

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Designing As You Like It - Conceptualization, Process & Creation

by

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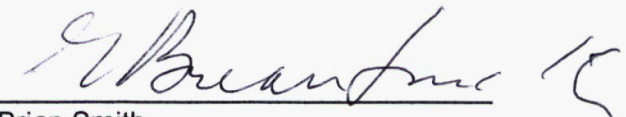
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THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Designing As You Like It - Conceptualization, Process and Creation" submitted by Wes D. Pearce in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts.



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ABSTRACT

This work examines the designer-director relationship in theatre and is written in support of the costume and set design of the University of Calgary's production of William Shakespeare's As You Like It.

The design process for As You Like It is discussed but underlying this concern is the continuing attempt to answer 'what does it mean to be a designer?' By using various philosophical theories, historical positionings and literary methods the work examines and comments upon the emerging scholastic importance of the designer-director relationship in the world of theatre.

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DEDICATION

Nobody is as self-righteous as a student actor whose costume isn't looking right.

Guy Sprung

To Brett: whose love, support and unselfishness made this all possible.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Can this cockpit hold
 The vasty fields of France? Or may we cram
 Within this wooden O the very casques
 That did affright the air at Agincourt?
 O, pardon! since a crooked figure may
 Attest in little place a million;
 And let us, ciphers to this accompt,
 On your imaginary forces work.

William Shakespeare
Henry V (I i 11-18)

With this speech Shakespeare introduces the audience to the unique, and at times curious and bizarre, situation which confronts all practitioners of theatre. However, for the sake of brevity and the more exact needs of this work I take the Prologue to be speaking more specifically about the fundamental problems and nature of the scenographer's work in the theatre. That is, how does the scenographer capture and bring to life the world and people of the playwright's mind when all one really has to work with is an empty space, a few dollars and a deadline? The role of the scenographer may seem rather thankless, for who can really do justice to creating the teeming streets of Victorian London, the great palaces of Ancient Greece, or the sweeping plains of the American mid-west when television and CD ROMs beckon greater visual rewards with the flip of a switch? Why, it may be questioned, attempt to dress the voluptuous court of Louis XVI, the formal, if unfamiliar, Roman Senate or the sensual and erotic world of a visionary's Spain when beautifully bound art history books and the cinema can surpass what the theatre can do? The answer seems to be found in the collection of artists who believe, like Shakespeare, that the forces of the imagination are more spectacular and powerful than the "baubles and beads" of all the other media and this (perhaps innocent conceit) allows them to bring their artistic visions of the world to the

stages of the world. Darwin Payne mentions a similar mystic philosophy when he states;

the most basic assumption made...then, is that all present-day scenographers [feel]...a strong need to become directly involved in an art which can reveal meaningful truths about humankind and the varied world in which it exists....The scenographer can and should be an artist who aids in securely linking the imaginative world of history, philosophy, and myth with the physical world or material form and movement. If there is to be a continuing call for the art of scenography it must be found in the continuing need for these craftsmen of revelation (Payne 1981, 17-18).

I count myself among those artists and this is my story.

Ever since I saw my first live theatrical production - *Oklahoma!* when I was nine - I have been a lover of theatre. My interest in design really began after watching too much bad theatre - where the costumes bore no relation to the set and the design bore no relevance to the text. As I studied further it became a goal of mine to link the literary with the visual. While this sounds simple it is much more difficult to connect what the audience sees with the text and the subtext of the play in a way that brings new insight for the audience, the actor and myself. The following work is my attempt to record and understand the process that I undertake every time I am handed a new script.

It focuses on the specific process I experienced working on the design for *As You Like It* (from text work to researching pastoral drama) but it also examines the process of designer-director creation beyond the confines of the University of Calgary's production of *As You Like It*. The original conception of this work was to examine the designer-director relationship across Canada (and perhaps Great Britain) and while the scope of that project became too cumbersome to handle I believe the intent of that original project remains. In doing so, I have been faced with the problems of an historian insofar as I am trying to write about an artistic event that has already happened and now exists only in the mind. Necessarily this paper suffers from being read in isolation as the reader is unable to witness the production at the same time.

The following list of personnel involved in the production is provided to make the ensuing

commentary easier to follow:

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|
| Director | Dr. Barry Yzereef |
| Assistant Director and Dramaturge | Shari Wattling |
| Lighting Design | J. James Andrews |
| Head of Props | Werner Karsten |
| Head of Wardrobe | Lisa Roberts |
| Technical Director | Don Monty |

It is my hope that this work will provide more insight into, what is perhaps, the most important relationship in theatre. I hope that it will provide some answers as to why, we as designers, make certain choices and prove that we do not make these choices quickly or easily. Lastly, I hope that this work will be the beginning (and not the end) of my formal exploration of the increasing importance of semiotics in theatre performance.

Chapter 2

The Story(s) of *As You Like It*

A Pastoral of a hundred lines, may be endured, but who will
 hear of sheep and goats and myrtle bowers and purling
 rivulets through five acts?

Dr. Johnson, *Life of Gay*

The basis of any good theatre production begins with a study of the text. When I approach a new text I begin by asking many of the basic dramaturgical questions I learned in my first script analysis class. What does the text say? What is the text about? What are the major themes of the text? Who are the characters in the text and how do they relate to each other? The first couple of times I read a script I am usually simply trying to follow the story. The details and subtleties of the author's craft I have to leave for later (and more detailed) readings. I use subsequent readings to help further my understanding of the story, of the characters, of the world they live in and the great themes or messages of the text. Perhaps because I began my training as a costume designer I am often most interested in the inter-relationships between the characters. I can usually visualize the characters before I see the world they inhabit. I also find it important to note what makes this play different from other plays I have read and what makes this play good or bad. However, working with a text that I am familiar with, as in the case of *As You Like It*, can be problematic because I am trying to look at the text with new eyes even though I am extremely familiar with it. Certainly, looking at the text for a specific purpose (as opposed to just reading it for fun) casts it in new light and this helps to see another side of the play. Part of my solution was to examine the history and sources of the play and see what new information they could provide.

The only known source for *As You Like It* is Thomas Lodge's prose romance *Rosalynde*

which was published in 1590. *Rosalynde*, was in turn, partially based upon an early English poem *The Tale of Gamelyn* which tells of the "unjust treatment of Gamelyn by his older brother, the bloody fights between them, Gamelyn's flight to the greenwood, where he becomes the leader of a happy band of outlaws, and the eventual recovery of his land after his brother has been hanged" (Gilman 1986, 141). Lodge was able to take this rather brutal narrative and create his "polished piece of work" (Latham 1975, xxxvi) by adding the story of the banished king, Gerismond, and three love stories: Rosander (the former Gamelyn and Shakespeare's Orlando) and Rosalynde (disguised as a boy named Ganymede); Alinda and Saladyne (*As You Like It's* Celia and Oliver) and Phoebe and Montanus (*As You Like It's* Phebe and Silvius). "Interspersed throughout *Rosalynde* are elegant love poems. The whole, [is] a medley of folk tale, pastoral love eclogue, and pastoral romance" (Gilman 141). *Rosalynde* contains no comparable characters to Shakespeare's Touchstone, Audrey, William, or Melancholy Jaques but critics are unanimous in claiming Shakespeare's immense debt to Lodge's work. Some critics also argue that the success of two Robin Hood pastorals; *The Downfall of Robert Earl of Huntingdon* and *The Death of Robert Earl of Huntingdon* and another 'naughty' pastoral *Sir Clyoman and Clamydes* (suggesting the rustics) all produced by rival companies kindled Shakespeare's interest in the pastoral (Gilman 141, Latham xxv). Latham also argues that the role of Jaques was written as a tribute to one of Shakespeare's satiric contemporaries, possibly John Marston and that Touchstone and Amiens were both inspired by, and created for specific members of the Lord Chamberlain's men, namely Will Kempe and Robert Armin (Latham 1975, li). As is usually the case Shakespeare was able to take numerous disparate sources and inspirations and mold and weave them into a work that can only truly be seen as his own creation.

Presumably, *As You Like It* was written sometime between late 1599 and early 1600. On

August 4, 1600, a play entitled *As you lyke it / a booke* was entered at the Stationers' Register (London) in order 'to be staied'. While plays were not usually registered until their popularity made them targets for pirating, this play was not published until the *Folio* was printed in 1623. This publishing lapse has cast some doubt on the plays' initial success insofar as the successful *Henry V* was published in a bad quarto in 1600 and re-printed twice again before the authoritative folio was prepared (Latham 1975, ix). The mixed public reaction and negative critical reception given to the play throughout the play's history has mirrored the tempered Elizabethan reaction. Samuel Johnson described the story as "'wild and pleasing,' and the dialogue 'sprightly,' but regretted Shakespeare's 'hastening to the end of his work,' especially because it meant suppressing the 'dialogue between the usurper and the hermit' and thereby losing an 'opportunity of exhibiting a moral lesson" (Gilman 1986, xxi). G.B. Shaw is equally cutting when in *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets* he has William Shakespeare say to Queen Elizabeth I: "I have also stole from a book of idle wanton tales two of the most damnable foolishnesses in the world, in the one of which a woman goeth in man's attire and maketh impudent love to her swain, who pleaseth the groundlings by overthrowing a wrestler....I have writ these to save my friends from penury, yet showing my scorn for such follies and for them that praise them by calling the one As You Like It, meaning that it is not as / like it" (Gilman 1986, xxi). Since the turn of the century the play has seen renewed favour with numerous landmark productions being staged and all continually challenging the script of Shakespeare's pastoral. A Playfair's production at Stratford (England) in 1919 caused a huge scandal not because of the 'cubist' setting but because a stuffed deer, faithfully trotted out during Act IV. ii. during every production for forty years had been cut (Kennedy 1993, 121). A Stratford (England) production in 1957 was noted for the pretty Arcadian settings designed by Motley which, according to Richard David were 'too appropriate' causing the magic to evaporate as the

play needs something to strive against (Latham 1975, xc). The 1961 National Shakespeare Company's production starring Vanessa Redgrave emphasized the "sadness implicit in a tale of precarious happiness snatched away from misfortune" (Latham 1975, xc). Dennis Kennedy argues that the production that forever changed *As You Like It*, in the way that Peter Brook's 1970 production forever changed *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, was Clifford William's all male production in 1967 at the National Theatre. His production finally took the emphasis away from the pictorial dream of Arden and used the text to "investigate love in an atmosphere of spiritual purity that transcends sexuality. It is for this reason I employ a male cast, so that we will not - entranced by the surface reality - miss the inner truth. (Kennedy 1993, 257). Directors and critics are still debating, protesting, supporting and responding to this production. Since the 1960s the play has received even more attention; and has become a staple of summer stock and amateur companies. "It is an attractive play for amateurs, since it offers a wide and varied range of parts, which can be attempted at a variety of levels and which reward the player's efforts" (Latham 1975, lxxxix). Not only do the play's themes reflect a growing concern with the 'civilization' versus 'nature' debate but the romantic story has continued to be a favourite since the days of the 'love-in'.

Regardless of the contemporary popularity of the play, *As You Like It* was routinely criticized in the eighteenth century for being 'shoddy' and much of this textual criticism remains. An analysis of the text reveals some rather complicated structural errors and many careless mistakes. The structural timeline in the play is the most problematic because two completely different time lines are suggested within the first half of the play. In Act I.i. Oliver asks Charles what's the *new* news at the *new* court? to which Charles responds;

There's no news at the court sir, but the *old* news.

That is, the old Duke is banished by his younger brother the new Duke, and three or four loving lords have put themselves into voluntary exile with him, whose lands and revenues enrich the new Duke, therefore he gives them good leave to wander (I.i. 98-104).

While Charles claims this is old news his constant references to the 'new Duke' imply that the event is still rather recent. Similarly, Rosalind's grief over her banished father is still fresh and raw;

Dear Celia, I show more mirth than I am mistress of, and would you yet I were merrier? Unless you could teach me to forget a banished father, you must not learn me how to remember any extraordinary pleasure (I.ii. 2-6).

And after Celia tries to comfort Rosalind by trading places with her, Rosalind responds with;

Well, I will forget the condition of my estate, to rejoice in yours (I.i. 14-15).

However, all of this changes when Duke Frederick banishes Rosalind from the court and Celia pleads for her cousin's life;

I did not then entreat to have her stay;
It was your pleasure and your own remorse.
I was too young that time to value her,
But now I know her. If she be a traitor,
Why so am I. We still have slept together,
Rose at an instant, learn'd, play'd, eat together,
And whereso'er we went, like Juno's swans,
Still we went coupled and inseparable (I.iii. 65-72).

Celia's entreaties lead one to believe that the banishment is several years old and that Frederick is not really 'new' at all. In Act II Duke Senior speaks in terms which implies the banished courtiers have been in the forest for a lengthy period of time - at least two seasons but probably years;

Now my co-mates and brothers in exile,
Hath not *old* custom made this life more sweet
Than that of painted pomp? Are not these woods

More free from peril than the envious court?
 Here feel we not the penalty of Adam,
 The season's difference, as the icy fang
 and churlish chiding of the winter's wind,
 Which when it bites and blows upon my body
 Even till I shrink with cold, I smile, and say
 'This is no flattery. These are counsellors
 That feelingly persuade me what I am' (II.i. 1-11).

Understanding the timeline becomes important in establishing a world for the characters to live in. If the banishment is still recent then the activities of the court (and even the court itself) are going to be more controlled and guarded by a feeling that this could all overturn in a moment. However, if Frederick is firmly in control then the mood and activities of the court are different: dominated by power, control and a sense of immorality. Similarly, if Duke Senior and his followers have been in the forest for years they have established a pattern of living which includes the elements and the rustics found within. If they are new to the woods then they are also struggling, learning and growing with the flora, fauna and residents already living there. The text allows for both interpretations to be plausible and both interpretations could easily affect the design, especially the costumes of the court and the foresters. There are several other problems within the text which can be equally irritating for anyone studying the text for a serious purpose. In Orlando's first speech he refers to his brother Jaques and although we never hear from him until the end of the play, where he introduces himself as "the second son of old Sir Rowland", we are introduced to a much more important Jaques in Act II. Since the two characters cannot possibly be the same person it is possible to view the text as either being hastily written or badly typeset. Similarly, in Act I. ii. Celia is referred to as the taller of the two women and yet in Act I. iii. Le Beau refers to Rosalind as the taller of the two as she herself does in the next scene. One may also question why the banished Duke is never named although Dover Wilson postulates that Frederick was actually the name of the exiled Duke but at some point

Shakespeare forgot and applied the name to the usurping brother instead (Latham 1975, xxx). Perhaps none of these questions are really all that important for Latham argues that in performance "audiences are rarely disposed to question...consistency" (Latham 1975, xxix). But if a designer is expected to know the text as intimately as the director then these inconsistencies need to be considered. Many of these problems are relatively minor but I think they can easily allow one to conclude that the text was hastily written. This may explain not only the unsatisfactory ending but the title as well.

