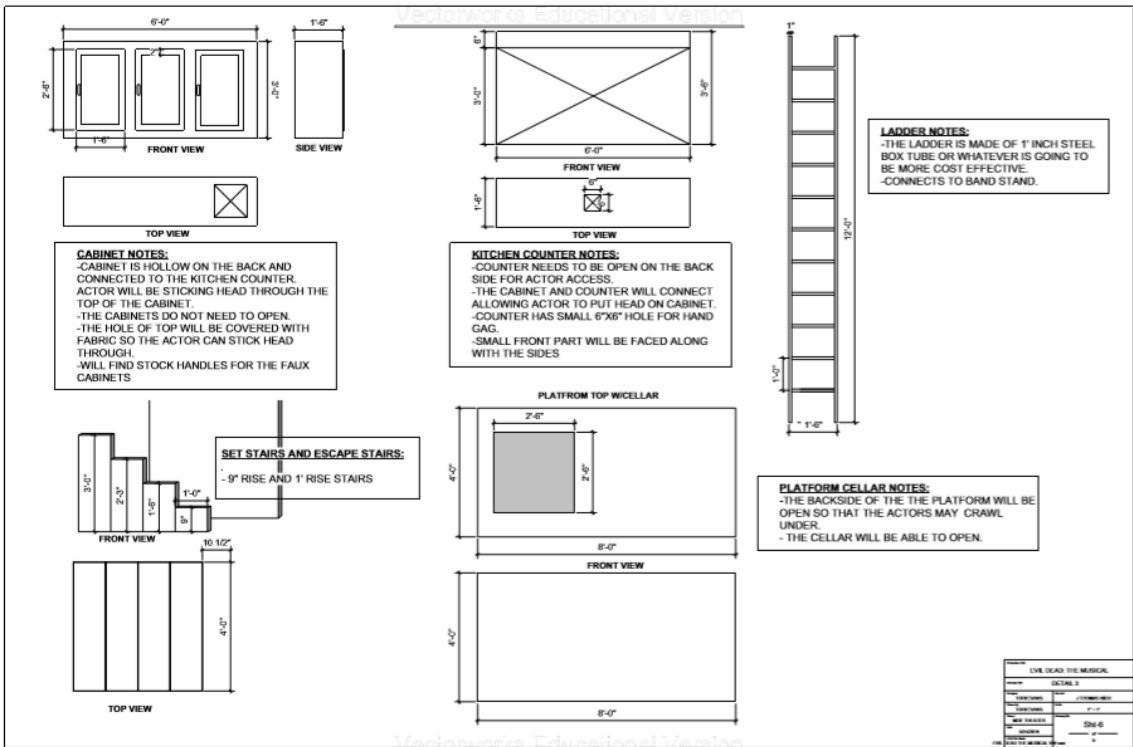
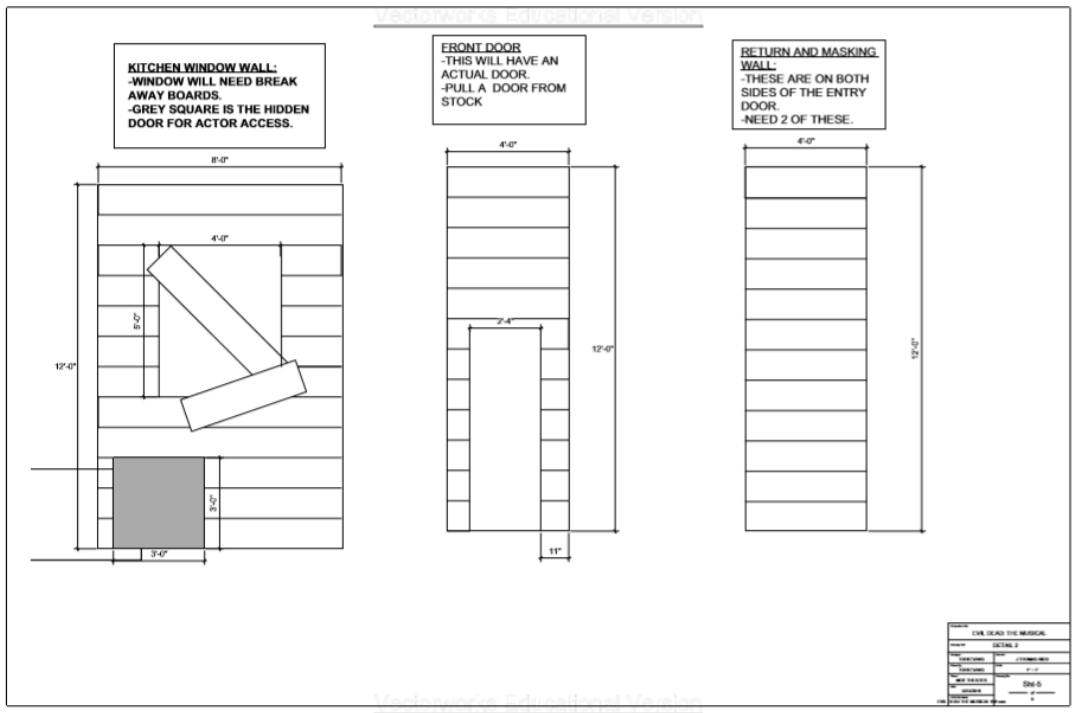
CIVIL DEAD THE MUSICAL	
SET VIEW	
DATE	
SCALE	1/8" = 1'-0"
PROJECT	2024
DESIGNER	1
DATE	

