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THE DIRECTION OF
WHY TORTURE IS WRONG, AND THE PEOPLE WHO LOVE THEM

by

DONALD C. HART

A THESIS
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
MASTER OF FINE ARTS
IN
THEATRE ARTS

MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY, MANKATO

MANKATO, MINNESOTA

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The Direction of *Why Torture is Wrong, and the People Who Love Them*

Donald C. Hart

This thesis has been examined and approved by the following members of the student's committee.

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ABSTRACT

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This is a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment for the Master of Fine Arts degree in theatre. It is a detailed account of Donald C. Hart's artistic process in directing *Why Torture is Wrong, and the People Who Love Them* in the fall of 2017 for Minnesota State University, Mankato's department of Theatre and Dance. The paper chronicles the director's artistic process from pre-production through performance in five chapters: a pre-production analysis, a historical and critical perspective, a production meeting and rehearsal journal, a post-production analysis and a process development analysis. Appendices and works cited are included.

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CHAPTER I

PRE-PRODUCTION ANALYSIS

This chapter contains the pre-production analysis for Donald C. Hart's direction of *Why Torture is Wrong, and the People Who Love Them* by Christopher Durang. The play was selected as a thesis by the director in the spring of 2017. Minnesota State University, Mankato was granted permission to perform *Why Torture is Wrong, and the People Who Love Them* September 13, 2017, through September 16, 2017, in the Andreas Theatre.

Why Torture is Wrong, and the People Who Love Them is a two-act satire. Its primary message is that conservative extremism can be harmful. It can cause both physical and psychological damage to others. An extremist is defined as, "A person who holds extreme political or religious views, especially one who advocates illegal, violent, or other extreme action" (Oxford Dictionaries). Thus examples of United States conservative extremist groups are the Ku Klux Klan, the American Nazi Party and the American Freedom Party. The play contains characters who represent groups such as these. They value Caucasians, Christians, assault rifles, fetuses and people who survive through ICU machines more than others. Their actions are often xenophobic, Islamophobic, nationalistic, militaristic or misogynistic.

The play's title references how some radical conservatives want to torture Arabs and Muslims for the war on terrorism. This was the danger of extreme conservatism that

Durang wanted to emphasize the most. He used the phrase “and the people who love them” in the title because it made the play sound like many popular self-help books that have appeared over the last several decades. “I bring up the topic of terrorism, but I add a sentence that makes it sound like it’s a self-help book and earnest. And the juxtaposition, to many people, is funny” (Durang, *Why Torture* 98). It was also titled this way because it is grammatically incorrect in a similar way to Stephen Colbert’s political satire book, I Am America (and So Can You!).

Several key actions of the play support Islamophobia as one of the primary dangers from the far-right. The liberal feminist, Felicity, becomes fearful that her new husband, Zamir, might be a terrorist because of his name, ethnicity and quick-temper. Her father, Leonard, fully believes Zamir is a terrorist shortly after he meets him for the same reasons. Zamir is not a terrorist but Leonard will not be persuaded otherwise. Later he tortures and disfigures Zamir for information about future terrorist attacks.

Far-right ideology is primarily seen through Leonard but other characters reinforce the perception that this story’s world is controlled by these beliefs. Neither Zamir nor Reverend Mike identify with conservative extremist politics but both have misogynistic beliefs that match the far-right. Both treat women as inferiors. Reverend Mike sometimes sees women merely as sex objects (he describes some women by their mouths). Zamir often refers to Felicity as his property and even “date rapes” her. This could lead an audience to believe that all men within the world of this play (except for the narrator) are sexist. This communicates to the audience that the world is controlled by far-right ideology.

Through the women characters, audiences see both the impact of misogyny and the harm of appeasement toward extreme actions. Luella and Hildegard willingly accept their social roles as the subservient women to the male characters. Even when they question the morality of Leonard's actions they follow blindly and obediently. The most rational character, Felicity, even appeases her father's radical nature for most of the play. Therefore Islamophobia, violence, misogyny and appeasement are the main dangers Durang associates with the radical conservatism in this story. To be clear his overall point is that radical conservatism is bad.