Examining the sources, performance history and the text were of some help in leading me towards the design but the investigation which proved most successful was my examination of "pastoral". The play, because of character and situation, is most identified with the pastoral genre; and yet everyone's meaning seems to be different - if they can even define what they mean by pastoral. When I began my study I had little understanding of pastoral except it seemed to involve shepherds, was represented in the works of Constable and Turner and may have inspired the design of Kenneth Branagh's *Much Ado About Nothing*.

What do I mean by pastoral and is such classification really necessary when the production is being set in 1995? As the designer I felt that discovering "pastoral" would indeed be important for this production if, for no other reason, than to be able to reject it at a later date if "pastoral" was working against the production. Defining pastoral is in itself quite difficult. Not only because as a literary genre it's popularity has long since faded, and as David Young observes, critics have participated in a "deplorable tendency to limit discussion of the genre to its 'pure' examples, to a degree which they would never think of employing in, say, studies of tragedy" (Young 1972, 5). Certainly within Shakespeare's text one does not find an example of a pure "academic" pastoral; but rather, like Polonius' own list one finds a "tragical - comical - historical - pastoral". As a result the play can, at

times, be read as a multiple text for as McFarland notes "the situation at the start...could...as well serve for tragedy as for comedy" (McFarland 1972, 98). Throughout her introduction to the play Latham comments on the elements of Shakespeare's "romance plays" found in the text and pays particular attention to the wedding masque at the end. Obviously, the play is also comedic and many of the standard elements of Shakespearean comedy are present in the text as well. Although Kott argues that the seeming familiarity of the Rosalind/Ganymede disguise is "not only a convention that serves to tie and untie the love intrigue" but a vehicle used to explore a darker theme: "the ambiguity of gender" (Kott 1992, 13). For many actors and spectators Rosalind's disguise is a pleasant, but not unexpected, foil standing between two young lovers. Similarly, other comedic devices such as Touchstone (the clown), the escape away from the city (and civilization) and the playful lack of plot help to colour the play in a warm, humorous and familiar light. And yet when all is said and done the word most often used to describe the play, the atmosphere and the characters in the play is pastoral. Since this is the case a further working definition of pastoral must be established.

For many scholars a working definition of pastoral is an arduous task with an end result which never seems to satisfy themselves or others (Young, *passim*). One of the important scholars who attempted to define, and at the same time revitalize pastoral, was William Empson. His seminal work *Some Versions of Pastoral* attempted to shift the focus away from the swains and sheep of Dr. Johnson and instead emphasized subject, structure and the emotional force of the pastoral:

The essential trick of the old pastoral, which was felt to imply a beautiful relationship between rich and poor, was to make simple people express strong feeling (felt as the most universal subject, something fundamentally true about everybody) in learned and fashionable language (so that you wrote about the best subject in the best way). From seeing the two sorts of people combined like this you thought the better of both; the best parts of both were used. The effect was in some degree to combine in the reader

or author the merits of the two sorts; he was made to mirror in himself more completely the effective elements of the society he lived in. This was not a process you could explain in the discourse of writing pastoral; it was already shown by the clash between style and theme, and to make the clash work in the right way (not to become funny) the writer must keep up a firm pretence that he was unconscious of it (Empson 1935, 11-12).

What emerges from Empson's work is a concern, in pastoral, for "putting the complex into the simple" (23) but even more importantly is the constant dichotomy which permeates pastoral. In the previous passage, Empson refers to "the two sorts of people" brought together in order to be compared to each other within the pastoral and that throughout the work "the merits of the two sorts" should be made visible. Importantly, the reconciliation of the 'two sorts' which leads the reader to self-examination is aided by the 'clash between style and theme'. Importantly, pastoral cannot work without the obvious external conflict of the story and the less obvious, but equally important internal conflict.

Internal and external conflict, are however, the cornerstone of good literature and to define pastoral simply as a work with conflict and dichotomy would define all of English literature as pastoral. Since this is not the case one must narrow the parameters of the search and look at those recurring conditions, patterns and themes which are distinctly present in pastoral. In his work, *The Heart's Forest*, David Young discusses the development of English pastoral from its earliest beginnings to its manipulation and resulting success. One of the successful mutations of pastoral is a form known as pastoral romance, especially championed by Sidney. Two important elements of 'dramatic pastoral' were first used by Sidney in such works as *Arcadia*. First, Sidney created a literary form in which "the arrival and sojourn of the characters in the bucolic settings remains the basic plot stratagem of the work as a whole" (Young 1972, 20). The placement of chivalric characters (necessarily lovers of some sort), in a world in which they really had no right to be, instantaneously created plot. The characters were always involved in a battle with fortune in order to be

restored to their rightful place and while this restoration was guaranteed after an (external) societal and (internal) psychological adjustment the path out was never easy;

A passage in praise of the quiet life is interrupted by a fight with a savage bear. Characters are swept by sudden, unaccountable passions. If love flourishes, it is in the face of every known obstacle: rejections, enchantments, cross-wooings, disguises, abductions, apparent deaths. Almost anything is possible in this heightened, imaginary world, where the single overriding subject nonetheless remains the relations between man and the natural world, the 'compentration...of nature and the lover' (Young 1972, 22).

Second, by placing his chivalric characters in a 'rural or wilderness' setting begets, what Empson would refer to as, the debate between two sorts of people. As Young points out this conflict became important if pastoral was to mature into a genre which attempts to be anything more than a list of escapist exploits and wish fulfilment (Young 1972, 32). It is this conflict, between two diametrically opposed forces, be they urban versus rural, rich versus poor, or active versus contemplative which has become the hallmark of pastoral. The contrasting of opposites and the resulting friction is what drives pastoral. While the characters in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are driven to exile in a forest the play cannot be considered pastoral for the dramatic conflict comes from the machinations of the fairies not from characters debating various antitheses as found in 'pastoral' works such as *The Maid's Metamorphosis* (attributed to Lyly). In the play Eurymine flees to the forest where she is offered refuge by a ranger and a shepherd who debate the merits of their occupations while clamouring for the affections of the heroine. Silvio the hunter argues, invoking the names of several gods, for the sanctity of hunting:

I marvell that a rusticke shepherd dare
With a woodmen thus audaciously compare?
Why, hunting is a pleasure for a King,
And Gods themselves sometimes frequent the thing (II.ii. 168-71).

Gemulo, the shepherd, is able to invoke his own gods while arguing for the contemplative

life of the shepherd:

So did Apollo walk with shepherds crooke,
And many Kings their scepters have forsooke:
To lead the quiet life we shepherds know
Accounting it a refuge for their woe (II.ii. 301-5).

Although, Empson, rightly maintains that the author of pastoral believes that presenting both worlds would enlighten the viewer/reader into accepting both worlds as beneficial; one should heed the words of Empson who argues that while "pastoral was about rustic life...it was not for rustics" (Empson 1935, 27).

The English pastoral and the dramatic pastoral which evolved borrowed heavily from the successful elements of pastoral romance and by Shakespeare's time the patterns of the genre were well defined, accepted and understood by a general audience. As previously mentioned, the general pastoral involved one or more young urbanites forced into the country where they adopt a 'rustic life' and generally bide their time, learning a lesson, until they can be returned or restored to their rightful place in the city. Their stay in the country is filled with idyllic hours chasing or being chased by a potential lover(s), discussing the state of the world, choice of lifestyle, or value of aesthetics with local residents, and believing they have discovered the 'Golden Age'. Psychologically, the pastoral dramas are driven by the "double longing after innocence and [sexual] happiness", (Poggioli 1957, 147-48); and while these desires seem to be found in the forest, in reality they can only be satisfied when the characters return to their 'own' urban space. Again one sees the necessity of dichotomy which dominates so much of the pastoral;

the dual concern with innocence and happiness helps to explain why love stories again and again form the central subject of pastoral literature, why it tends to value chastity on the one hand and sexual fulfilment on the other, and why it generally equates unhappiness with unrequited love (Young 1972, 29).

Out of necessity the writers of pastoral must attempt to reconcile many of these

dichotomies before the end of the play. The reconciliation was usually achieved with the return of the world of the play to its natural order - the world order before the play began. The transformation(s) which occur within the characters of the pastoral must be mirrored in the larger, though often unseen, world beyond the rustic setting if the characters' growth is to have any real significance. As Empson mentioned, not all the dichotomies will be resolved. Many of the debates continue in the present, but in the pastoral drama the tension of opposites felt throughout the play is brought, briefly, to conclusion.

Having defined pastoral drama by its literary qualities it soon became an important concept in the design process of *As You Like It*. What I took away from the research of "pastoral" was the success of what I call the 'necessity of opposition' within the genre. Looking at Shakespeare's text it became apparent that the play is filled with internal, external, disguised and rather obvious opposites, many of which are decidedly polar, and all of which would work against each other to create the production's dramatic friction. The 'new world order' that is revealed as the first act progresses soon comes to be understood as a dark, sinister, murderous place where banishment may come at any time and fear is always present. Shakespeare has created a world so dark that it would be impossible for our heroes not to find relief and sanctuary in Arden. The text offers no surprises but rather provides the viewer with a safe haven in which to watch the romantic and philosophical antics of Rosalind, Orlando, their fellow refugees and the rustics found within the wood.

Chapter 3
Modern Shakespeare?

I guess you could do a nonrepresentational *Tosca*...but why?
Barbara Silverstein

In March of 1994 when *As You Like It* was chosen for the season Barry Yzereef had some specific ideas about the production and while these did not force a look or concept upon the show he certainly gave me some firm parameters within which I was to work. The most important of these was the desire to set the production in contemporary dress - having the play take place in and around the Calgary of today (early 1995). It was an idea I was receptive to and interested in exploring. With a cast that would be approximately 40 people I certainly wanted to avoid the problems I witnessed in *Much Ado About Nothing* at the Stratford Festival in 1991. The spectacular production set in eighteenth century Spain saw too many long trains on too small a stage with too much stepping and slipping on, not to mention, ripping of the dresses, despite the conscious efforts of the cast to be careful. I did not want to pin the students into costumes which would overwhelm causing them to forget all about text. This production had to be primarily a play about words; not only is the play a pastoral debate with little action happening after the first act but, more importantly, for most of the actors it was their first foray into Shakespeare and I wanted to make this as "painless" as possible. Yet this is not to say I openly embraced the idea, my concerns with a contemporary production were (and perhaps still are) manifold. These concerns are not mine alone but are representative of an aesthetic debate which is still of significance throughout the theatrical world. In *Looking at Shakespeare*, Dennis Kennedy argues that the entire discussion has evolved because "for the past hundred years or so we have no longer shared cultural convictions that would establish theatre style" (Kennedy 1993, 4). Advocates of the practice justify their actions by claiming that

contemporary productions make the text more relevant to the modern audience. Payne discusses the practice in his book *The Scenographic Imagination* and while he acknowledges that 'contemporized' productions do not always work, he justifies the actions of the production team as "an attempt to recover some of the original force and meaning they [authors and composers] intended and did, apparently, achieve in the earlier presentations for audiences whose tastes were more in sympathy with the style and period" (Payne 1991, 133). Payne's concern echoes Kennedy's discussion of a twentieth century cultural void. While it is possible that as a culture we have lost a certain shared 'consciousness', the practice of contemporizing the classics angers many artists who, like Barbara Silverstein of The Pennsylvania Opera Theatre, argues that modern audiences are more sophisticated than many theatre artists are willing to acknowledge:

Onstage [in a production of *Coronation of Poppea*], we tried to keep it simple, without any wild updating. You don't have to put the characters in business suits and hit the audience over the head with the message- 'Oh look, there are people like that alive today.' We know that (Waleson, 27).

This work does not attempt to resolve this debate. Rather I mention its larger philosophical presence as a springboard to my own concerns. While placing the play in a contemporary setting seems easy and certainly is based upon historical precedent. Did not The Lord Chamberlain's Men dress themselves in contemporary Elizabethan clothing when 'treading the boards' of The Globe Theatre? There are several problems that could arise and that had to be addressed before the process could begin.

First, as a member of the production team I want to know why we are setting the play today (beyond a purely financial consideration) and what are we going to say once we have set the play in 1995? It becomes more than an aesthetic concern, for as Kennedy discusses in his book, "there is a clear relationship between what a production looks like

and what its spectators accept as its statement and value. This seems obvious: the visual signs the performance generates are not only the guide to its social and cultural meaning but often constitute the meaning itself" (Kennedy 1993, 5). I do not believe that one can arbitrarily set any play (but specifically the classics) in a new or unfamiliar setting without making the move itself a political act which will say something to the audience. Often there seems to be a lack of consciousness concerning the actual political ramifications of this seemingly artistic action. I have experienced some brilliant productions that explored the political or social climate of a chosen age but only when the concerns of that age matches the concerns already found within the text. That is, the political act of updating the production was validated because what the new production said and what the text said where compatible. Notable among these performances was a politically and artistically bent *Timon of Athens* set in Picasso's crumbling Spain (The Stratford Festival 1991.). However, despite the successful production of *Timon* I am far less concerned with 'how' it was staged and far more concerned with 'why' it was staged. I should clarify, and say that I am not talking about a political act that can be identified as being Conservative, or New Democrat, or Reform, or Liberal or affiliated with the political concept of 'government' but rather I am talking about a more postmodern use of the word political. My use of the word 'political' more or less corresponds to the concerns of several contemporary literary critics who believe that apolitical analysis of the literary text is impossible because "the analyst has to be politically committed." It necessarily follows, that it becomes impossible for the analyst to 'set aside' this commitment during textual analysis (Birch 1989, 30). Similarly, I believe, that we as theatre practitioners are equally motivated by the 'political'. Theatre seasons are not picked randomly. Directors are not assigned to productions erratically nor should the setting of a production be picked arbitrarily without thought and concern as to why one is committed to this particular setting. If we are choosing 1995 as

the setting in order to make the play more accessible to young theatre-goers then our motive becomes quite political insofar as we are attempting to make Shakespeare more enjoyable for the "masses", hoping that the experience will be so positive that they will continue to be very interested in theatre, eventually becoming strong advocates and supporters of professional theatre companies. If this is the only reason and aim of our modern production will it be strong enough to validate the performance?