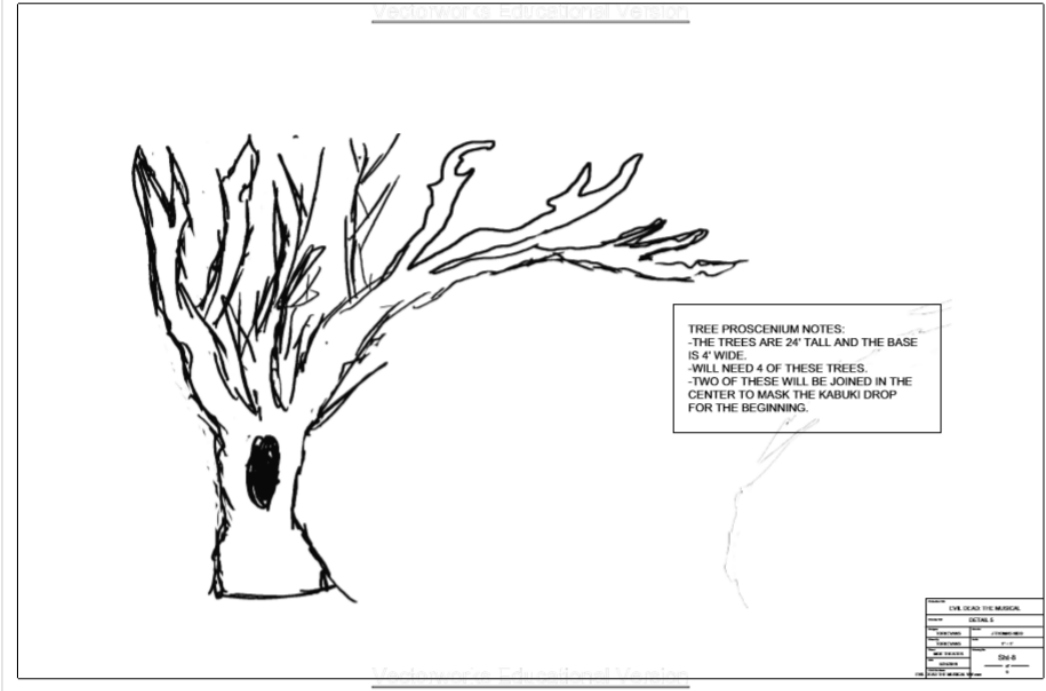
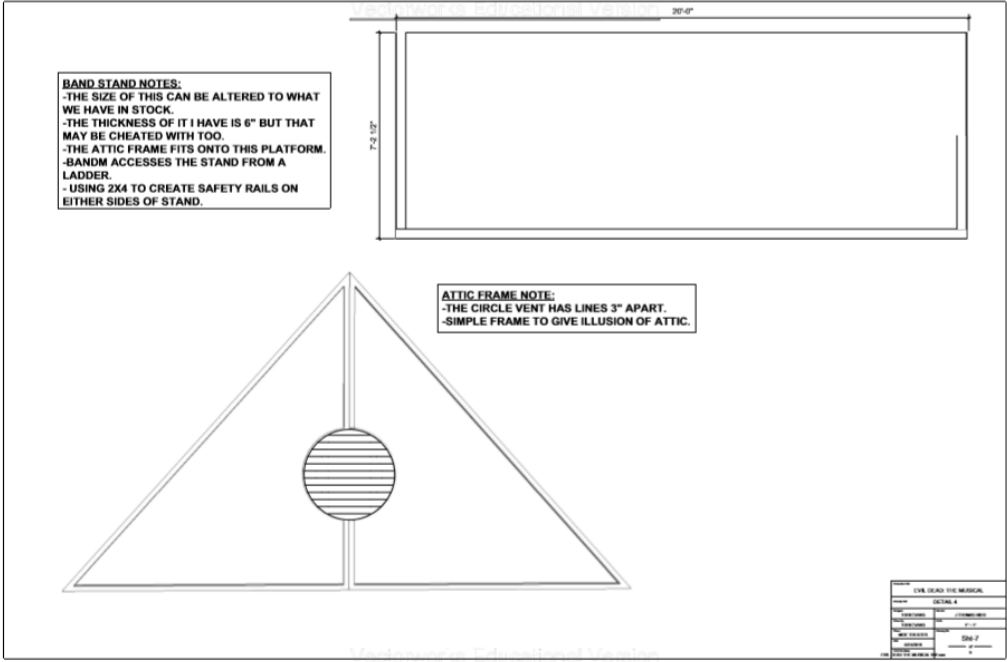
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APPENDIX D
FINAL DESIGN PLATES