The plot begins when a young woman, Felicity, awakes in a hotel room next to a stranger, Zamir. He claims that they married the previous night while they were both very intoxicated. Felicity's discovery of their marriage is the inciting incident because this action starts the chain of events that lead to the final scene. It also establishes that Felicity is the protagonist of this story. Because Felicity has no memory of the marriage she immediately requests an annulment. She quickly learns that Zamir has a frightening temper, a sexist view toward women, a suspicious profession and an Arabic first name. This makes Felicity fearful that she has married a possible terrorist or mobster.

Felicity immediately turns to her parents for help in Act I, Scene ii. Her mother, Luella, is too delusional to be helpful. Leonard, Felicity's radically conservative father, quickly offers to kill Zamir. While Felicity frantically wants to end her marriage she does not want her father to cause Zamir any harm. This scene establishes Leonard as the antagonist.

Leonard later captures and tortures Zamir. He does this not because he cares about Felicity but because he believes that Zamir is a terrorist who possesses knowledge of the next September 11-esque attack. Felicity acts to prevent Zamir's torture but is too late.

With the help of the play's narrator, Felicity goes back in time and creates an alternative beginning to the story. She sees what could have happened if people behaved differently. In this reality Leonard is more empathetic and is less concerned about his political agenda. Zamir is more honest and willing to change his negative personality traits. The play ends ambiguously because it is unclear what will happen next with these characters.

Felicity has been interpreted as the protagonist because the story's dramatic questions all revolve around her. Thus the plot progresses primarily through her. She is hopefully the most relatable character. Someone that the audience can identify with. All the other characters are odd, extreme or relatively unrealistic. She also enhances the other characters' humor as she is the only character that behaves "straight". "Felicity is the person of reason, like Betty in *Betty's Summer Vacation* or Prudence in *Beyond Therapy*. Her reactions to the crazy people can and should be believable and rooted ... and her presence ALLOWS the audience to find the other, crazier characters funny" (73). It is also important to point out that she is the only female character with a feminist outlook. This gives the play some feminist themes. The audience gets to see both how life is in a patriarchal society and how life could be in Felicity's altered reality.

Leonard is the play's antagonist since he stands most in Felicity's way. He also serves as a foil to her. Felicity is a peaceful, logical, liberal, young adult (about 25 years old). Her father is a violent, irrational, far-right, older adult (about 55 years old). This strong contrast from Felicity allows for more conflict and an easier way to point out his wrong actions.

The director believes that Leonard's motivation is not necessarily to literally protect America but to protect his image of America. He often refers to the past and how much better life was. At one point he refers to how he wants to be like the dad from "Father Knows Best" (22) and at another moment he mentions how wonderful the Vietnam War was (15–16). Leonard's image of America is a nationalistic version of the world he grew up in. Durang places this play sometime during the Iraq War. The director imagines that this story takes place in 2007 which would put Leonard's birthdate in 1952. "Father Knows Best" would have been on television when he was a boy and he would have been a young man by the time the Vietnam War ended.

Zamir serves primarily as a plot device because he is the new person who enters the other characters' lives and triggers most of the play's actions. His presence also introduces the issues of Islamophobia and torture to the audience. He should be a charming, hot-headed, cocky, insecure, misogynistic attention-seeker. This should make him both comical and alarming. The audience should however perceive a strong character change in Zamir by the end compared to his first several scenes. It is only in the end that the audience discovers why Zamir acts the way he does.

The director recognizes however that Zamir is not merely an innocent victim of prejudice. He commits sexual assault and acts as a ne'er-do-well. These actions present a challenge because audiences may not empathize with him as strongly. His struggles with societal xenophobia and Islamophobia could be overlooked. This is why the play's final scene is important. Zamir recognizes that he was wrong and could be a different person. It does not justify his actions but it gives the audience the belief that his life will change for the better. The scene also confirms that he is not a terrorist, mobster or some other person demonized by society. Audiences should empathize with Zamir most at this point.