Second, I have a problem with the attempts of directors to force a concept onto a play which at best may confuse the meaning of the text and at worst constantly battle against the text during the performance. Certainly, when a concept works the text is able to reverberate in a manner that does allow the play to speak through the ages. I have witnessed several productions which allowed such communion to occur. Notable was the aforementioned *Timon of Athens* (save Act V), a pastel inspired autumnal production of *Twelfth Night* set in an evaporated oasis in the early 1920s (Globe Theatre, Regina: 1990) and a bilingual production of *Romeo and Juliet* set in Saskatchewan in which the Capulets spoke Québécois and the Montagues spoke English (Shakespeare on the Saskatchewan, Saskatoon: 1988). Unfortunately, I have seen a far greater number of productions which seemed to have been moved out of their historical or literary setting and placed elsewhere without any apparent consideration to why this was happening? What would the end result of such a decision be? Was there any thought as to whether this concept actually works with what is actually in the text? My thoughts about this inability to see beyond "novelty" were confirmed with a production of *Much Ado About Nothing* (Shakespeare on the Saskatchewan, Saskatoon: 1993) set within the insect kingdom. This production featured, among other eccentricities and inconsistencies, Beatrice as the "Queen Bee", Benedict as a "Butterfly", Leonardo as a "Yellow Jacket", Don Jon as a "Tarantula" and Dogberry as a "Click Beetle", the entire production became very tedious because the

novelty concept had no political, artistic nor literary connection to the text. I am not a Shakespeare "purist" who demands an Elizabethan-looking production or a Victorian-sounding and acting production, but rather I do expect logic and consistency between the production values and the meaning of the text.

Lastly, I believe that the setting chosen for a production must somehow validate and be validated by the text. What I generally am opposed to (and do not think I am alone in this) is the notion that one can set a dramatic piece anywhere and not worry that the setting and speech are diametrically opposed to each other: in essence working against each other. Although rather dramatic in his approach and over zealous in his prediction of dire consequences if the trait continues Richard David comments upon the increase of 'travel agent' productions produced by the Royal Shakespeare Company;

'Where shall we go this time? Lapland might be fun; or India would make a nice change.' This search for a setting is, I believe, no frivolous gimmick but a significant symptom of the feeling of present-day directors as to what is the basic problem in presenting Shakespeare's work. Convinced that the plays have an intense continuing relevance if only they can be disengaged from their forbidding framework of archaism, the director resets them in a modern context so that the issues may be seen by a modern audience in familiar terms. (David 1978, 216).

My concern with a 'modern' production however, is not with its unique setting because it is an unusual setting but because setting and voice is an important dramatic element. Although Shaw and many of his contemporary playwrights have recognized this crucial connection in their drama, the link between voice and setting has become an increasingly important issue in the 20th century because we have so many great dramatists who specialize in creating wordplays which mesh the characters into a specific geographic time and place. That is, the works of David Mamet, Sam Shepherd, August Wilson, Edward Albee or Caryl Churchill (to name but a few) can not easily be moved across an ocean, or across the country or even across a city without serious damage being done to the author's

intentions and the meaning of his/her text. For instance, if a director decided to locate *Glengarry, Glenross* in Moose Jaw, or attempts to produce *Curse of the Starving Class* in Iowa, serious problems will develop. The characters will not speak honestly of the place and the place will not speak honestly of the characters; the end result will be confusion with the production saying many things but none of them clearly. My problem with many modern dress Shakespearean productions often concerns the dichotomy between how a character looks and how that same character talks. Occasionally this is a problem with the actor but more often it is a direct result of a 'concept' that has not been thought out very carefully. That is to say, with the advent of a secular society, (among other philosophical and scientific discoveries), does a cast of waifs in torn- up jeans referring to the great battles of Zeus and the clearly organized Renaissance patterns of heaven and earth even begin to seem believable? If the audience cannot even get past the superficial concerns of the production, what hope is there that they will be able or willing to explore the production at a deeper level in an attempt to discover the 'meaningful truths about humankind' which lie within the production and the text. Regardless of a play's aesthetic values and visual effects, it becomes very difficult to believe a production (Shakespeare on the Saskatchewan, Saskatoon: 1994) in which Hamlet, dressed all in black leather, with needle tracks up his arms and with an exposed and pierced nipple, confronts his mother about her *morality*:

Such an act
That blurs the grace and blush of modesty,
Calls virtue hypocrite, takes off the rose
From the fair forehead of an *innocent* love
And sets a blister there, makes marriage-vows
As false as dicers' oaths; O, such a deed
As from the body of contraction plucks
The very soul, and sweet religion makes
A rhapsody of words. (III.iv. 40-48).

If my enthusiasm for this project was somewhat tempered it was not because I felt it

would have little or nothing to do with the traditional scenographic responsibilities but rather I was concerned as to how our production was going to address these larger philosophical and aesthetic considerations.

Chapter 4

The Creators: History of the Designer-Director Relationship

...for the past hundred years or so we have no longer shared cultural convictions that would establish theatrical style.

Dennis Kennedy, *Looking at Shakespeare*

If the first internal thoughts of the designer and director are point A, and point B is the finished product on the stage being watched by an audience, then the line linking the two is called the designer-director process. This line may stretch out for several years or may be as short as a month. Regardless of length the designer-director relationship is sometimes unstable, sometimes volatile, sometimes compatible but always an interesting attempt by two (or more) individuals to create a synthesized whole. The relationship that designers and directors share (or strive for) in the fading years of the twentieth century is, in the realm of theatre history, relatively new *and* unusual. This chapter deals with this evolution of the designer-director process. Because this process is less than a century old it becomes critical to continually analyze the process not only to understand it better, but with the hope of improving it. It is important to mention that, while this chapter deals with the designer's rise of importance in theatre, the director's role (as we understand it) is also relatively new. Guy Sprung attempts to define the theatre director in *Hot Ice* in order to better understand his art;

A theatre director is a hybrid artistic calling whose role in the process of play production has been accepted as necessary only over the last one hundred years. The "art" of a theatre director is such a convoluted concoction that it is impossible to dissect it into its components. We are part interpretative, part creative artist, with generous helpings of diplomat, politician, business person, venture capitalist, technician and con artist stirred in. We are watchers, not doers. Without a predominant talent to write or act, we harness our drive to communicate by orchestrating the talents and craft of others (Sprung 1991, xi).

Part of what makes this relationship so interesting is that not only is the process quite new

but the roles and responsibilities of both designer and director are equally new. A century may seem like enough time for theatre to have experimented and thoroughly pushed and examined the boundaries of what it means to be 'designer' or 'director' and understand and record how this affects the relationship. Yet in an art form that progresses at an unreasonably slow pace a hundred years is really very little time.

The concept of many creative people working, separately but together, towards a common goal was certainly not the case when Western theatre developed in Greece where every aspect of the production was under the heavy hand of the playwright. As Brockett describes in his 'Bible' of theatre history:

Nearly all tragic dramatists directed their own works,.... In Aeschylus' time, the author acted in his plays, trained the chorus, invented the music and dances, and supervised every aspect of production....The playwright's key role in the early years is indicated by the term applied to him, *didaskalos* (teacher), for he was considered to be the instructor of both the performers (during the process of play production) and the audience (through the finished product) (Brockett 1987, 27).

The playwright retained a great deal of his creative power during the re-emergence of secular drama during the late Middle Ages (1300 - 1500 AD). Even during the English Renaissance we must assume that often the playwright played an important role in the production of his words;

In the introduction to his verse translation (1610) of Thomas Tomkiss's morality play, *Lingua*, Johannes Rhenanus described how such control was exercised.

So far as actors are concerned they, as I noticed in England, are daily instructed, as it were in a school, so that even the most eminent actors have to allow themselves to be instructed by the dramatists, which arrangement gives life and ornament to a well written play,...(Greer 1986, 23).

Certainly, this appears to be the case for Shakespeare if one can take the words of Hamlet as being, as are Polonius', representative of theatrical production values at the

time. After having written "some dozen lines, or sixteen lines" (II. ii.) of his own, Hamlet inserts them into the Players' 'text' of "The Murther of Gonzago". However, as the production approaches Hamlet is not content to let the trained abilities of the players be taken for granted and instructs the actors on matters of diction and presentation to ensure that his lines are not lost on Claudius;

Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounc'd
it to you, trippingly on the tongue, but if you mouth it,
as many of your players do, I had as live the town-crier
spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with
your hand, thus, but use all gently, for in the very
torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, whirlwind of your
passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that
may give it smoothness. (III.ii. 1-8).

While English 'public' theatre seemed to value the playwright's words as being central to the success of the theatre, this was not true of all theatre as court masques and other spectacles, often arranged by Inigo Jones, became increasingly popular under James I. The increasing importance of mechanical spectacle as the purpose of the production necessitated the demise of the playwright as the preeminent force behind production. Conversely, this movement saw the rise in importance of the theatre-artist or architect who enabled the new 'moving' plays to function. On the continent the playwright and his words had become buried under a never-ending tide of bigger and better machines and effects. As Feurst argues, "the decadence of the Italian Renaissance found painters engaged in a search for the means of deceiving the eye through the development of an elaborate perspective, this *trompe l'oeil* becoming constantly more and more complicated and refined. Perspective was an obsession" (Feurst 1967, 5). The theatres of both Italy and France were celebrated as much for the scenic marvels that were presented onstage as for the words that were spoken there. Indeed, the celebrated theatre architects such as Georges Buffequin, LeMercier, and the mechanical genius Giacomo Torelli are as well

known (if not more so) than their contemporary playwrights. By the mid-seventeenth century Pierre Corneille's new play *Andromede* was billed as a "play with machines" partially to differentiate it from the 'over-mechanized' Italian Opera but more importantly to advertise that the great French dramatist could also use elaborate machinery and special effects to help tell his story and not simply rely on words. The Restoration in England (1642) saw not only an increase in the number of mechanical plays produced but also a growing importance on the visual scenery that enveloped even the simplest of plays. The trend for visuals and the continued disregard for the playwright continued unabated and, perhaps, reached its zenith during the 'melodramatic' age of the late nineteenth century just prior to the birth of realism.

Theatre in the Victorian Age was dominated by a growing trend towards pictorialism: creating worlds and presenting every detail of the text visually on the stage. Visual discovery of both the past worlds of antiquity and contemporary worlds of exotica accompanied by the technology to mass produce and distribute this information is a great hallmark of the Victorian age. "Influenced by the growing interest in historical representation in painting and architecture, the stage saw the plays as opportunities for *illustrating the past*" (Kennedy 1993, 26). Images replaced metaphors, as actor-managers such as Kean, assumed that historical accuracy of the setting was immanently more important than what was being said in the setting. Although Kennedy claims that Kean's great contribution to Shakespearean theatre and, one may argue, English-speaking theatre, was to make the theatre "self-conscious about its visual expression", he argues that this concern was very primitive and extremely flawed because "it never considered whether accuracy of period and locale were in any sense relevant to a visual understanding of the plays" (27). The actor-managers did not necessarily consult with other theatre artists about their plans and visions but relied on historical and educational

sources in order to produce these Victorian spectacles. The actor-manager had completely replaced the playwright as the singular force behind theatrical production and yet collaborative designer-director relationship was still unheard of by the likes of Henry Irving and Georg II of Saxe-Meiningen.

The visions created for the theatre were not 'designed' in the same manner nor for the same purpose as we design today. The relationship between 'theatre artist' and the stage director or stage manager was barely present and certainly was based on something other than cooperation and communication. David Payne provides a coherent analysis of the historical development of design in *The Scenographic Imagination*;

The essential point to remember about the twentieth century's conception of scenography as an art is that prior to this century it was, almost always, only an adjunct to a production, not necessarily an integral part of it. In fact, there was little coordination between any of the various departments responsible for the mounting of a production....But the great difference between then and now lies in the fact that the scenographer of the past spent very little time working with others - directors, costumers, playwrights- in preproduction planning. Ostensibly the scenographer's task was to provide pictorial backgrounds for performers to be seen in front of, although his relationship to these performers was virtually nonexistent (Payne 1981, 4).

Attempting to discuss the changes which have affected the designer-director relationship in the past century, Patrick O'Conner comments on a situation in opera that was, however, not isolated to that art form. "One hundred years ago, when Nellie Melba made her debut at the Paris Opéra as Ophillie in Thomas' *Hamlet*, the scenic designer did not get so much as a mention in the program" (O'Conner 1989, 8). This was not to say that there was no set present. There was and it was big; it was just that "each act was executed by a different artist" (O'Conner, 8) and public recognition was deemed unimportant by management. Payne maintains that to view the theatre artists as victims would, however, be a mistake.

And yet it would not be entirely accurate to maintain that the

scenographer of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was only the servant of actor-managers and playwrights. Often they were highly respected artists in the theatre, and there is ample reason to believe many were guilty of considering the actors, singers, and dancers mere additions to their work. Nor is there any real proof that the scenographer paid much attention to the playwright as a reliable source for determining the way a setting should look onstage; it is doubtful if many playwrights were consulted or given a chance to exercise any real control on how their plays were mounted. It is certainly doubtful many scenographers ever gave much thought to the playwright's purposes that lay beneath the surface of the text or to the explicit directions written there. And if one inspects the pictorial records of the various forms of theatre during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it appears as if few scenographers saw much difference between any form of theatrical production; play, opera, masque, and ballet all received much the same sort of treatment. His only real concern was to what extent these different forms gave him opportunity to demonstrate his skill in creating fanciful stage pictures and spectacular effects. But, in fairness to the scenographer of these periods, it should be pointed out that this approach was exactly what was expected of them (Payne 1981, 4).