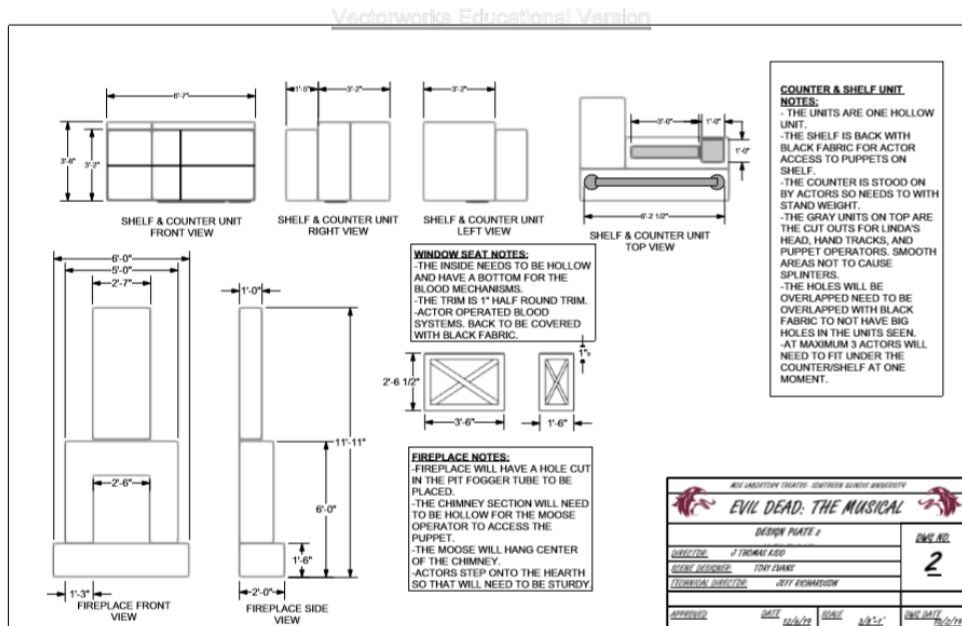
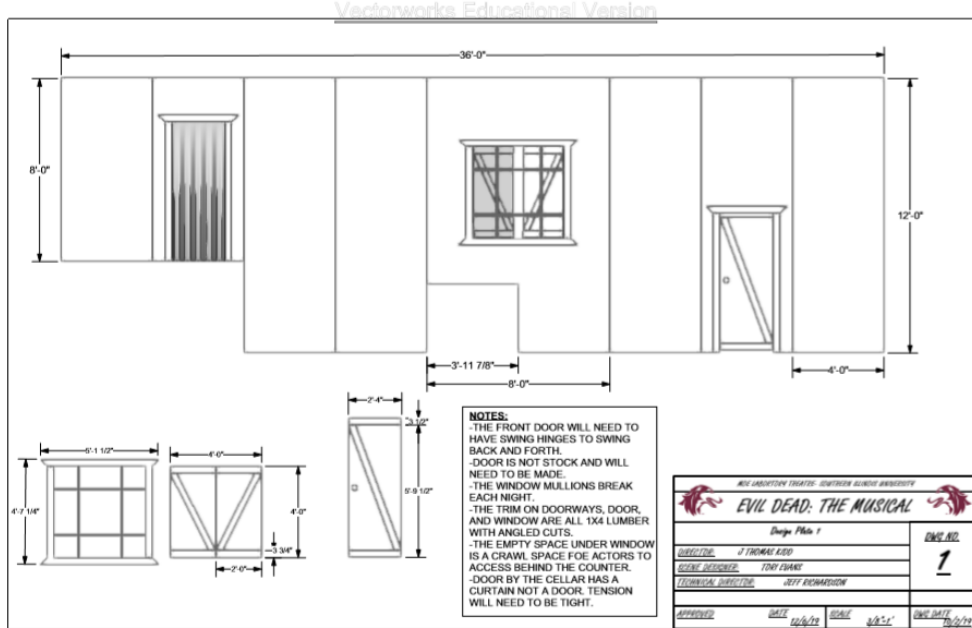