The Voice serves as the play's narrator and steps in to play a couple of utility characters. The character was originally invented to serve as the voice for Felicity's inner thoughts and feelings. Near the end of the play he serves almost as a *deus ex machina* when he grants Felicity's wishes to go back and change how the story began. The actor who plays this role should be likeable, charismatic and vocally versatile. The latter will likely be the greatest challenge as the actor who plays the Voice must be able to use multiple character voices. One utility character the Voice becomes is Leonard's far-right partner, Looney Toons. This character has a form of Tourette Syndrome that makes him shout uncontrollably in cartoon voices. Most of these voices seem to be written as imitations of Looney Toon characters.

This actor must also have the ability to sing because in the final scene the Voice becomes the Hooter's Maitre d' who sings "Dancing in the Dark" by Howard Dietz and Arthur Schwartz. This interpretation of the song should be similar to the Frank Sinatra

version since Felicity seems to enjoy his music. Earlier in the play, she requests another Sinatra song, “What are You Doing for the Rest of Your Life?”, by Alan Bergman, Marilyn Bergman and Michel Le Grand.

Luella serves as Felicity’s primary confidant and vice versa. It is also through Luella that the audience realizes how cruel and abusive Leonard can be. Even when he is not in the room Luella seems to be constantly tortured by the idea that she is married to a madman. Her only way to cope with this reality is to ignore it and think about things more pleasant to her. This creates some bizarre actions and dialogue. It will be a challenge to the actor who plays Luella to justify her absurdity.

Hildegard serves as a confidant to Leonard and as an extension of his actions. Leonard uses Hildegard as a puppet. She willingly follows his commands partially because she believes in some of the far-right causes and partially because she feels drawn to powerful men. Her definition of a powerful man is likely someone who asserts dominance over others. Therefore she is strongly attracted to some of Leonard’s misogynistic nature. Most of Hildegard’s comedy is formed by her obsession with Leonard and her clumsy nature. The greatest challenge to this role will be how her underwear repeatedly falls to her ankles throughout the play. Durang even admits in his notes that he is not entirely sure the best way to make this happen. The director will need to collaborate with both the actor and costume designer to find the best solution.

Reverend Mike is primarily used to create motivation for other characters. Felicity takes his contact information after she meets him because she plans to use his testimony to get the marriage annulment. Hildegard and Leonard mistake the

conversation between Reverend Mike and Zamir for terrorist attack plans. Felicity asks Reverend Mike to her parent's house to help her free Zamir. In the Hooter's scene, Hildegard overcomes her obsession for Leonard and turns her affections to Reverend Mike. The main challenge for this character is that he should appear both suave and unsettling. This juxtaposition should help show that he is both a disgusting pornographer and a genuine holy man.

The director's concept for this play is that the world is controlled by crazy far-right ideology and Felicity is the only voice of reason. Selective realism will be used in the designs. This is because the story is unrealistic but it has commentary on the real world. The director suggests that the properties, furniture and costumes (minus the Hooter girls') should be realistic. It is likely that the set will be minimal in its size and detail because it needs to quickly transition to multiple locations. The sound and light design should also be realistic unless there has been some interaction with the Voice.

The most unrealistic moments of the show happen when the Voice appears. Thus the director suggests that the design areas help communicate to the audience that the Voice lives in a different style than the other characters. This style should be appropriate for every part the Voice plays. Therefore the director believes selective qualities of late 1950s cartoons might create the most appropriate style. Bright colors and full orchestral music could help convey this. It is important the Voice is not shown in a chaotic cartoon style. This character should be a juxtaposition of the chaos in the more realistic world. This is similar to how some cartoon characters (e.g., Bugs Bunny) are suave, calm and in control while the chaos exists around them.