It would be simplistic to believe that the work of Ibsen and Chekhov accompanied by the rise and importance of realism were solely responsible for ushering in a new designer-director relationship with the dawn of the twentieth century. In fact, much of the theatre before World War I is barely distinguishable from its nineteenth century counterparts. However, in the avant-garde theatres and salons that housed many new, controversial theatrical movements, what the production looked like and what was said through the 'decoration' of the production was becoming increasingly important. Although Ibsen's stage descriptions tend to be very detailed and precise and may seem rather anti-designer, the plays themselves are some of the first to really give the designer or stage decorator a voice which reverberates throughout the production. "The characters are obviously heavily influenced by their physical environment, and the...designers must treat action and characters with subtlety and awareness, if they are to create an appropriate environment" (Russell 1976, 157). To the contemporary 'eye' the early productions of realistic drama usually seem

artificial and 'quaint' and often this is the result of the scenic artist who was unable or unwilling to follow the psychological bent of the 'new dramatists'. As Feurst mentions, tradition can be a strong enemy in repulsing change. "Stage decoration did not immediately cross the bridge into this new field. The idea of the painted setting was too deeply rooted to disappear at once" (Feurst 1953, 8). Still the early twentieth century was full of new hopes and visionaries in the theatre began to understand the role of theatre differently and to re-think the way that theatre was produced.

The drama, that is, the acted drama, could no longer be a phenomenon which the spectator sensed solely through the medium of the ear. It is clear that the spectator perceives the play as much through the gesture and movement of the actor as he does through the spoken word, and, what is equally important, he must also perceive it through the scenic ensemble in its entirety. The play was now expressed by the entire scene, as well as by gesture and movement, and the spectator became conscious of entire images which themselves contained the drama. The new *mise en scene* was addressed to the eyes as well as to the ears, thereby creating a spectacle which carried the dramatic action within itself (Feurst 1953, 11).

As the century progressed artists and thinkers like Adolphe Appia, Edward Gordon Craig and, perhaps most importantly Josef Svoboda, began to envision, discuss and create theatrical design that in and of itself visually captured the (previously missing) lyrical or mystical 'essence' of a dramatic work. The new dramatic concerns allowed (or perhaps forced) the best of the actor-managers, such as Reinhardt, to look beyond 'the self' in order to best satisfy the 'dramatic vision'. This cooperation was revolutionary and modern. "The appearance of this collaborator, this new artist, architect or painter, is a distinctive phenomenon of the twentieth century theatre....Thereafter the scenic creation became the result of the intimate collaboration of two men,..."(Feurst 1953, 12). Throughout the rest of the century, Western theatre history is often measured and understood by the successful collaborations which have greatly influenced, not only design, but theatre itself: Max

Reinhardt and Ernst Stern (*Don Carlos*, *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*), Elia Kazan and Jo Mielziner (*Streetcar Named Desire* and *Death of a Salesman*), Tyrone Guthrie and Tanya Moiseiwitsch (who founded The Stratford Festival in Ontario and are perhaps most famous for *Oedipus Rex*), Peter Brook and Sally Jacobs (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) and Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber and John Napier (*Cats*, *Phantom of the Opera* and *Sunset Boulevard*). In Canada such noted partnerships include Christopher Newton and Cameron Porteous at Niagara-On-The-Lake (*Saint Joan* [1981], *Caesar and Cleopatra* [1983] and *Major Barbara* [1987]), Brian MacDonald and Susan Benson at the Stratford Festival (*The Mikado* and *The Gondeliers* [1995]) and Robin Phillips and Daphne Dare (notably at the Stratford Festival (*King Lear*, *Love's Labour's Lost* and a Chekhovian *Winter's Tale* [1978])). This collaboration has become so integral to theatre production in the late twentieth century that Bob Crowley maintains that "designers are no longer just expected to provide a background. Now they're expected, as much as a director is, to come up with - for want of a better word - the concept of a show" (Ratcliffe 1993, 19). Similarly, Matt Wolf argues that 'the audience' has become more sophisticated and aware of this important collaboration: "The general public has at last acknowledged what the industry itself always knew to be true: the important theatre of any epoch depends upon important designers" (Wolf 1994, 223).

Chapter 5
Concept, Process and Creation

The greatest natural genius cannot subsist on its own stock; he who resolves never to ransack any mind but his own will soon be reduced to mere barrenness to the poorest of all imitations. It is vain to invent without materials on which the mind may work and from which invention must originate. *Nothing can come of nothing.*

Joshua Reynolds in *The Scenographic Imagination*

The last chapter dealt briefly with the history of the director-designer relationship to establish a context in which the specifics of the *As You Like It* process could be discussed. One of the problems encountered in dealing with this relationship and this process is that there is no 'correct' or 'formalized' pattern. There is no textbook telling us what to do: only a sketchy road map. In his article "De/Sign/ificant Assumptions", Allan Watts discusses some of the issues which effect defining this collaboration. "Explanations of process are always difficult, especially for an art form which seems to demand such apparently contradictory modes of working as the intuitive and the analytical, the visionary and the collaborative, the emotional and the intellectual" (Watts 1992, 32). This apology before the fact is offered, not as an excuse, but rather as a condition that any discussion of the artistic process is bound to end in frustration if one is looking for a 'scientific' and easy to follow (perhaps even linear) progression of thought and action.

Traditionally in western theatre the director is the first person hired and in the 'team effort' is seen "as the captain who sets the overall rules of play" (Arnott 1982, 31). As Malcolm Page argues, the hierarchy is not universal, "in Japan designers sometimes initiate and choose the director with whom they want to work" (Page 1994, 16). In another variation on this relationship Anthony Ward (who designed the Palladium's new production of *Oliver!*) mentions that Cameron Mackintosh rigorously maintains that "the set directs the musical" rather than the traditional understanding that "the director directs the musical and the set's there to support what you are seeing" (Halliday 1995, 38). Despite much of the

praise for collaboration the director is still often responsible for choosing 'the concept' for a particular production. Malcolm Page offers the following summary: "directors talk, generally or specifically, visually or abstractly, and - though designers offer images and ideas - designers are translating directors' impressions into reality" (16). Desmond Heely argues that the first idea for the design should come from the play (Garebian 1984, 50) and Peter Parina maintains that it is not necessary "that from the beginning directors know what should be achieved by the production team" (Parina 1992, 13). More often than not this is not the case. Unless one is working in a collective in which the final product is "likely to take three years to complete" (Beauchamp 1992, 37) the hierarchy, with the director at the top, is likely to remain. In the most cynical of terms, this 'relationship' is solely a director-based autocracy because, regardless of terms like cooperation and communication, the fact remains that unless the designer sneaks ideas or visions into the production, the director can always veto and suppress the creativity of any designer. But I am not a cynic. I believe that a positive designer-director relationship does exist, and from experience know, that directors often blindly trust designers with aspects of the production over which directors have little control until the completed vision(s) appear on stage. The gratifying moment for both the designer and director is seeing characters and locations magically spring to life. Occasionally, as at Edmonton's Citadel Theatre (1992) the vision which greets the director, in this case Robin Phillips, at the dress rehearsal is not the one which was expected and as a result all but two of the finished costumes for *La Bete* were cut and the show opened and ran with almost everyone in street clothes. It is incidents like this which underscore just how important and yet how precarious the designer-director relationship is and just how important this relationship and the ensuing process is to the finished product on the stage.

Defining the designer-director relationship after discussing their role(s) in the context of the

theatre hierarchy becomes more difficult because "every director and every designer is different, and every pairing is different" (Page 1994, 18) not to mention that every script and every space is different. The relationship shared by Peter Brook and Sally Jacobs is best summed up by Jacobs who comments that Brook "trusts the material to tell him what to do and finally he does something very simple which reveals the material in a very honest way. She adds....A good designer,...is invisible" (Page, 16). Michael Eagan reports that when working for Robin Phillips "you don't really design at all, you just listen to what he wants" (Page, 16). Ideally, the relationship is more than one person giving a shopping list and another person filling it. Bob Crowley talks about relationship he shared with director Nicholas Hytner and choreographer Kenneth MacMillan as they approached their acclaimed 1993 production of *Carousel*:

We are looking at it with a European eye, and very much a European eye of the '90s, as well. We went back the original play [*Liliom*] by Molnar, which is, of course, also European. We never approached it as if we were doing a musical. We went about it exactly the way we would go about doing a play by Shakespeare, a comedy by Sheridan, or, indeed, an opera by Mozart....The three of us...didn't know the piece very well. We had no real preconceived ideas about it....The one thing all three of us decided was that it is not a musical about a carousel....[We] went to Maine and I did all my research about whaling on the East coast....We did masses and masses of research, but as I say, we filtered it through (Raymond 1994, 22-23).

Experience has taught me that the reality of the relationship between designer and director usually ends up somewhere between these two extremes and that is what the process for *As You Like It* eventually became.

In early 1994 Barry Yzereef was chosen to direct a play in the third slot of the 1995 season. Then the play was chosen from a short list which included *Love's Labours Lost* and *Much Ado About Nothing*. Initially the production was approved for the season as a large but very minimalist ensemble production with the cast providing all of their own costumes. The set would have 'evolved' with the production and only a lighting designer

would have been assigned to the production. It was only after this plan had been abandoned and Barry had thought about the 'concept' that I became connected with the production. Barry's concept was fundamentally entwined with his purpose for staging *As You Like It*. This purpose was "to attract High School audiences and young theatre goers to the comic world of William Shakespeare. I wanted to make this play accessible to them in a way [in which] they could identify with the characters and their situations (Yzereef 1995). In conducting interviews with high school students about how to make Shakespeare more appealing, Barry was repeatedly told that the production was doomed if he/we attempted to "put any male actor on stage in tights...[with] faggy English accents". It became apparent that the only way for the production to succeed in its 'political' purpose was to conceive of the play as a thoroughly modern (perhaps even new) play set in 1995. With a defined purpose before us, the process of creating the production began in earnest.

With a clearly defined purpose and look to our production it was my turn to return to the text and re-read it until I could visually blend our present world with the world created by Shakespeare. This process was, at least fundamentally, similar to the process which Bob Crowley and the creative team of *Carousel* experienced insofar as I (as designer) was trying to re-interpret and re-see with new eyes (or at least a new perspective) an extremely familiar piece of literature. Like the *Carousel* team trying to re-see a classical American musical with 1990's European eyes, Barry and I were trying to re-see a classical European play with 1995 Western Canadian eyes. Initially, I wanted to turn *As You Like It* into a contemporary political fable set in present day Alberta and flirted with decorating the stage in silk banners that ran from ceiling to floor all decorated with images of Ralph Klein and Dianne Mirosh. But, after the banishment scene, the whole concept seemed to cave in on itself and I abandoned the project. Another image which stuck in my mind was Duke

Frederick constantly surrounded by a scurrying cluster of red cloaked, book-bound cardinal-like advisors and while I am still in love with the image I did not really think this Peter Greenway touch would be of any benefit to the production. It is interesting to note however, that Secretary Jane performed basically the same function and was indeed dressed in red. It became a challenge to reduce both court and the pastoral or country folk to respectable and responsible contemporary figures.

Barry had no specific visions or images for these contemporary worlds but he did have some descriptive words which he believed captured the essence of each world. The city was: "dark", "mechanical", "kickboxing", "limo", "Madonna" and "nasty-Nazi" while the forest was: "fun", "babes in the woods" (playing on several levels with that word), "flannel" and "denim". The most interesting thing about Barry's list is that I shared many of his impressions: yet, I was much more hesitant to place the court scenes in a simple corporate context than he was. I was less willing to work immediately with this transformation because I was not sure that translating the court to a corporate board room would be all that effective nor would the actions that occur within this corporate world (especially the banishment) achieve the same amount of emotional impact as they would in the royal court. However, I was having an even more difficult time trying to imagine a functioning alternative to the corporate world and in a classic case of closing my eyes and jumping off the cliff I began to think and create the sinister corporate world of Act 1. In hindsight my 'fear' seems to have been ill-founded; corporations do indeed run our world and few people would argue that Queen Elizabeth II is more powerful or important than Microsoft founder Bill Gates. In the summer of 1995 I saw a production of *Julius Caesar* (Shakespeare in the Park, Calgary) which had been updated to the present. Caesar, dressed all in white including a Captain Stubby hat and Cuban cigar, was a dictator of a militaristic banana republic which I felt distorted the power of Caesar and the major themes

of Shakespeare's story. This literal interpretation failed to grab the essence of the play and seemed to reinforce that our figurative or poetic interpretation was (after much worry) a more honest choice.

While creating this powerful corporation I was also concerned as to where this would leave Orlando and Adam. My concern was that although no one really likes this corporate world we have created it is a world far less alien to many than the world of the thrasher (skateboarder). Can Orlando be sympathetic from the beginning if he represents a world that scares many of us when confronted by it on the streets? To an older audience the answer is probably no and it becomes the actor's job to bridge this gap and make the character sympathetic and empathetic. To our target audience (which I sometimes forgot about) there is no greater hero nor sympathetic character than someone from the 'hood'. True, we could not change Orlando's speaking patterns but via some deft editing, movement coaching and a 'hip' wardrobe (collected from the streets) it was fairly easy to make him a spokesman for disenfranchised youth kept away or wanting nothing to do with the corporate world which surrounds them everyday. As our re-inventing of the show progressed I felt that bigger obstacles to the vision were the hangers-on at the court. Characters like Le Beau (who at one time was going to be Celia and Rosalind's personal and tres flamboyant designer) and Charles the Wrestler did not fall into the corporate world nearly as neatly as one would like - wrestling is not the method of killing preferred by most hitmen in the present day. Our solution was to make both characters exaggerated and humorous while creating a back-alley world where Charles and the illegal kick boxing matches (like cock-fighting a generation before) is an accepted and important means of existence. However, the biggest problem was the character of Touchstone. He was problematic because his role as 'clown' in the play is poorly understood by our contemporary culture and also because he was created as a 17th century wit he tends not

to be as funny as he was when conceived. In practical terms 'clowns' do not advance very rapidly up the corporate ladder and yet Touchstone had to be familiar and on close terms with Rosalind and Celia. I do not think that we came up with the best or even most creative way of solving this problem for in the end Touchstone became a caretaker in the land of corporate buildings. Yet by reducing his character from court clown to caretaker (and the accompanying costume), and some substantial editing in our first act of the play we created a problem in that very few people really understood he was the 'clown' until his foolish transformation in the forest (III. ii.) which not only lessened Touchstone but severely limited the effect of Jaques' entrance (II.vii.) because many people did not realize that the fool Jaques is referring to is Touchstone. Touchstone's transformation into an 'over-jewelled' urban cowboy was brought about by Jaques reference to 'motley' and my personal experience that anyone who tries to dress for a part that really is not them is rather 'clown-like'. While the cowboy wear established Touchstone as a fool in the eyes of the audience it is still not 'motley' which would have been the costume worn (and the identity of) the court clown.