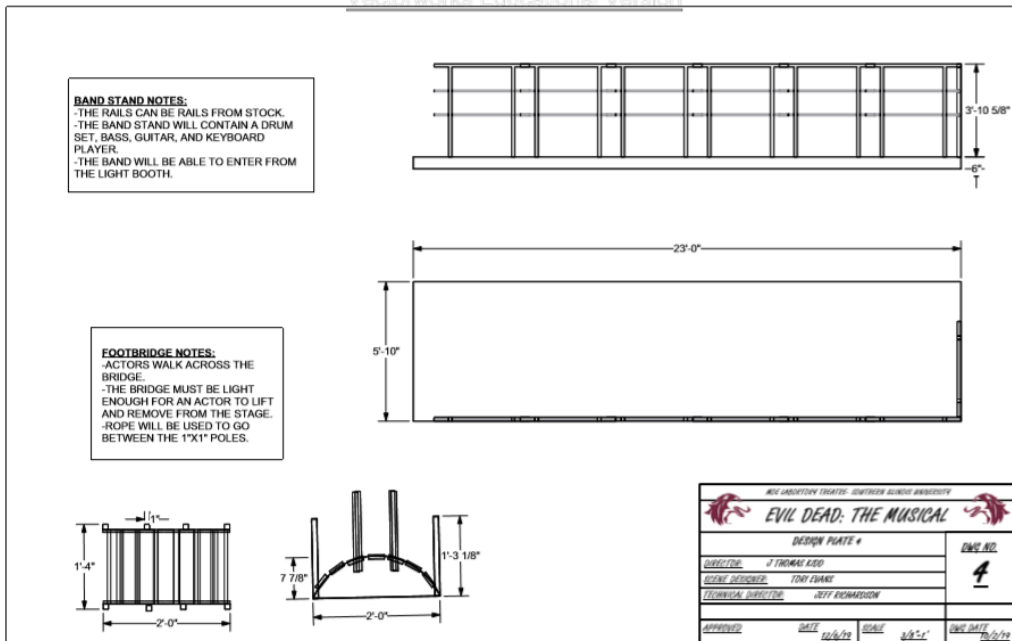
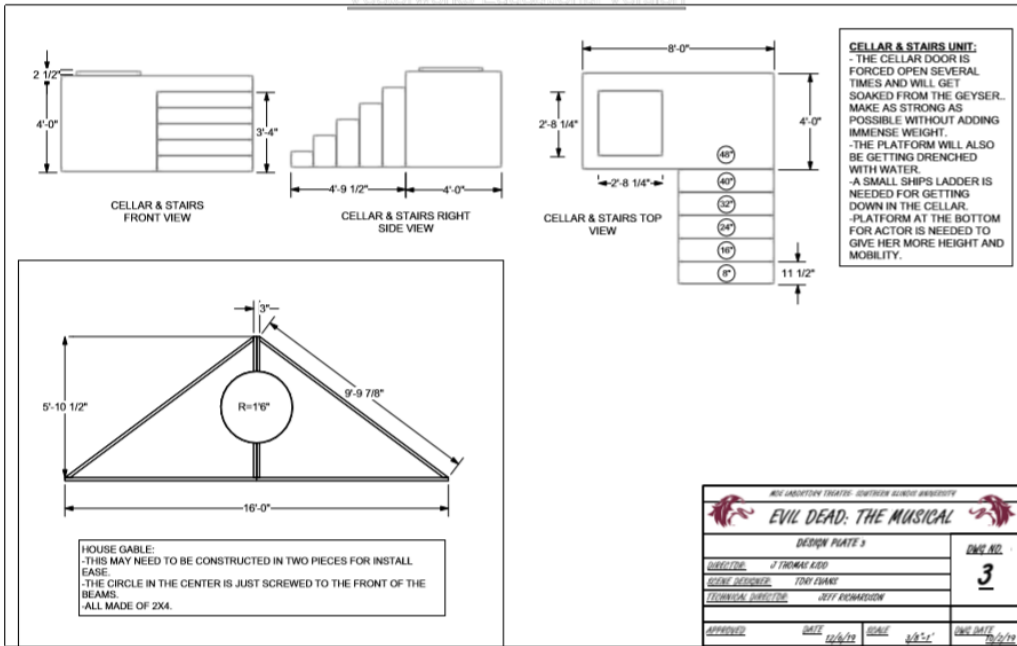