Durang does not give a specified date for when the story takes place. He only alludes through the dialogue that it is the same time as the Iraq War. The director believes that the best time to place the play at is within 2007. By this point the war has already been fought for several years. “In January 2007, President Bush announced a controversial plan to temporarily increase the number of U.S. troops there by more than 20,000, an effort that became known as the surge” (Britannica). This increased activity led to the largest number of American soldier deaths since the earliest parts of the war. The tension from these historical events seem strong enough to motivate the actions of the play’s characters.

It is also unclear the exact locations of every scene. The dialogue states that Felicity lives in New York while her parents live in New Jersey. However they cannot live too far apart since Felicity is able to visit them so quickly and frequently. It is also implied that Felicity and Zamir do not have large incomes. Therefore the director believes that the main locations could likely be Bronx, New York, and Fort Lee, New Jersey.

To help convey the parents’ conservatism the director also suggests to include traces of late 1950s style with their home and clothes. Leonard often reminisces about his childhood. He believes that life was far better then. Durang also references the 1950s many times with his stage directions for Hooters and suggestions for music. The challenge with this choice is that the audience might become confused with what time period the play is in. A mixture of 1950s and 2000s style in the parents’ house might be forgiven if all the other locations are clearly a 2000s style.

Leonard's butterfly room should be exaggeratedly militaristic. The director has envisioned this room to be similar to how an overly-paranoid person would prepare for World War III. Guns, ammunition and survival supplies should be everywhere (especially on the walls). This room should show the audience the extent of Leonard's extreme paranoia. The more weapons there are and the more powerful the weapons are, the more extreme Leonard appears. Challenges with this might be the department's limited space, weapons and budget.

It is the director's hope that this satire will inspire audiences to become more aware and active in the fight against radical conservatism in America. Current events (e.g., the white nationalist rally in Charleston, VA) have shown how dangerous these ideals can be.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL AND CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

This chapter contains the historical and critical perspective of Christopher Durang's *Why Torture is Wrong, and the People Who Love Them*. Included will be details of the playwright's life and work, and creation and reception of the play.

Durang is an American comedic playwright, actor and educational leader. He was born on January 2, 1949, and grew up in Berkeley Heights, New Jersey. By the age of eight he was inspired to become a playwright. He wrote a, "Two-page version of an 'I Love Lucy' episode," that his class staged (Durang, *The Juilliard Journal*). At the age of thirteen he staged a musical that he wrote while at prep-school. He later earned his Bachelors of Arts in English from Harvard and Masters of Fine Arts (MFA) in Playwriting from Yale. While at Yale he worked closely with MFA student actors Meryl Streep and Sigourney Weaver.

Durang's first professionally performed full-length play was *The Idiots Karamazov*. It was staged at the Yale Repertory Theatre in 1974 with Streep as the star. He later gained national attention in 1976 when,

His play *A History Of The American Film* was accepted as one of 12 plays done by the prestigious Eugene O'Neill National Playwriting Conference; and from that, Durang's play received an unusual shared "triple premiere" in 1977, having three back-to-back productions at the Hartford Stage

Company in Hartford, Conn., the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles, and the Arena Stage in Washington, D.C. The following year *A History Of The American Film* was presented on Broadway, earning Durang a Tony nomination for Best Book of a Musical. (Christopher Durang–Long Biography)

Also in 1977 Durang finished the full-length play, *The Vietnamization of New Jersey*, at Yale. This production led the New York Times to call Durang, “A one-man Yale lampoon” (Gussow).

Durang would go on to find plenty of work over the course of the next decade. Five full length plays were written in these years: *Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All for You* (1979), *Beyond Therapy* (1982), *Baby with the Bathwater* (1983), *The Marriage of Bette & Boo* (1985) and *Laughing Wild* (1987). Each were well received either on or off Broadway. The autobiographical play, *The Marriage of Bette & Boo*, was long considered his best work due to its utilization of both comedic and serious moments. “Christopher Durang, the humorist and satirist, has rarely written anything funnier or more serious than his mordant comedy *The Marriage of Bette and Boo*. ...[Durang] has perfected the art of turning bitterness into comedy without losing its edge” (Oliver).