As we transformed the country characters my only fear was not to create simple stereotypes because if the corporate world is, in theory, Calgary, then the country is probably somewhere between Bragg Creek and Kananaskis Country. Residents of that area are really not that different from others in the general area (including Calgary). In hindsight I think that the transformation here was less successful. Not only is the text limiting what the characters can be but there were some set notions as to what the characters should do for the play (provide broad comic moments to counterpoint the danger of the city). I was disappointed that many of the 'pastoral' characters, their personas and traits became rather tired images which we had seen before and did not seem to breathe as freshly as did the corporate world. While we did replace shepherds

with cowboys, to me, the rustic stereotype remained. Midway through the dress rehearsal period I began to rethink the forest and thought perhaps we should have abandoned the traditional visual dichotomy of the pastoral and instead dressed the 'rustics' in business suits or at least have them more closely resemble the university trained farmers who are populating the prairies today. Then I would have given the 'country look' to the stranded urban residents who are really living a shallow Country Music Television escapist fantasy. In reality I doubt it would have worked all that well but visually it would have been rather experimental and perhaps more challenging to the audience than the more traditional images they experienced.

The process of rethinking the play with our 'modern eyes' was, like the process of *Carousel*, not solely limited to Barry and myself. One of the more difficult tasks was executed by Barry and Shari and involved editing the text in order to make the play more relevant and easier to understand. As stated in an earlier chapter, consistency of place and speech is a very important aesthetic concern of mine and I have often found it to be the failing in up-dated Shakespeare or operatic productions I have seen. The previously mentioned *Julius Caesar* had been scrupulously edited in order to ensure that all of the male characters that were now female characters were named and referred to by the proper pronoun (Cassius had become Cassia) but the setting which was obviously South America (circa 1995) was religiously referred to as Rome and its citizens were Roman! Barry demanded that the editing process be done carefully and with a minimum amount of damage to the text; "obscure references, jokes, and rhetorical devices that only Shakespearean scholars would understand were removed....The most extensive cut was in Act V when Touchstone shows off his verbal skills. The only reason it is there is to allow time for Rosalind and Celia to change into their wedding apparel. I must confess I have always found those speeches of Touchstone to be dull and I have never seen them

performed well...so out they go" (Yzereef, 1995). Barry agreed that "the connection between setting and voice is very important" but argues that "there was no need to 'update' the language in any way". I think that in many ways this balance was achieved. Although, I am sure that more than one person believed "OLIVER SUCKS" was a desecration of the Bard's poetry. The edited text does remove much of the period detail from the original which gave me much more freedom to work with in conceptualizing the design. As Rosalind begins to plan her disguise she imagines her dress and the attitude that will accompany her new persona:

Rosalind: Were it not better,
 Because that I am more than common **small**,
 That I did suit me all points like a man?
 A gallant curtlet-ax upon my thigh,
 A boar-spear in my hand and, in my heart
 Lie there what hidden woman's fear there will,
 We'll have a swashing and a martial outside,
 As many other mannish cowards have
 That do outface it with their semblances. (I.iii. 110-118).

Since her comments no longer accurately reflected 'our' Rosalind there was no need to keep the rest of the description in the text, especially just for the sake of 'purity'. It was this concern for a modern sensibility which influenced most of the editing. Another influence upon the editing was the need to clarify and occasionally dramatically re-vision some of the relationships within the play. By removing all references to Adam's age from the text it was possible and practical to make Orlando's companion the asthma suffering street kid of our production without devaluing their friendship. In hindsight I think this move actually increased the bond between the two characters (and the actors) and also prevented the actor from resorting to bad make up and the need for 'hammy' acting.

It is not easy to articulate where or why a specific design is created but suffice it to say that the images that surrounded me at the beginning of this creative process evolved from marrying our 'political cause' with my desire to discover a visual metaphor for the play. In

the spring of 1994 Barry and I had discussed using the set from the 1993 University of Calgary production of *The Changeling* for our own production. We were excited by this because it could provide a very Elizabethan atmosphere for our production but upon looking at the model we realized that the unit set was too dark and too big for this lyrical play of light. Thinking about our goals the divergent aims began to fuse and in the late summer of 1994 I was able to present a number of set proposals to Barry - all of which could work and all of which provided much discussion. As part of the creative team I felt this was an important part of our process and Barry agreed, " I was MOST pleased when you brought a series of designs that we could look at and discuss. For me, this is creative excitement. Different ideas are bandied about and we brainstorm. My God, collaboration!!". One of the reasons our process was able to work in this positive manner was that we had time. Almost six months had passed between our first two meetings and that was plenty of time to develop a number of these proposals. Of interest was that about half of these proposals involved large amounts of fabric draped in various ways. Some, like the silk banners of my political satire had form and function but often I retreated to the world of fabric (which I know better) when I was stuck or unable to come up with a finishing touch or could not imagine another material which would create the same visual look. I felt my 'retreat to fabric' was important to conquer but it is related to the concerns of Peter Parina in his article "Scenography: Stage Magic and Visual Poetry";

I often hear that set and costumes should be designed by one person. I am not certain about that. These two disciplines are very different and seldom is one person equally good in both. If one has more talent for sets, the costumes tend to be sculptural and often difficult for actors to work in. It on the other hand one is better in costumes, the set tends to be a showcase for the costumes. One could argue equally well that there are parallels between architecture and set design, and between costume design and fashion, but there are very few architects practising fashion or fashion designers doing architecture (Parina 1992, 14).

It seems to follow that when in doubt one tends to cling to what one knows best and it became important for me to fight against this and take some risks. Throughout this process I was convinced that the important images in the design would be the tree and fence. I still have no real idea why I thought this but it continually recurred as central to me and so many of the proposals dealt with these images in various ways. After much discussion about all of the proposals we began to narrow the search. The design that worked best for everyone was my personal favourite; I felt it was the most effective, practical and lyrical. The proposal as it now stood included the tree which was still (in my mind) "a metal sculpture of twisted copper with no attempt to create a sense of realism" and the fence which had become less angular and now stretched across the stage. The proposal also called for several projection screens along the back wall upon which several collage pictures would be created showing the evil city at day and night and eventually transforming into the forest or Arden. It was at this point that the inter-relationship between the tree and the fence began to crystallize for me. The tree and the fence participated in the same journey as the young lovers and as they progress and grow internally then the set must somehow reflect this externally. At the same time I held discussions with Jim Andrews about the projections and how they might work and while everything is possible I almost immediately began to doubt the usefulness of the images.

I was somewhat concerned with the cost of the projections but more importantly I really began to believe that the strength of the set was its simplicity. In a pleasant way simplifying the space harkened back to the minimalist Elizabethan stage. More important was the realization that by removing the projections, like providing contemporary costumes, we avoided over-producing and dwarfing the actors in technology which did not tell the story.

Once the projections were cut I continued to refine elements of the set. At one point Barry

and I were worried that the set was too flat and that the only modulation in the space came from the picnic table. I felt it was too soon after *The Grace of Mary Traverse* to use the rake again and so we discussed the idea of two small, downstage ramps that would follow the curve of the UT stage and meet just before the vom entrance. We both thought they would provide great ramps for Le Beau's fashion show as well as good vantage points to watch the fight from in the city. Similarly, they could double as grassy knolls in the countryside and might be of some great use in the wedding. Yet once outside the meeting these ramps began to pose more problems than they were worth and I became quite worried about their cost. When I approached Barry again he agreed that if faced with a budget crisis the tree and the fence were more important. I decided then that we would cut them (so as to not have to go through the process of having someone else cut them) and Barry said they would somehow work without the ramps. In the end, I know it was the right choice, if for no other reason than the flat stage was overflowing with actors during the wedding as it was, and my budget was happier.

The removal of the ramps meant that again the relationship between the tree and the fence was the focus of the design. It had always been my intention that the fence would be in front of the tree during the scenes in the city and when the action moves to the forest the fence would disappear and the tree would revolve to expose its more natural side and be moved downstage. By this time I had abandoned the totally sculpted 'surreal' tree and was working towards a twisted metallic effect for the city tree and a more natural tree (with some metallic bits) for the forest. For me this relationship seemed to work although something seemed to be missing. When I presented the model to Barry and Shari the tree was a mesh of metal and leaves. Although I had yet to work out how its base would actually support the weight I was confident that the tree was the visual metaphor I wanted. The fence was hung about 3 feet off the ground and was actually centred between the floor

and the ceiling - it was less of a physical fence and more of a psychological presence within the city. As I noted in my journal, it was during the presentation of the model to Barry and Shari that the evolution of the relationship between these two elements was completed.

October 7, 1994

The fence caused some problems as I had it hung to be an aesthetic band across the proscenium - that is the fence was the idea of fence and not necessarily FENCE. However, Barry seems to want the fence to be reality and to extend to the floor. I don't object it's just I really question why the fence has to be so real when obviously the signifier is there. People aren't going to crawl under the fence because if it's not a complete physical barrier it's a complete psychological barrier and whether it's floating or touching the ground it still separates the urban from the rural. My point was that the floating fence does the same thing as a solid fence and looks better doing it from a purely aesthetic point of view

The tree met with much better success. We were talking about the tree and the fence and what to do with the city flashback scenes etc. (since the fence isn't there anymore) and I had put the fence back in place behind the tree (for storage) and eventually Shari said "Hey why not open the fence, pull the tree forward, and then close the fence again". Then it became clear to all of us that the fence could stay in play until Oliver and the other city people arrive in the forest for the redemption at which time the fence will disappear for good: beginning the restoration of natural order. It's such a good idea and extends the visual metaphor much more completely than it did previously.

If the process involved in the creation of the set design seemed less than traditional the process involved in the creation of the costume design bordered on the radical. Many of the characters began as a quick sketch or just a collection of brand names and then I developed various looks, colour ranges and silhouettes for the characters. Costume discussions between Barry and I lasted about two months. When character silhouettes and colour palettes had been finalized, the process became less traditional as I held discussions with each of the cast members. As previously mentioned the show was originally to have been created by the actors and so maintaining their input towards the show was important. This input was not limited to involving the actor in discussions about what the character would wear or what their hair would/should look like but having them

actively supply (or help search for) much of the costume as well. It was, as Barry said, an attempt to break down the barriers between "the designer, the director AND the designer and the actor". As my journal entry confirms, I was initially sceptical yet intrigued by the idea:

AUGUST 31, 1995

The problem with having people bring their own stuff is that I don't like doing it because inevitably something gets ruined and secondly I know students and I know they don't have mounds of excess stuff hanging out in their closets (especially high quality stuff) which we need a lot of. However, involving the actors in their wardrobe choices will be neat because I want to see how they go about approaching how they dress a character - can they separate "character from self". How do people decide "yes my character would wear that or no my character would never wear that". I know the process I go through - but I am fortunately more removed from the character than the actor is.

If my reaction to this proposal was divided and nervous the reaction from the cast was, equally interesting and mixed. For some of the senior acting students this was a great opportunity and they jumped at the chance to have a say in how they envisioned the character, often specifying what would empower the character and the actor and continually bringing in pieces from home (or a friend's home) which added just a little bit more definition to our reading of the character. As a costume designer this was enlightening, for often the character is conceived and reduced to fabric swatches and buttons, with some help from the wardrobe and the director, before the actor is even cast. Disaster can easily occur if an individual's take on the character veers sharply away from that pre-conceived notion. Other acting students seemed quite floored by the concept - perhaps wondering what I was getting my MFA for if they were going to do all the work! Were they paying me a compliment by trusting my judgement or had their study of character had never before necessitated looking at what they would wear, how they would wear it, or why they would wear it? For many of the junior acting students bringing in costumes from home was just like high school and it was no big deal. One of the more

telling aspects of this process was the difficulty many of the 'lords' and 'ladies' had in creating a character for the stage without having dialogue. It is not an easy task, especially when many people believe a non-speaking part is some sort of punishment for having a bad audition (when in fact the direct opposite is usually the case). I met with many blank stares when I asked why a particular character was in the forest or what that person had done before the takeover or what they would do upon returning to the city. I asked these questions in an attempt to give the actors a chance to see themselves as more than 'set dressing' and in performance the actors who knew their character's *raison d'etre* (such as Bunny and Maria) had a far better time of it than those who simply went and wore what they were told. Having consulted with the actors I was then able to consider, discuss, and render practical approximations for many of the looks for the show. The sketches simply provided a basic look and a sense of colour for each character and because a majority of the show was pulled from existing stocks, or personal wardrobes or bought second or third hand (more collaboration) anything more specific would have been radically altered during its 'realization'. Change is often an important and invigorating element of theatre designing and while this 'collaborative' process is not completely original it gave me an opportunity to experience a new process which was less concerned with hierarchy than usual. The necessity to continually re-think the position of 'designer' within the hierarchy and re-examine the way the process is traditionally seen to work was confirmed in a recent article in *Theatre Crafts International*. In the article Leslie Frankish talks of her work on the Shaw Festival production of *Ivona, Princess of Burgundia* which was directed by Tadeusz Bradecki who is the artistic director of the Stary Theatre in Krakow, Poland:

It was an interesting process,...entirely different from ours, and we had to mesh both worlds. In Poland, they work through an exploratory process; it's very organic - you rehearse and discover and start to design portions of the play. And then, gradually, it all comes together. There is no set opening night. Well, we weren't quite able to do that. But I was able to

marry our two different processes somewhat with the costumes.

We're lucky to have an excellent stock of clothes from 1890 to 1940, and so before rehearsals began, Sharon Secord and I went around to Stratford, to the Grand Theatre in London [Ontario], and our own stock and pulled anything remotely 1920s. Then I went into town and swatched any fabric that was remotely 1920s. We had all the resources ready. For rendering, I did silhouettes of the quality and attitudes of the characters in 1920s clothes, giving us room to discover what each actor was going to do with it.

We spent the first week seeing where the director was going and what the actors were starting to feel, and we started to sift through the clothes. How does this look on this person? How about this colour scheme? During the second week of rehearsal, we decided that one scene should be played in the middle of the night. So we decided that some were in nightwear, and some had just stayed up the whole night. Discovery and discovery - and very labour intensive for me. (Chase 1995, 38).

I really feel that the process we went through for this production was positive and quite rare. I think we both respected each other and really tried to allow each other the artistic space needed to create a show we were all proud of. Like Frankish, I think that the entire production was a rare experience in collaboration that is not seen much in theatre today. I will discuss two final and very different aspects of the pre-rehearsal period which really demonstrate the spirit of collaboration which was experienced on this production and truly does not happen with every show, despite our best efforts.