APPENDIX E

REVISED DESIGN PLATES





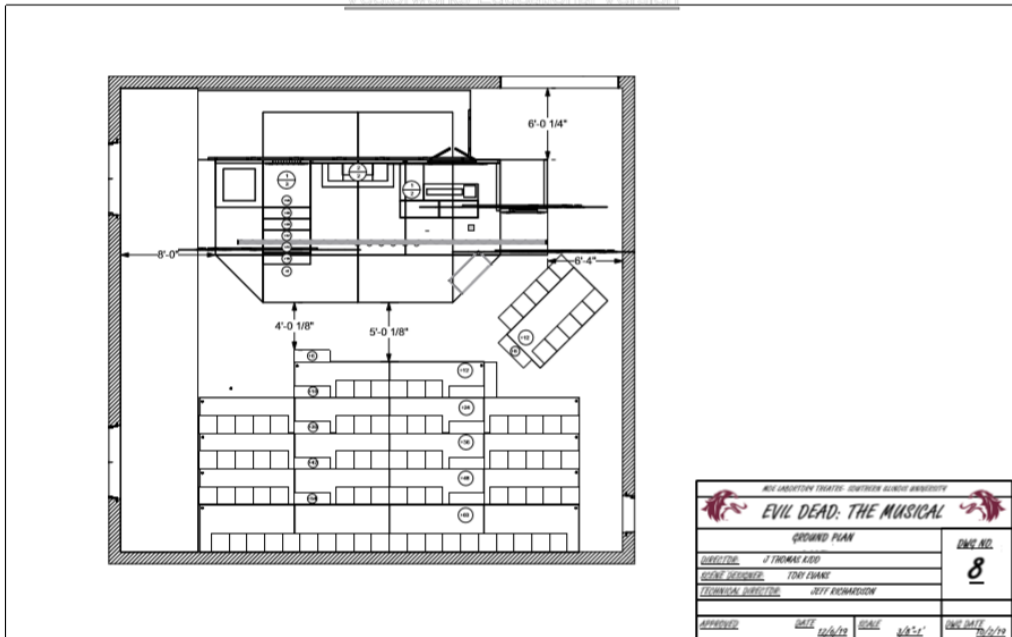
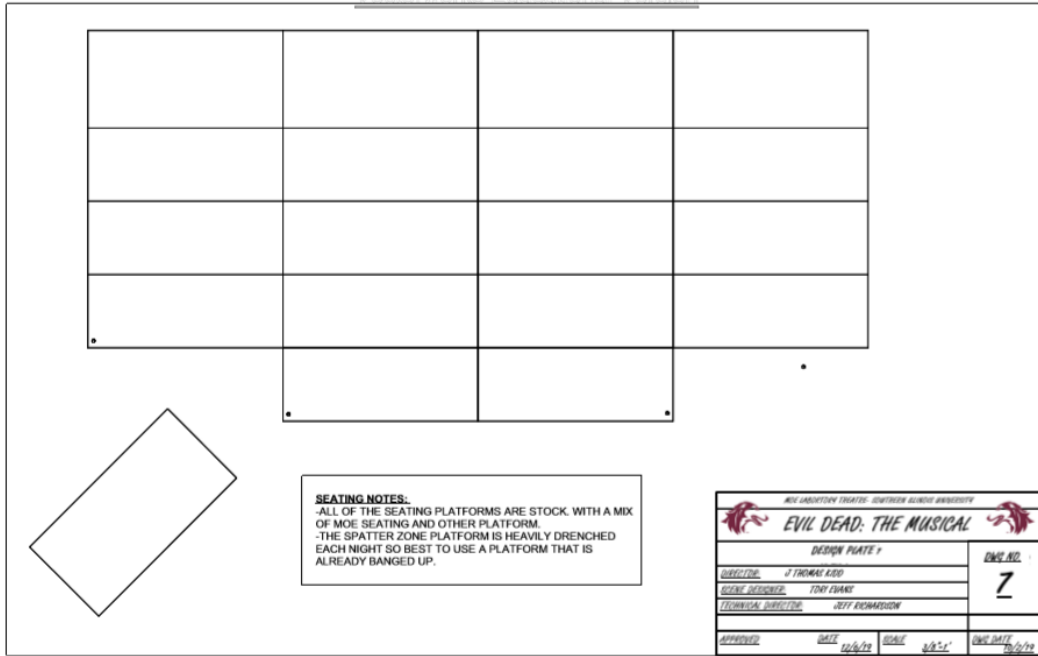
TREE NOTES:
 - NEED 3 OF THESE. 1 IN THIS ORIENTATION AND 2 MIRRORRED OF THIS ONE.
 - CAMO NETTING AND EROSION CLOTH WILL BE ADDED TO THE TREES TO HELP IMMERSE INTO THE ENVIRONMENT.
 - 2D TREES WITH PAINT ON THE FRONT.