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s Durang dabbled with screenplays, teleplays, acting and education. These writing projects had very little success but he was able to find numerous acting opportunities. “His first speaking role was as Davis the put-upon executive in Herbert Ross’ ‘The Secret Of My Success’ starring Michael J. Fox. On Durang’s third day of shooting, Ross hired Durang to punch up some of the dialogue; and

so all the lines Durang got to say he actually wrote, as well as tweaking some of the other scenes” (Christopher Durang–Long Biography). In 1994 Durang and playwright Marsha Norman founded the Juilliard playwrights program as co-chairs. These projects kept Durang out of Broadway for most of the 1990s and is likely responsible for why he only wrote three full-length plays in that decade.

Betty’s Summer Vacation was the most successful of these three 1990s plays. In 1999 it was produced at Playwrights Horizons and was sold out through its entire run. It was his biggest hit since *The Marriage of Bette & Boo*.

This nightmarish satire of the public’s thirst for tabloid gruesomeness was very much a critical success, and won Durang his third playwriting Obie award, along with Obies for Nicholas Martin’s direction, for Thomas Lynch’s settings, and for actress Kristine Nielsen’s tour de force performance as Mrs. Siezmagraff (Christopher Durang–Long Biography).

Despite its success it was unable to move to Off-Broadway, “Due to lack of theatre availability (and the crash of the Nasdaq stock market)” (Full Length Plays: Betty's Summer Vacation).

After this success Durang began to focus on full-length plays again in the 2000s. He wrote *Mrs. Bob Cratchit's Wild Christmas Binge* (2002), *Miss Witherspoon* (2005), *Adrift in Macao* (2005) and *Why Torture is Wrong, and the People Who Love Them* (2009). All of them generally received positive reviews. However none of these shows made it to Broadway and Durang was not recognized with any awards for them.

In 2012 Durang finished what might be his most popular show to date: *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*. “After a sold out run, first at McCarter Theater in Princeton New Jersey and then at Lincoln Center in New York City, *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike* moved to Broadway for a limited run from March 5 to August 25 (2013)” (Christopher Durang: News). The Broadway run was so successful that Durang was awarded the 2013 Tony Award for Best New Play—his only Tony Award win.

Since 2013, Durang has not written another notable full-length play. Of his 36 one-act plays only a few from earlier in his career (e.g., *Titanic* [1974] and *Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All For You* [1979]) have received significant recognition. It is possible that Durang has retired from playwrighting. He stepped down as co-chair of Juilliard’s playwrights program in 2016. Regardless if Durang writes again he will be remembered as a significant influence in American theatre. The PEN/Laura Pels International Foundation for Theater Awards has already awarded him with the elite title of Master American Dramatist in 2012. The Theater Hall of Fame also inducted him that same year.

Durang’s comedic style is known for its absurdity, wit, satire and bleak subject matter. “Randomness and hysterics seem appropriate ways to access the grotesquely humorous world of Mr. Durang, the author of plays that skewer religious orthodoxy, heterosexual nuptials and the afterlife” (Piepenburb). It is important to note that Durang mixes both laughter and sorrow in his stories. He once described the acting technique necessary to play one of his characters as,

The ability to say outlandish things in a normal tone of voice. The ability, though, also to have comic technique that in terms of timing and pace, lets a thing be funny at the same time that it's real. I feel Sigourney Weaver is very good at that and also Dianne Wiest who just won the Oscar. She was in *Beyond Therapy* and has been in two other readings of mine. It's a balance between letting the reality of the characters' needs and tensions show through at the same time that it has just a tiny spin that lets it be funny. (Durang, interview with Craig Gholson)

But because of the varied and strange nature of his plays, not all Durang characters should have the exact same acting approach. Acknowledging this, Durang provides detailed notes about his characters and the world of the play in many of his play's acting editions.