This collaboration included being asked to participate in the audition process which is a rare opportunity in most theatres and was a first for me. Being included from 'square one' as it were, provided me with a chance to really help shape the look of the show. Most things being equal, a great deal of casting was achieved by combining visual or vocal similarities and then contrasting them with a polar opposite: in effect underscoring the 'pastoral dichotomy' yet again. I am told that four people casting a play takes a lot longer than just one but the results are usually stronger and the satisfaction when the final list is drawn up is very rewarding. For me this sense of satisfaction stems from knowing that by

fully participating in the casting of the show I had a voice that counted in the creation of this company. I had been asked to share responsibility and that to me is the cornerstone of 'collaborative theatre'.

Another important collaborative process was the design and construction of the tree. Once the 'design' of the tree was loosely established it became its own collaborative process which did not really stop until just before the preview performance. The tree was constructed very organically. Often neither Werner nor I knew what would happen next. We just knew it would eventually work. There were several reasons for this collaboration. First, I was at the mercy of the technicians insofar as I was not convinced I could create accurate and beneficial working drawings nor do I have much knowledge on how to build a tree. Second, because the tree was really a very large styrofoam sculpture I felt it best to trust the sculptor and let Werner create in a manner and style he was most comfortable with instead of trying to follow a less than perfect model or sketch. Third, as discussions and rehearsals progressed so did the importance and requirements of the tree and the model that seemed adequate in November was less so by the third week in January. Last, the tree was built collaboratively and lacked a more traditional process because, as Douglas McCullough has been known to say "no one but God can build a tree"!

When I say the tree was constructed collaboratively I mean that as opposed to the traditional building method where the designer provides the technicians with precise working drawings or a complete and accurate model. Our tree had neither. It was decided early in the process that drawings would be rather useless not to mention extremely time consuming to create. We worked from a 1 inch scale model that was generally used to provide a sense of shape but did not contain all the detail of the finished project. While this did cause a bit of confusion (especially for the welders at the University Theatre who had to create the steel frame with less guidance than they are used to) it gave

us more freedom to experiment and create as the tree took shape. Many of the fine details of the tree, such as the mysterious breathing face would have been impossible if Werner, his crew, and I had been following a rigid construction pattern. Once the tree was sculpted it was then basically my responsibility to decorate it while the shops worked out how it would move and Werner worked out how it would bloom. The building and growth of the tree is one of the things I was proudest of as the designer. There was a lot of trust amongst several people who did not always know where this project was headed nor what was going to happen next and yet never doubted that in the end the tree would be able to stand proudly, move on time and with little fuss, be climbed, be swung upon and bloom. Having examined our designer-director relationship in detail it is important to pause and reflect on whether it was successful. Certainly I felt that *As You Like It* was successful and certainly by the positive mail received from high school audiences our political goal was reached. I am hopeful that many of those students will go on to enjoy more Shakespeare and more theatre in general. I firmly believe that the designer-director relationship was integral to the success of this production. When the relationship is strained one notices that this eventually has a negative trickle-down effect on the cast and crew not to mention a production that never feels or looks quite right. I felt that we achieved a very positive relationship because during the pre-rehearsal and rehearsal period it became more and more difficult to remember from whom, at which point and for what reason certain elements were being added to the design or to the rehearsal process. That is, no single person was able to totally dictate the entire production and from my experience there was more cooperation and collaboration involved in this project than in many. In part, this spirit existed because Barry, Shari and I all cared about this production immensely. None of us felt that it was simply a job that had to get done and most of the time we were able to keep our egos out of the discussions.

This is not to say that the designer-director relationship and our process was not without problems. One of the concerns I found is a common problem in theatre and one mentioned by Allan Watts in his article "De/Sign/ificant Assumptions". In the article Watts discusses the fact that the very concerns of the designer and the director (as they are understood in institutional theatres) work against the tenets of collaborative art:

Traditionally, the designer spends a lot of time with the director at two stages of the work. In the beginning they may spend considerable time together discussing, analyzing, conceptualizing - in short, planning the production. Again, as their work nears presentation to an audience, they come together in a final flurry of rehearsals to see the whole creation in its actuality for the first time. Between those times, their respective duties tend to separate them, both spatially and in terms of their focus (Watts 1992, 35).

It was impossible for me to attend all the rehearsals or for Barry to attend all the shopping trips and fittings and this meant that communication did not always happen as it should. Sometimes, as Watts mentions, one gets too involved in a small detail or concern and loses sight of the production as a whole. At other times a detail or piece of business can be innocently added to the production (albeit without the other person's knowledge) which tends to work at cross purposes to everything else that is happening. During the technical rehearsal with costumes I noticed at the top of II.vii. a group of the exiled characters returning to their campsite with their arms loaded up with full McDonald's bags. At that point something in me snapped. I had created a world far from the city which was difficult to enter and exit; establishing these conditions with the fence. Barry had single handedly destroyed the metaphor. I returned to my script and re-read certain passages which seemed to me to indicate that the forest was no where near the city or a McDonald's;

Orlando: Why, how now, Adam? No greater heart in thee? Live a little, comfort a little, cheer thyself a little. If this *uncouth* forest yield anything savage, I will either be food for it or bring it food to thee (II.vi. 4-7).

I also questioned why banishment would be such a bad thing if a McDonald's (and presumably all other urban amenities) were close by. I approached Barry the next day to discuss this concern and expressed my reservations about what the food was saying. He mentioned that in an effort to involve the cast in a more pro-active approach to the piece he had asked for suggestions in regards to this scene. Understandably, he could not refuse all the ideas mentioned and since the McDonald's had caused a lot of enthusiasm, he had decided to keep it in the performance. I wondered how familiar the cast was with the script and if they actually knew why they were in the forest or where the forest was? Barry asked if I had a solution to the problem and although I still feel quite strongly that we should have cut the food right then I suggested that we replace the McDonald's bags with generic bags and shake containers. I suggested this because obviously there is a small hamlet in the forest (where Martext lives and preaches) and it is possible that the village would have a skating/curling rink and these rinks always have a little concession stand where local ladies make greasy food for a local charity. This is the type of scenario which everyone who grew up on the prairies can relate to and yet still works within the framework of our play. In retrospect the generic fries and shakes still looked completely out of place and I should have argued more vehemently to have them removed. However, this is the sort of situation which probably could have been avoided if I had the time to attend more rehearsals and been involved in more discussions as the work on stage grew and took shape.

Another difficulty I experienced was again due to a lack of communication combined with an occasionally stubborn actor. From the beginning I had maintained that the collaborative process with actors was possible but that the final say in a look had to come from a discussion with me and could not be randomly made by the actor. If the program says costume design then I want some control. Usually the process worked quite well but as

my journal demonstrates even the best intentions sometimes create problems;

JANUARY 15, 1995

The bigger problem I'm having is the way the cast and others are dealing with the actor's clothing. Firstly, there are those actors who have refused to see me or think about their character or costume until they arrive at the fitting which is a little too late to do much of anything except sort of run around and be crazed. Although this hasn't been a huge problem no one has been very punctual about bringing things in and it has been very difficult to try and size up the show and see how things are looking until it is perhaps too late. Today our problem was how many girls in jeans - how many in dresses - trying to tie the chorus together with a look has been difficult because I'm seeing them one at a time and often they don't have all their stuff and so we're still guessing with some of the look and we have a lot more to organize and in many ways it would have been a lot easier to design each chorus member and then just pulled them as opposed to this less than satisfactory arrangement. The other BIG problem is actors who bring things into Barry who OKs them and then they go away and I never see these items but in the fitting all I hear is "No Barry said I can wear this instead". This has been a problem with Paul (Orlando) because while the renderings are "ideas" I did have rather set concepts for the leads which had little to do with what was in their wardrobe because, lets be serious, this is theatre and not real life and there are statements and ideas I'm trying to re-enforce within the audience about Orlando which are being undermined because people are trying to make things "easier" - the concept was things could come from your wardrobe but didn't have to. I also worry that Paul (because he wants to wear so much of his own stuff) is not going to look a) like the rest of the show and b) isn't going to look grungy and bag-like enough to really make his plight understandable to the audience. That is, if he's not broken down as much as Adam then we haven't achieved this thrasher grunge look we are going for.

In the end I think things looked fine and almost always the look was very close to what I wanted in the first place but the problems of trying to get the show costumed in this manner were trying. For a number of reasons I felt that in retrospect the process really did not work all that well. First, the collaboration of theatre can only succeed if communication is accurate, precise and timely. As is usual in theatre, I had to rely on other people to relay much of the information coming out of rehearsals and Barry had to depend on others to be informed of the situation in the shops. However, due to inexperience or incompetence most of this information was never received. Much of the frustration which we experienced

should never have happened, and even in a learning institution, should not have been tolerated by other powers that be. Second, the number of people who really took an active interest in the relationship between character and costume was considerably smaller than those who did not seem to care. Many of those who did care were playing characters that out of necessity had been seriously studied and designed before they were cast. Third, while the process generated much discussion very few people actually brought in much clothing that was practical so I am not sure that we saved ourselves much time or money. Fourth, from the beginning I knew we were dealing with student wardrobes which tend not to be filled with lots of Eddie Bauer, Polo, Henry Singer, Harry Rosen and Timberland clothes (which is what the show really called out for). If the actor wanted to help us out he/she was limited by reality. Last, I think the process works best in an organic theatre environment where the company is very small and very close and the journey (from start to finish) is completed by everyone at the same time. Under these circumstances, communication and discussion and design are happening at once and everyone involved should be interested and taking a pro-active approach to the production. This is not to say I would not try to collaborate with actors again but I would be much more particular about agreeing to the arrangement. The discussion generated and the notes taken as to how a character is perceived between the actor and myself was the most valuable aspect of the process. Perhaps that is where the process should end, leaving the hunting and gathering of the costumes to the wardrobe department.

I think that, regardless of the process the designer and director willingly or unwillingly go through, one always looks back and wonders if things could/should have been different. I also think that while a director-centred production or a designer-centred production or an actor-centred production all have their merits, a production which allows (or perhaps forces) everyone to work together produces theatre that everyone involved in the process

can be proud of. Such was the process that Barry and I went through and despite the problems and the fact that indeed there were some things that did not go as planned it was a process and a production of which we were proud. We gave a bit of ourselves to this production and process and in return took a bit of others away with us when it was over which, when you think about it, is the essence of theatre.

Chapter 6

Re-coding - Creation of a Semiotic Reading

...the modern theatre does not know unconditionally how to dress actors in classic plays or what environment to provide for them to move in.

Dennis Kennedy, *Looking at Shakespeare*.

"None of us can pretend that we are Elizabethans, four hundred years of history, wars, tragedies and progress have taken place since then", says Leon Rubin in the program notes to his 1984 Stratford Festival modern dress production of *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. I think this statement is vitally important to our own process and production. The most 'historically accurate' production of any of Shakespeare's plays by any company in the world is not going to impact the audience the same way as it originally did because we, the audience, are unable to de-code the playtext or read the performance with the same certainty or accuracy as did its original viewers. It has become common in the late twentieth century to link the visual Shakespeare with the textual Shakespeare. Dennis Kennedy argues that many contemporary productions use "scenography not only to establish environment and atmosphere but also to create a complicated theatrical signifier of its thematic approach" (Kennedy 1993, 3). There are people, cynics or purists, who would ask WHY? Simply put, their argument runs that the text is all that truly matters and, to paraphrase Hamlet, we should let the players play, regardless of the effect on the audience. I would argue that if theatre does not educate, enlighten and entertain then perhaps we should just stop doing theatre. A production of *King Lear* or *Oedipus Rex* that does not force us to look inward and see ourselves onstage and move us to reflect on the frailty of humanity and humanness has not been very successful. As the time gap between modern audiences and Shakespeare's works increases it becomes more difficult to rely solely on the words to relay all meaning. You cannot watch the play and your crib notes at the same time. It then follows that the look of a production becomes increasing

important to understanding not only what the text is saying, but also what the playtext is saying about the text. Dennis Kennedy argues that there "is a clear relationship between what a production looks like and what its spectators *accept* as its statement and value. This seems obvious: the visual signs the performance generates are not only the guide to its social and cultural meaning but often constitute the meaning itself" (Kennedy 1993, 5) [*italics mine*]. Kennedy's argument seems reinforced by Guy Sprung's statement that "Shakespeare doesn't have any messages or solutions. He only has a genius for understanding human nature and the human condition, and his plays have to do with people, and places and real experience" (Sprung 1991, 130). In essence Sprung is saying that it is the production (playtext) which invests the text with a contemporary meaning. His production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* which opened at The Pushkin Theatre (Moscow) on November 2, 1990 is such an example. A totalitarian Theseus ruled over the court with an iron fist, the forest was made to "reek of contemporary western rock...punk decadence" and the mechanicals would be "a collection of recognizable Soviet craftsmen (Sprung 1991, 6-7) . While the story of the star-crossed lovers and the battling fairies never changed, the new meaning given to the production and its effect on the audience was profound. Shakespeare was once again relevant to some of the over-worked, depressed but still proud Muscovites.

From the beginning however, it had been our intention to avoid doing a concept piece. "My whole philosophy as a director is summed up in the phrase TELL THE STORY!!! I object to things that are imposed on a script. Concepts should augment and clarify not impose and confuse. Why...anyone would dress characters up as insects in a Shakespearean comedy is beyond my ken" (Yzereef, 1995). My goal then was to help Barry tell the story while at the same time providing my own commentary on a text that was over four hundred years old. One of the most important tasks that Barry, Shari and I

undertook, as a part of this process was an attempt to 're-code' the performance in order to provide the audience with a production that was as multi-faceted and 'readable' to our audience as was the Elizabethan performance to that audience. This re-coding can be disastrous if it is seen as simply making the play 'more modern' on the surface - which usually translates into far too much gratuitous crotch grabbing whenever something vaguely understood (or misunderstood) as 'sexual' is mentioned in the script. The directorial challenge was to make the play easily accessible to a young audience without destroying the text while I became increasingly interested in creating a visual metaphor (helping to explore the subtext) which would be equally challenging for an older audience. Such a task is not easy as evidenced in the following argument from Dennis Kennedy's brilliant book *Looking at Shakespeare*:

The metaphoric method of visual encoding reminds us powerfully of the place of the audience in theatrical activity, and of how dangerous to perception radical revisions of Shakespeare can be. Audiences are not homogeneous masses; they are made up of disparate individuals who can receive the details of performance in different ways. Yet spectators probably bring more preconceptions of how the play should look when they go to Shakespeare than they do to the work of any other dramatist. Directors and designers, seeking vital and contemporary interpretations, can never fully anticipate how a production will read. The illustrative solutions they offer do not always succeed because miscues in perception are particularly widespread in the visual, bordering as it does on symbol and dream. Some visual concepts are too eccentric or solipsistic, and some are jammed with conflicting signals, so that disjunctions between text and reader are bound to occur. But blunders or failures, whether created by the performers' errors or by the spectators' limitations, should not blind us from the truth that all performance requires a "somewhere," an ille, that is seen, for fictive characters embodied by actors cannot live apart from time and space. A Hamlet set in contemporary Berlin is a different play than one set in medieval Elsinore or Elizabethan London, yet all three have legitimacy and even some Shakespearean authorization. To put it as simply as possible, how Hamlet dresses reveals as much about the style and intention of the performance as anything he says, and may well influence a spectator more than Shakespeare's poetry (Kennedy 1993, 15).