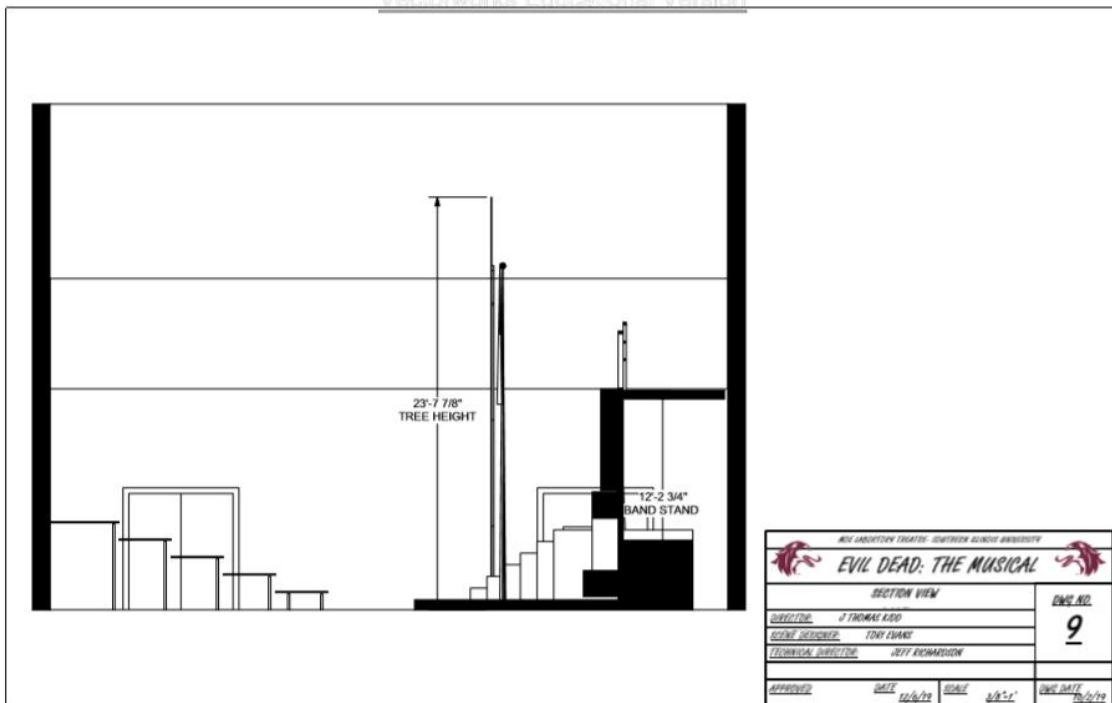
CAR NOTES:
 - THE WILL BE MADE IN TWO PIECES AND OUT OF TWO SHEETS OF LUGAOL.
 - HANDLES WILL BE ATTACHED TO THE BACK FOR THE ACTORS TO USE.
 - THE WINDOWS ARE CUT OUT.
 - THE CAR WILL NEED A FRAME TO PREVENT THE CAR FROM SNAPPING IN PLACES THAT ARE SMALL.

<small>WISCONSIN THEATRE - UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN</small>				
EVIL DEAD: THE MUSICAL				
DESIGN PLATE 5				PAGE NO.
DIRECTOR: J THOMAS EDD				5
SCENE DESIGNER: TOM FRANK				
TECHNICAL DIRECTOR: JEFF RICHARDSON				
APPROVED	DATE	SCALE	DATE	
	12/6/19	1/8"=1'	12/9/19	