It is also notable that many of Durang's plays are based on his family. I find with my absurdist plays that I was actually writing about my family, but so disguised I didn't realize it myself. For instance there are very forceful people in my family, and so in some of my crazy plays, like *The Nature and Purpose of the Universe*, there are people just bullying one another. (Durang, interview with Erik Piepenburg)

The play that is most evidently based on his family is *The Marriage of Bette & Boo* where the main characters represent Durang's parents and their dysfunctional marriage. Many of Durang's female characters other than Bette also have tragic qualities that he saw in his mother. A housewife who continuously suffers psychologically, can laugh at

herself and hates life, fits into Durang's sad yet funny style. Durang explained that his mother was such a strong inspiration because, "There was a lot that was upsetting in the family and she had an ability, sometimes, in the middle of all that to find it funny. To see the extremity of it and suddenly to have the distance to say, 'Boy, we're all acting crazy now'" (Durang, interview with Craig Gholson).

Durang unknowingly began to write *Why Torture is Wrong, and the People Who Love Them* in 2007 while he taught a class at Juilliard. Like most of his plays he wrote in an improvisational way and without an outline. The result was not only the first scene of the play but the eventual discovery of Zamir's name.

I didn't know the man's name was Zamir until I got there. And suddenly, when I made that choice, Felicity was not just dealing with a guy who was probably a very bad choice as a husband ... but I was now going to raise worries that he might possibly be a terrorist. (Durang 91)

Even after this discovery it took Durang several more days to discover that the plot would revolve around America's fear of terrorism and far-right politics. Leonard was originally imagined to only be an eccentric old man with a butterfly room. "I suddenly thought that Leonard should be very much a 'red state' conservative, very much a follower of the Bush-Cheney administration, and indeed closer to the fairly radical views of Dick Cheney" (Durang 81). Durang would later discover that he wrote the play as, "A catharsis, a comic catharsis, for the last eight years" (Healy). He was able to workshop the play with acting students from Juilliard before he received a commission to bring it to the Public Theater in New York.

The play premiered in March of 2009. It was directed by Nicholas Martin who also directed Durang's *Betty's Summer Vacation* and *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*. The direction had,

Just the right balance of crudeness and finesse by Nicholas Martin, turns such scenes into occasions for one of the most releasing forms of laughter: the kind that encourages the spewing of the anger, fear and helpless indignation that build up in anyone who still reads or watches serious world news. (Brantley)

The most recognized design area of the original production was David Korin's scenery. He utilized a turntable for the play's multiple settings. This made the transitions between many of the short scenes smooth and almost instantaneous. "David Korin's marvelous revolving set functioning as a whirligig fun house for this fang-toothed farce" (Brantley). "Korin won multiple awards for his design for this play, including a Drama Desk Award and an Obie sustained achievement award" (Christopher Durang: News).

Overall reviews of the play were mixed. Some critics found the plot too bizarre or difficult to follow. "There has gotta be a story in this play, but it is swallowed whole by one scene after another spinning its little wheels off and otherwise not moving one centimeter" (McCall). The fantasy ending of the play especially had mixed interpretations. Many critics felt that it was merely Durang's method to make the audience happy when they leave the theatre. Others found it more provocative. "Someone said to me that the play's ending captures our desire to undo the last eight

years. I do think Chris was tapping into a longing in this country that is very deep to redo things, to say, ‘Torture is not who we are’” (Eustis, quoted by Patrick Healy). Most critics did seem to agree that the play was wildly funny even if audiences did not get all the punchlines. “I found that about two-thirds of its jokes hit the mark. Given Durang's joke density, that's a lot of laughter” (Perlman).