As You Like It is rather unique in the canon of Shakespearean comedies insofar as it does not clearly utilize a 'comedic wheel of fortune' which acts as a frame for most of the

comedies. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* begins in the court (in love) and then follows the action to the forest where wild things occur and then returns to the court in order to make all things right. Likewise, *Much Ado About Nothing* follows a similar cycle beginning with much rejoicing of life over death (the return of men from war) then slowly collapses into grieving and sorrow only to return to greater rejoicing of life over death (the return of Hero). *As You Like It* begins in a court which is most unnatural and then moves to the forest of Arden which heals and amends the characters and while the play returns to a 'natural order' we never follow the action back to the city. In many ways the audience lacks the sense of closure found in many of the other comedies; even Lear's path follows this cyclical route albeit with tragic consequences. Therefore one of my major design decisions was to thematically link the costumes at the first of the play with those at the end of the play in an attempt to provide this closure for the audience. Barry implemented a similar cyclical pattern by linking the flashlights used during the "Blow, blow thou winter wind" choral speech at the beginning of the play with the candlelight of Rosalind's epilogue after the wedding. I thought that the easiest way to do this was dress characters in the beginning and the end of the play in a pastoral look largely based on the images and colours of William Turner's paintings. Since the play opens with Orlando and Adam representing the periphery of the 'Frederick period' it became obvious that the pair of dancers added at the top of the show would have to be dressed in a style representing the 'pre-Frederick period'. The comforting and expected pastoral costumes seemed an obvious choice. Linking the beginning of the cycle (the pastoral) with its completion (the wedding) was done by dressing the wedding couples in an equally non-realistic manner. The two images were not identical but linked by the fact that they represented what the rest of the play had not been. I felt it was ideal to dress the couples in historical costumes which reflected their relationship: Rosalind and Orlando dressed in an adventurous Cavalier style, Celia and

Oliver reflected a Bronte-esque Romantic style, Phebe and Silvius dressed in a picturesque and warm Western style, Audrey and Touchstone dressed in the loudest and tackiest of style (or lack thereof). Limiting the colour range (in both costumes and lights) at both the beginning and the end of the production would also help to set these moments apart from the rest of the play and help to blend them together, allowing the circle to be completed. It was our belief that by linking these images symbolically we were providing closure; if the text would not take us back to the city we would make the journey ourselves.

Dressing the dancers in a traditional pastoral look served another purpose which was to trick people and upset their expectations of what was to follow. The idea was that the dancers, dressed as a shepherd and shepherdess, would lead people to believe that this was just another sleepy, dreamy, traditional production of Shakespeare's love play. However, at the end of the pastoral dance they would be jolted awake by the sirens, the rolling fence, the flashlights and all the actors, no longer confined to the stage, but spilling out throughout the auditorium. Prepared but uncertain, the audience was presented a new rather non-Shakespearean world. Throughout the performance they would continually experience other similar moments where they would be expecting one outcome (another bad Shakespearean wrestling scene) only to have something completely different thrown at them (a rather lengthy Jean-Claude Van Damme inspired kick-boxing sequence). In a tribute to television and the movies our aim was to keep the audience always ready for something new; the audience was allowed into our world but we wanted to ensure it never became predictable.

My parade of historical wedding costumes during the wedding scene also served another, equally important, function. I have never liked the ending to the play, finding it at best trite and formalized and at worst reeking of Jacobean excesses. It continues to be my belief

that if we are setting the play in 1995 the finale could nor should not happen. No matter how intelligent and modern one attempts to make the characters of Rosalind and Celia and regardless of the brilliance, breadth and depth of the actors playing these young women both characters become puppets in the fifth act. Celia, after instantly falling in love with Oliver never speaks another word and is only marginally mentioned at the wedding by Duke Senior who is able to muster this greeting:

My dear niece, welcome thou art to me,
Even daughter welcome, in no less degree (V.iv. 146-147).

Rosalind's fate is only slightly better. In her wedding finery she shrinks from the fiery, independent and strong woman she was in Act I and becomes a frightfully silent creature with :

[To the duke]: To you I give myself, for I am yours.
[To Orlando]: To you I give myself, for I am yours (V.iv. 115-116).

If the wedding was seen as real, as an actual continuation of the action, then what is our message to women: have fun because it all stops on your wedding day? This became a bigger issue because I knew we were targeting a young audience and I was well aware that we had to be careful as to how we were using the tool of theatre to educate our audience. At its most cynical (and dangerous) the wedding reads as a powerful political statement: in the four hundred years since this play was written nothing has changed. Women are still seen and treated as a commodity. This was not the message we wanted to give to our young audiences and as I frantically wrote in my journal (several times) "the wedding cannot happen in the real world nor real time of today!". My solution was to play upon the masque traditions of the seventeenth century. Essentially, I wanted to make the wedding a fantastical event so that the events within are not necessarily true. As Agnes Latham writes in her introduction to the play, "on stage the masque has the function of a play-within-a-play. Its heightened illusion makes the rest of the play seem momentarily

more real" (Latham 1975, xxii). It became important to make the costumes at the beginning and the end of the play less real. In essence the reality of the play (Act I.i.- Act V.iii.) was to be framed by "classical" or expected Shakespearean pastoral scenes as evidenced by the costumes.

What I wanted to do with the set design was rather more complex and certainly more demanding. My intent was to create a design that celebrated the inherent dichotomy of the pastoral but at the same time commented on the fantastic and surreal quality of the pastoral. Entwined in my concern for the pastoral was the feeling that the design should also be a political statement, commenting that the pastoral of Shakespeare's time (although simply a literary convention) could not exist today and, in fact, will never exist again. Yet while the foundation of the design was to be found in opposition I was also looking for a design which would act as a visual metaphor for the play. I was looking for a design that would take the same journey of self-discovery as Rosalind and Orlando. To me, finding a design that would communicate all of this to the audience and yet not dominate the production was a tremendous challenge.

In his article "Disattending the Play": Framing and Frame Breaking" Reid Gilbert discusses the inherent importance of framing devices in theatrical productions. He writes that, "because theatre presents spectacle at some remove from its spectators, it is naturally 'framed' spatially and ceremonially, but the notion of framing as part of a semiotic coding of performance...is somewhat more involved" (Gilbert 1992, 4). Much of what Gilbert discusses involves the cultural and mental preconceptions (or framework) that the audience brings to a performance and the designer's ability to play with and play against this existing framework. The eventual goal is to expand or change this framework. By providing small clues ('markers' or 'regulators') throughout the work the designer can manipulate the audience on several levels; these markers lead the audience immediately

to new discoveries about the play but more importantly forcing them to discuss and come to their own understanding of what the production is saying about the text, the audience and the world beyond the theatre building itself. As Gilbert argues, "only as the audience is allowed 'into' the drama through various 'doors' (real and conceptual) will it participate, but only as it is forced to build a 'frame' around the play and move outside it...will it come to understand the more complex implications expressed in the total dramatic design "(4). Although both Gilbert and Kennedy argue from different theatrical points of view they both agree that it is often the 'coded' design which holds the meaning of a contemporary production and is this same design which has a tremendous effect on the semiotic reading of the production. It is my belief that within the design there were several prominent doors which allowed the audience into, and beyond, our production.

The primary answer to my personal challenge and an important 'door' into the production was found in the design of the tree. The dichotomy of the pastoral was not solely to be achieved within the set design. Opposing forces were strong influences in the costume design as well. It became increasingly clear that if the design was to reflect a concern for the pastoral that the tree must be grounded not simply in opposites but rather in forces constantly in active opposition to each other. It was not enough to simply have an industrial side and a natural side because our world and the pastoral world of the play are not that simple. Driving to the university one day I came across a young tree glistening and shimmering, yet trapped in the blowing, ribbon-like remains of an unravelled cassette tape. This was not an unusual sight, but on this day it struck me as being the image which best explained my concept of two worlds at once colliding and yet co-existing.

At the top of the show the audience is introduced to a sculpture which appears to be 'tree-like' but is covered in metallic plates, its trunk criss-crossed with hoses and pipes. A large knot seems to contain the image of a breathing face, its branches cocooned in cassette

tape. Leaves seem to grow on distant branches and among the bricks there is green grass and bark. I wanted people to question this sight. Is the living tree being destroyed by the concrete and metal or has it evolved into a super-machine combining the best of the mechanical world with its own natural assets? Was the tree perhaps encased in the steel plates by eco-warriors who knew it was the only way in which the tree would survive? Conversely, is the tree growing around and out of the metal, consuming the mechanical world around it? Is the face within the tree the caretaker who keeps the tree alive or by some twist of fate is the tree keeping the man alive? How was this 'unnatural' sight connected with the expected pastoral play which was about to be performed? When the tree was turned around for the forest scenes the 'realistic' image presented was much more expected and comforting. Yet the tree was not simply a traditional Shakespearean prop for it also caused the audience to question it. Being the second of two images seen by the audience how was it related to the first image? Was this the same tree? If the tree is real why are there hoses connected to it? Are the hoses feeding the tree or pumping it full of toxins? What is the significance of the leaves being metallic?

Many of these questions could only be answered by viewing the tree not only as representing the opposed forces of the pastoral but also viewing it as a political statement. When I said the design should have a political message I may have sent fear through the entire creative team. My idea of political was not a radical manifesto but rather a social commentary somehow linked to the traditional ideas of pastoral. I firmly believe that a fundamental shift in value has occurred since the writing of the play and that one cannot escape the city, progress or technology. It is constantly with us and is forever a part of us. This observation partially stems from going to Kananaskis and seeing a huge range of evergreen trees swathed down in order to put up a huge hydro-power line. All the wire and metal towers became intrusive in the landscape and with the sound of sirens echoing off

the mountains I realized that the pastoral escape or sojourn was impossible. I still do not doubt the healing powers of the forest (as a hike or a holiday will prove) but it is impossible to escape, to really get away from the 'industrial' anymore. So while Arden is a welcoming place it is not the same Arden of Shakespeare's pastoral. Corin uses a milking machine and drives a John Deere combine while Audrey drives a pick up truck and all around them the banks foreclose; the tree must say all of this. Combining the metallic tree and the natural tree in a way that constantly allows both images to be constantly at war with each other was part of my solution.

If the design only served my political aims it would become a difficult concept piece that would not necessarily work with the rest of the production. Therefore, I returned to the text and ensured that the tree could also be read as a visual metaphor of the written text. As I mentioned earlier, the text does not fully complete the traditional comedic cycle of fortune but the tree, like the costuming, allowed the audience to make this journey. During the pastoral dance the tree was dimly lit and played no part in the action of the two dancers. Yet when the tree was hit by pastel light during the dance one was able to catch glimpses of it - a bit of trunk, some leaves, a bit of glittery stuff - it was possible to forget the haunting industrial image of the pre-show and to imagine the tree as belonging to this pastoral scene. This is a state I would call the natural order of the Shakespearean pastoral. With the end of the ballet, the rolling in of the fence, the blackout and the disarming choral piece, the world has been flipped upside-down. When the cold lights come up on Act I.i. the world has become unnatural. This world is a place of usurpation and banishment. It is a place where people are displaced and are left out in the cold waiting for death; it is 'the winter of our discontent'. The tree, further distanced from the audience by the chain-link fence and lit by blue and purple light, becomes unnatural, as if from a nightmare. The image of this bizarre tree re-enforces the chaotic and destructive

world which has been established with the unnatural rule of Frederick. As the characters flee to Arden the tree reflects the new found freedom and attitudes experienced by Rosalind and Orlando. The tree, having pivoted to reveal its 'other' now displays a more natural side. It is now closer to the audience and parallels the world of Arden which is no longer seen as threatening nor dangerous. The tree, brightly lit in ambers and fresh greens, has returned to 'life' and this mirrors the return to life of the protagonists as they move towards self-examination and redemption. It is important that the first scene involving Arden and the new tree centres on the lively Duke Senior and his healthy followers. It leaves little doubt as to the fate of the new refugees. Throughout the forest scenes the tree is no longer just an image but provides for, and is used by, many of the characters. It provides a place to sit, a swing to sway upon, a place to hide behind and cool branches to rest under. The tree becomes a player and a partner in the healing process. The tree, like many of the characters from the city continues to redefine itself, becoming fully functional instead of just a decoration. The wedding brings about final reconciliation, redemption and repatriation to many of the characters. With the return of Duke Senior to the 'throne' and the exile of the usurping brother the natural order of things has been re-established. It naturally follows that the tree, peeling away the layers of mechanics and hoses bursts into bloom and is once again bathed in pastel light.

I have followed and explained what I believe was a typical reading of the tree during the performance but a closer reading provides a more sophisticated message. I argued that the wedding scene heralds a return to the natural order within the play and that this is reflected in the tree bursting into bloom. However, it did not take a great deal of observation to see a person standing behind the tree manipulating the various wires needed to make the flowers 'pop out'. That is, the blooming of the tree is not natural but the result of a mechanical process. The claim that the Duke and his followers can return

to the city and establish a new order is complicated by the fact that the very symbol of this completed journey is a product of the mechanical world: the world left behind. While one argues that the forest was the healing force in the play (as represented by the tree) none of it was possible without the technology of our city (in a world beyond the play). Yet the play claims that the healing process can only begin once the city is left behind. The need to visibly employ industrial mechanics in order to animate the tree (throughout the show) casts another shadow upon the ending of the play. Will the returning heros be able to implement their new order or will they be engulfed by the resisting old order as established by Frederick? Is it possible that redemption will be overturned by *realpolitik*, as personified by Secretary Jane? This deeper reading of the performance illustrates how impossible it is to escape and flee the city as idealized in Shakespeare's play. While it is debatable that such an escape was even possible in his day it was certainly important to our production to blur those lines even further calling into question the ability to divide and maintain these separate worlds.