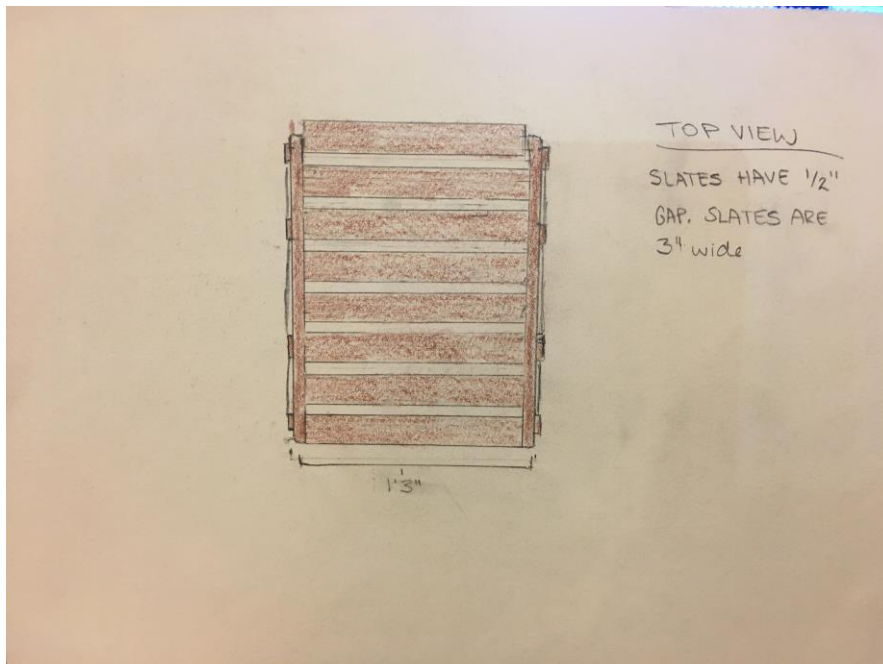
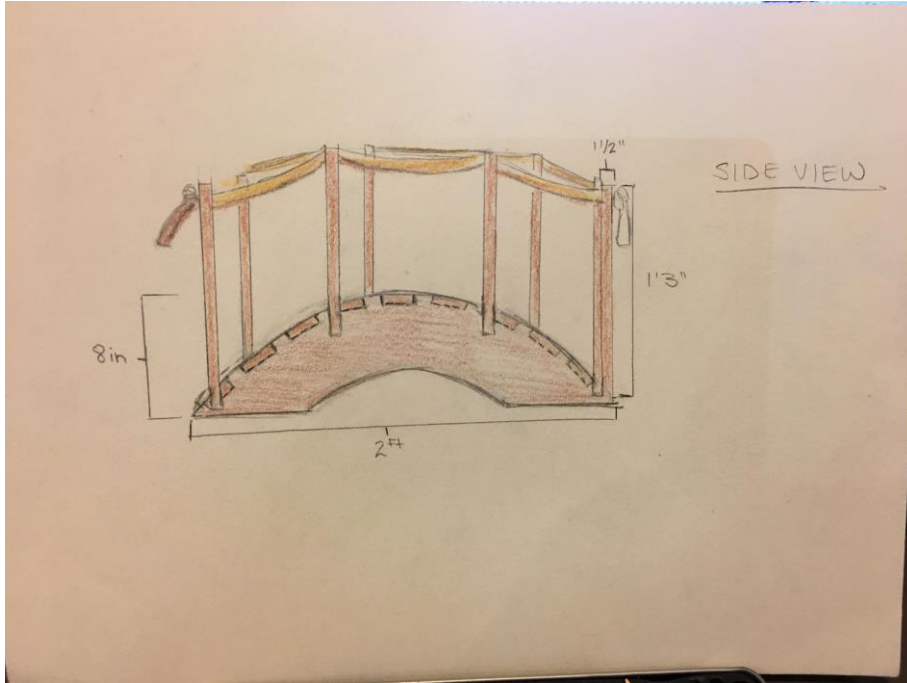
STAGE DECK NOTES:
 -DECK WILL BE GETTING BLOOD AND WATER ALL OVER EVERY NIGHT.
 -FLOORS HEAVILY SEALED TO PREVENT DECAY.
 - ALL IS STOCK STEEL DECKING.

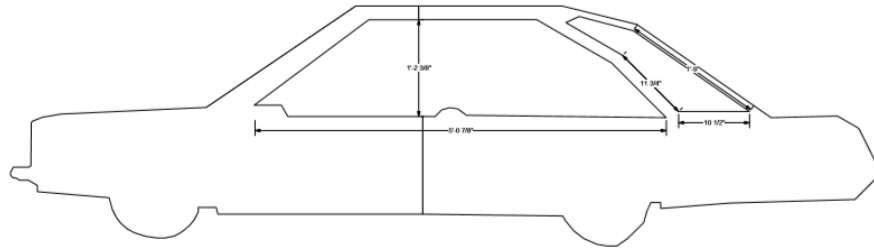
<small>WISCONSIN THEATRE - UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN</small>				
EVIL DEAD: THE MUSICAL				
DESIGN PLATE 6				PAGE NO.
DIRECTOR: J THOMAS EDD				6
SCENE DESIGNER: TOM FRANK				
TECHNICAL DIRECTOR: JEFF RICHARDSON				
APPROVED	DATE	SCALE	DATE	
	12/6/19	1/8"=1'	12/9/19	





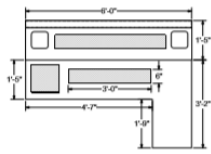
APPENDIX F
MISCELLANEOUS DRAFTING



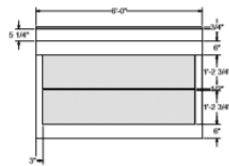


COUNTER AND BOOK SHELF

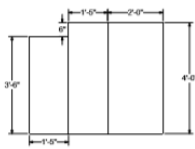
COUNTER & SHELF TOP



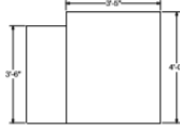
COUNTER & SHELF FRONT



COUNTER & SHELF LEFT



COUNTER & SHELF RIGHT

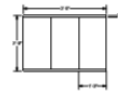


BRIDGE

BRIDGE FRONT VIEW



BRIDGE TOP VIEW



BRIDGE SIDE VIEW



EVIL DEAD: THE MUSICAL	
COUNTER & BRIDGE	Date: SEPT 5, 2010
MOR LABATORY THEATRE	Scale: 1" = 1'
Designer: J THOMAS KIDD	1
Designer: TOM FUNK	OF
Revisions:	1