CHAPTER III

JOURNAL

Monday, April 24

The production team had our concept meeting today. I provided my vision that Felicity is the only voice of reason. Performance advisor, Heather Hamilton, advised that I should reword my vision so that it would better describe the world of the play instead of a big idea. The newly phrased vision was the world around Felicity is crazy because she's the only voice of reason. The production team was provided with a written description of the vision that offered more details such as the styles of the play and how these styles are defined. There was a list of all the things the play satirizes and Durang's definition of comedy for this play. The sheet also identified the protagonist and antagonist and the settings of the play.

The team did not have too many questions about this. I mentioned to the scene designer, Macaria Meza, that the original production used a turn table for very quick and smooth transitions. The team's technical advisor, John Paul, and Hamilton explained that it could be possible to use a turntable, periaktos or some other turnable set to achieve these transitions. We were unable to go into a lot of discussion because we still did not know what configuration the play would need to be set in. That decision would be up to Department Chair, Paul J. Hustoles, who would direct *The Aeneid* in the same theatre immediately after our production.

Thursday, May 4

Meza shared images of what she imagined some of the scenes to look like. She had images of homes that either were from the 1950s or were inspired by them. We agreed that Leonard and Luella's home should be inspired by that period but should not make the audience feel that the play is set in the 1950s. There were also images of classy cocktail bars for what she thought could be the fancy Hooters. Paul advised me to create a scene breakdown for Meza so that she could have a better idea of what is expected for each scene.

The costume designer, Rosemary Hampton, shared images of clothing that were worn in 2007 or a little earlier. We narrowed these images down to the looks that we liked. I suggested the idea that we could put a plain red baseball cap on Leonard to help make the play more relevant to those who have seen the red Donald Trump hats. Luella's dress colors were discussed and we made decisions on what specific colors those should be. While we discussed the challenge of quick costume changes it was decided that I could also make a costume breakdown to aid Hampton.

Monday, May 22

Hampton came in with several sketches to show. I discussed the idea that Leonard, Hildegard and Looney Toons could all wear American flag pins on their costumes. This would help indicate that they see themselves as dedicated patriots. We also discussed how we could find a way to have a touch of red on all three of these characters to indicate their political alignment (e.g., Leonard's red hat).

We had learned between the last meeting and this one the theatre would be in a proscenium configuration. The decision was made to not use a turntable because of the complexity, possible expense and limited size. Meza had a rough sketch of a design today but there were still a lot of uncertainties from both her and me. Hamilton advised us to meet again after Meza had come up with a more developed design and groundplan.

Sunday, July 9

Meza and I emailed back and forth for a couple weeks at the end of June. She and I were both busy with different summer obligations so we could not meet in person. Paul—who is also our department’s Scene Design Professor— was able to meet and advise with her in that time. Meza created both a groundplan and a video of her scale model for me. We had a fifteen-minute phone conversation about the design and came to the final decisions about the groundplan. I then emailed the rest of the production team to organize meetings for the rest of the summer.

The sound designer, Carly Kilgard, informed me with a response to this email that she had transferred to a different school and would no longer be able to design for the show. I immediately sent an email to Hustoles, Hamilton and Paul to inform them of this unfortunate news. Hustoles forwarded this information to the department’s sound design and technical director professor, Geroge Grubb, who reassured me that he would find a replacement or do the design himself.

The first production meeting since May was July 9. Our advisors were not able to make it. Meza was unable to make it due to her summer work obligation. Technical

Director David Thibert joined us via Skype. I shared the video and design images that Meza shared with me. Lighting designer Dalen O'Connell expressed that he would not be able to start his design until after a Vectorworks groundplan was created. But he did state that it would not take long to create a light plot once he had those plans.

Saturday, August 19

Grubb emailed me the previous week to inform me that the new sound designer would be Caisha Johnson. I emailed Johnson the same vision information I shared at the concept meeting, told her where to get the script and we scheduled a one-on-one meeting for August 17. At that meeting we discussed all the details that were not specifically addressed in the concept sheet. We brought up the biggest challenges of the design and created a priority list of sounds to find. I tried to make sure that she felt confident about the project because this would be her first sound design.