At one point in the design process, when the budget was looking particularly grim, Barry said that the fence had become so important to him that if we had to, we should lose the tree. Having just examined the complexity of the tree as signifier it is perhaps difficult to understand how the fence could be more meaningful. For Barry the "city setting with its industrial fence vs. the country with its picnic table and tree was simple and told the story" (Yzereef 1). For myself the interrelationship between the tree and the fence represented many of the ideals of 'pastoral' and the specific concerns of this production. The placement of the fence and the tree onstage became a strong signifier of many of the important themes in *As You Like It*: inside versus outside (not only in a pastoral sense but also referring to the 'halls of power'), open versus closed, natural order versus imposed order and the wild versus the tamed (of specific interest to a growing number of feminist

Shakespearean scholars). The fence became a necessary framing device in the production not only representing the themes of the play and visually representing entrapment and escape, it was also a silent comment upon reality. That is, whenever the fence was offstage the action onstage was unreal (real to the characters but unreal to the audience). The fence was offstage during the pastoral dance and the wedding masque. Conversely, when the fence was onstage the ensuing action was seen as being 'real' (for the audience and the characters). The fence, like the fantastical costumes, was an important clue as to how the action onstage was to be perceived by the viewers.

The fence, like the tree and the costumes, provided a powerful visual metaphor of the cyclical path of fortune. As previously mentioned, the dance, which was read as the 'pre-Frederick' period, represented the natural order of the world. This was clearly evidenced by the bare stage as the world was free and full of beauty. The emergence of Frederick as the political force in the world was symbolized by the 'flying' in of the fence. This event was not done quietly - no attempt was made to conceal the considerable rattling that forty feet of chain-link fence made as it emerged onstage. The noise compounded with the fleeing of the dancers, the siren and the blackout signalled a new world. When the lights came up on Act I.i. the chain link fence (topped with three strands of barbed wire) stretched across the stage and was lit with blue light. The effect was to create the nightmare image of the fence surrounding prisons and concentration camps. The play was blocked so that the only entrances could be made through the vom, from the four aisles in the auditorium and from the wings but only in front of the fence. In reality this cut the stage in two at the proscenium line. This really helped to engulf the audience within the action of the play. They were in the same world as these characters and there was no escape because the only other visible world was distant and inaccessible. At the bottom of Act II.ii. it was decided that one of Frederick's bodyguards and his girlfriend would escape to the forest

and join Duke Senior's entourage. Left alone on the bare stage they ran to the fence and undid a chain which separated the fence into two large hanging panels. The bodyguard then pushed on one panel of the fence which moved about three feet and this provided an escape route for the two of them. Continuing the motion from off-stage one third of the fence was pulled off [stage right]. At the same time, two foresters slid the tree (riding on air castors) into its central down stage position (several feet in front of the proscenium line). The fence never closed again, but hung as two panels separated by an opening of about ten feet. What the audience suddenly understood was that a major change had occurred in the world because the city could now be escaped and the forest could now be (voluntarily) entered. This was the beginning of the restoration of the natural order. Visually, the fence continued to reinforce to the audience (and perhaps the characters in the play) that the dangers of the city were still present: Frederick had not been dealt with. The omnipresent fence was a constant reminder that the banished characters were still prisoners and unable to return home. The forest was a more comfortable prison than the city but it was still a prison and the refugees were little better off than the deer they hunted. It is hoped the fence also spoke directly to the audience as to the state of our own 'real' world. The image of the tree against the backdrop of this mechanized fence, like the cassette tape among the branches of the tree, reinforced my political comment on the contemporary impossibility of escaping from the effects of humankind. I conceived of the image while in Banff National Park, amid the fences and power lines and where one is never sure if the animals are being fenced away from the tourists or the tourists are being fenced away from the animals. The only certain thing is that the experience is anything but natural. I felt that visually, the fence interfering with the tree was easier and simpler to read than the natural tree attempting to fight off the invasion of mechanized components and hoses. Together the two items created a powerful image commenting on what has

happened to our world in four hundred years. At the top of Act V.iii. the fence was pulled off-stage completely which returned the stage (to a large degree) to its pre-show state and heralded, like the blooming tree, the restoration of the (pre-play) natural order. However, the attempts of the text to return everything to a natural order becomes quite ironic given that in this production I have argued via the design, that neither the natural order of the pre-play period nor the innocent pastoral world of the forest can ever be reached. Stressed throughout the design was my fundamental belief that the natural order sought in the play is no longer seen as the natural order in 1995.

Was allowing the design to work against the text actually forcing a concept upon the production? Honestly, I have to say no. Neither the costume design nor the set design ever intruded into the text or into the production. While I have outlined how the production should have been read, it was also possible to watch the performance and avoid all of the semiotic coding within it. While missing or misreading the 'clues' of the performance might have made the production less satisfactory (what did all those costumes at the end mean?) it remained a strong telling of Shakespeare's story. As a designer it is disappointing when one's vision cannot be shared by everyone. Yet I remain convinced that subtle clues, scattered throughout the performance, accruing slowly, lead the spectators to a deeper reading of the performance (and ultimately the text). As Leslie Frankish states in *Theatre Crafts International*, "I always find what people read into the play to be delightful....We drop an idea seed into the audience's mind and wait for the circles to go out from it. It's important to me that a set does more than just spell it out for the people" (Chase 1995, 38). For many designers an intellectual and subtle production is a greater challenge requiring a more pro-active response from the audience than an obvious concept production or a production which cannot decide on its concerns and deluges the audiences with too many mixed visual metaphors and possible readings.

Chapter 7

Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything

Thus far, with rough and all-unable pen,
 Our bending author hath pursu'd the story.
 William Shakespeare,
Henry V (V iii 1-2).

The success of any theatrical production lies, of course, with the response it elicits from the audience. I fear this is often lost on many theatre practitioners who often feel that if our ends were achieved successfully then so was the production, regardless of its affect on the audience. I think the most important thing to be said for our production of *As You Like It* was that it successfully achieved the political aims of the director. The production reached an enormous number of young people who responded very positively to what they saw onstage. The modern dress, effective text and easily understood set were all key elements in being able to understand and enter the world of Shakespeare. To the general audience I think we presented an energetic and pleasing production, which may have changed some people's minds about the value and the need to update Shakespearean productions. Martin Morrow, of the *Calgary Herald* wrote;

Having seen my surfeit of modern-dress Shakespeare, I groaned inwardly when, at the top of Act 1, Paul Kommes' rebellious Orlando makes his appearance as a long-haired graffiti artist with ripped jeans and a can of spray paint, followed by the Adam of C. Adam Leigh, who is no longer a servant but a skateboard punk. But, happily, this staging does not end up bending over backwards to create contemporary parallels.

After a while, you forget there's a picnic table in the forest of Arden, or that the rustic English shepherds are wearing Alberta cowboy duds (February 24 1995, Section C, p 2).

Certainly I felt that our production was able to deal successfully with all of my concerns raised in regard to presenting a Shakespearean play in modern dress. The production drew a large number of people to the theatre and throughout the department was considered a modest 'hit'.

While I was pleased with the production, I felt that it was entirely too safe, especially in 1995. If Kennedy is correct and the seminal production of *As You Like It* was staged in 1967 then I think our production really needed to push the envelope of gender politics. Our production specifically stated that the love story was not involved nor concerned with gender politics. Yet who was Orlando really in love with? Did the hero love Ganymede because (s)he reminded Orlando of Rosalind or did Orlando really love Ganymede because of who and what the boy represented? The lack of sexual and gender politics in the production was best evidenced by the fact that Orlando and Ganymede were never allowed to kiss. Unlike Martin Morrow I do not believe that watching someone trying to keep from kissing someone of the same sex properly underscores, much less deals with, the issues of gender and sexuality inherent in the text. Similarly, the Rosalind-Celia relationship might have been explored more carefully because there is a none too subtle homo-erotic subtext that runs throughout the play, continually uniting the women. However, in all cases it was decided to remove any homo-erotic reading or evidence of homosexuality from the production. Le Beau, Touchstone and Phebe were all considered by the director or the actor at some point as gay characters, but in every case it was decided it would be easier if the heterosexual orientation remained. Even in the forest when there was a perfect opportunity to create a statement by involving a same sex couple the option was discarded. The importance of sexual power and its role within the play and within society, which seems to be at the heart of the play, was also greatly simplified. At times I felt the production seemed to play with gender politics in a way we had not intended. During rehearsals the character of Secretary Jane became much larger than Shakespeare's Lord 1. The character became much larger and continually usurped more of Frederick's power. By the time the production opened she had become the hated and corrupt power of the corporation and Frederick was almost absolved of his responsibilities

to the injured and neglected people of his world. At other times the complex issues of gender politics inherent in the script seemed removed from the production. The power that Rosalind assumes while disguised as a man has been discussed by various critics and many agree that the disguise is much more important than simply providing a convenient plot device;

In my view, the figure of Rosalind dressed as a boy engages in playful masquerade as, in playing Rosalind for Orlando, she acts out the parts scripted for women by her culture. Doing so does not release Rosalind from patriarchy but reveals the constructed nature of patriarchy's representations of the feminine and shows a woman manipulating those representations in her own interest, theatricalizing for her own purposes what is assumed to be innate, teaching her future mate how to get beyond certain ideologies of gender to more enabling ones. (Howard 1993, 33).

Yet in the production the disguise and the power that emerged from it were seen as simply being part of the story and any discussion that might have been raised surrounding this issue was disregarded. I realize that many of these issues were considered too complex, too explicit or too inappropriate for a production aimed at drawing more high school students towards theatre and yet I was quite disappointed that we chose simply to ignore these issues. Exploring these issues is controversial, but exploring the play without examining the complexities of the critical issues facing us in 1995, seems to be equally controversial. I feel as a result the production was rendered less potent. Ironically, our production of a play which revolves around gender politics and being produced by a theatre department that, as Morrow explains, is focussing the season on the themes of gender and the complexities of sexuality, played it very safe and avoided many of these concerns.

This work set out to ask many questions, collect many answers and achieve many things. I know I have not answered all the questions I raised and in the process of answering some questions I inevitably asked more. I set out to explore (and perhaps explain) a very

important relationship in theatre and found out that the designer-director relationship is, perhaps, beyond defining. The relationship is partially pragmatic, partially mystic, partially creative, partially impossible and constantly changing. Rising above all this confusion is the recognition that not only is this relationship necessary, it is also a very positive force in theatre. Yes, there will always be exceptions and those directors and designers who are referred to as geniuses often operate outside the realm of traditional process. Or do they? There are few answers at the end of my search (or is it the beginning?) and any attempt to quantify or qualify my findings is impossible. What this work has done is to help create a stronger me .

Creating, designing and producing my thesis production and the subsequent writing has re-kindled my interest in understanding and further developing my philosophy of design. When I began the program it was with a certain lack of direction on many levels. It becomes easy to become complacent and to go through the design routine(s) without much thought as to 'why' I do what I do; certainly it is not the money. There have been, and will continue to be the occasional production(s) when I find it easier to listen to the director's shopping list and simply provide it onstage. But there will be far more productions, projects and discussions which continually challenge me and my art; to me this has been the most valuable aspect of this degree. It has given me time to think and study the larger questions of design in a way previously not possible. The world of theatre design is often filled with contradictory messages which can be overwhelming and extremely frustrating. Discovering how I see myself and my role within this world is a major step towards filtering through the messages until they make sense. David Payne is laying down the corner-stone of my design philosophy when he writes: "while technical expertise is essential to [designer's] work, mechanical skill is merely a means to a goal, not the goal itself" (Payne 1981, 18) In order to be successful, part of my philosophy views

the designer as a communicator between several disparate elements within the theatre. Drafted ground plans, detailed models, painted design renderings and costume sketches are all means of communicating with technicians, directors and other designers but cannot be seen as the entire message. Accompanying this is a personal ability to be flexible within the parameters of the artistic vision in order to meet the demands of other technical, artistic or personal concerns of the production. While these 'artistic' means of communication must be comprehensible they must not be mistaken for the designer's true work which only occurs during the presentation of the whole production, onstage and in front of an audience.

My own process has led me to the conclusion that my initial interest in combining the literary with the visual is the very essence of good theatre design. It is poor design which provides image without metaphor. While I maintain that good theatre design is based in the text it is not limited by it. Design lives through the text. It may comment on the text, it may support the text or it may argue against it but it is forever entwined with it. Ironically, a simple shaft of light, a bloody chemise lying on the floor or the position of a fence on stage can usually say more to the audience than the most eloquent of writers. Given the power of the visual, the gift of the designer is not to create images which overshadow or overpower the text. "It would surprise the average theatre goer (and quite possibly many a theatrical insider as well) that many scenographers very rightly assume that if their own work 'shows up' in a production, that if their skill is too readily apparent, they have to some degree failed in their intent" (Payne 1981, 18). A production that drowns in metaphor or images or messages is as disappointing as a production that is barren of commentary and serves simply as a mouthpiece for an author's words.

Good design is an aid, not just to the audience, but also to the actors *into* the play. While designers often use actors to create images unknown to the actor the actor can also take

the metaphor further than the designer could possibly have imagined. In this way these two (often warring parties) can help each other to reveal aspects and moments of the play which are unique to a specific production. Visual nuances created by the designer often allow the director *into* the play allowing for the exploration of subtle and unseen worlds that would otherwise be impossible. Good design allows the director to expand the concepts and concerns of the first designer-director meeting and to fully realize the themes of a particular production. In the best of cases good design also allows the playwright *into* his/her creation to explore issues, themes and concerns that the author may not know lie hidden beneath the text. To say that good design allows everyone *into* the production and subsequently allows them to leave with more is also important to my philosophy.

Looking back over this work as it nears completion I am drawn to the theme which runs continually throughout my writing, my work and my philosophy. I have come to believe that the art of the designer is not a peripheral or adjunct theatrical activity but rather a vital element in theatrical production. Conceptualization, process and creation are important tools of the designer. As tools, they only exist if they are combined with the words of the author, the vision of the director and the skill of the actor. If I have learned nothing else throughout this process it is that nothing in theatre can happen in a vacuum.

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