APPENDIX G
PAINT ELEVATIONS



EVIL DEAD
FRONT DOOR
PAINT ELEVATION



EVIL DEAD
CABIN WALL
PAINT ELEVATION

3"

1 1/2"

1/4" = 1"



EVIL DEAD

FIREPLACE
TRUNK ELEVATION



EVIL DEAD

RIP AWAY
DEEP

1/24
in Stone



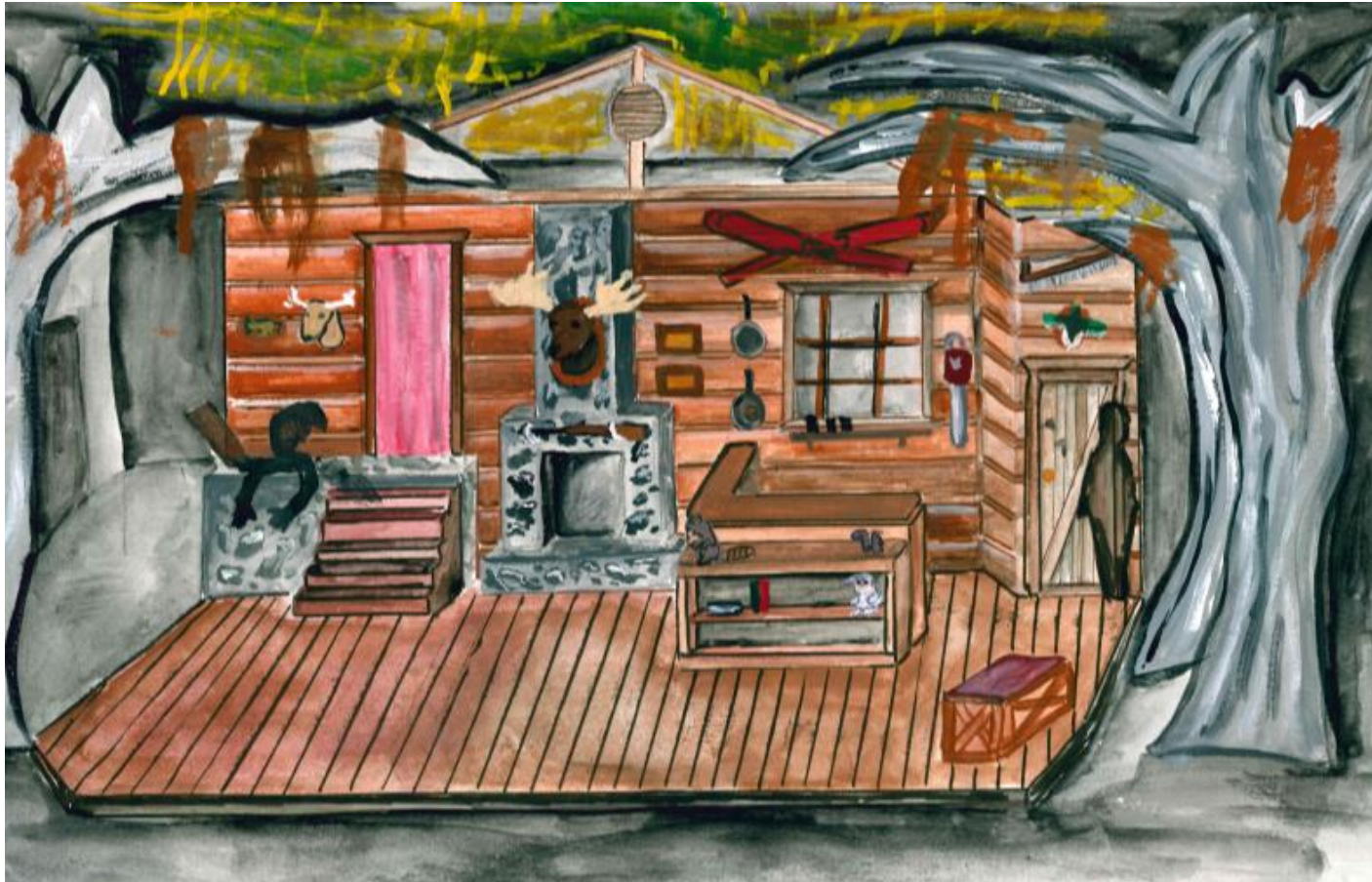
COLOR PALETTE



EVIL DEAD
SMART PAINT
ELEVATION

ALL STOCK

APPENDIX H
DESIGN RENDERING



APPENDIX I
PRODUCTION IMAGES









VITA

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Thesis Paper Title:
A Scene Designer's Guide to Evil Dead: The Musical

Major Professor: Wendi Zea