The team met on August 19. Our advisors were not able to make this meeting. O'Connell had finished his light plot and shared it with the team. He assured us that the lights would be hung the first week of class and that the focus would occur soon after. Thibert believed that he could start construction on the set by Tuesday or Wednesday but needed to talk to Grubb about it first.

I asked Meza and Hampton what they believed would be the appropriate number of stage crew members or quick-change dressers. They thought five or four people would be sufficient. Production stage manager Kendra Gilsdorf sent the request to professor Steve Smith—who organizes the stagehands for each production. Smith emailed

me to see if there was any way we could manage the show with fewer crew members. I came to the conclusion that we could make the show work with three crew members since the production already had an assistant stage manager. If there is a scene that needs more help for a quick transition there will be some actors available to help where needed.

Monday, August 21

This morning was the first production meeting of the fall semester. Paul was unable to attend. We primarily talked with Hamilton and Johnson about the scene, lighting and costume design. It was Johnson's first meeting with the other designers and Hamilton's first meeting since late May. O'Connell suggested, with lighting professor Steve Smith's advice, that several of the lighting areas should be larger. This newly suggested light plot would have instruments that can cover a larger area, which would give scenes isolated by light more space. O'Connell and I agreed that this could work if we could keep an isolated area at downstage center for a couple scenes.

After the meeting, Hamilton and I discussed details about the auditions that will take place later today. I expressed my concern about who I could cast for the character, Zamir. Durang suggested in the script that it would be best if the character's ethnicity could be that of someone who would typically be found in the middle east. To my knowledge there were no actors either from the middle east or of middle-eastern descent in our department. Durang's alternative suggestions for this character's ethnicity would likely have to be considered but this would also be a challenge. The ethnic diversity within the department's acting pool is not substantial. Most of the actors are Caucasian

and few of those appeared as if they could be of south-eastern-European descent (e.g., Greece or Italy). Hamilton made sure I understood that the actor's ability is more important than his appearance for this role. I absolutely agreed. If someone who auditions has the most appropriate appearance (e.g., a Middle-Eastern American) I cannot cast them if they do not have any acting skills.

I shared with Hamilton the plan for callbacks if they were necessary. The only role that needs more analysis to cast is the Voice. Actors were asked to perform a one-minute comedic monologue for this audition. Actors who are qualified to play the Voice should also be able to sing "Dancing in the Dark" (by Howard Dietz and Arthur Schwartz) and create Looney Toons-esque voices. It is unlikely that actors would provide evidence of either of these qualities with their monologue. I planned to have one page of the music and a small paragraph ready for the called back actors to use.

The auditions forced several tough choices. Pradeep Aswini Gurralla showed great comedic timing and confidence in his monologue. His Indian ethnicity fit into one of Durang's suggestions for the character. The only issue was that his dialect was non-American. Durang states that this character should be American and that Felicity should not doubt that until she hears that his name is Zamir. This points more specifically to the post 9/11 Islamophobia issue in America. Gurralla's dialect was unfortunately clearly Indian. I did not think that I (or anyone in the department) had the ability to coach him to speak with an American dialect in three weeks.

The actors that were most considered for Zamir were Mitchell Evans, Felipe Escudero, Mack Spotts-Falzone and Alexander Ess. The actor, Doni Marinos, had an

appropriate appearance but did not audition for the show. Three other actors also had an appropriate appearance but did not show the acting skills necessary. Of the four most considered, Evans was the most ideal actor for the role. Evans however was known as a skilled actor within our department and two faculty directors, Hustoles and Melissa Rosenberger, were also casting today. After some deliberation, the three of us found that Evans would best fit as a character in another show. I was then able to cast Escudero as Zamir. Escudero is a sophomore who possesses good range and flexibility. He has a natural charm about him that Zamir will need. Last spring he displayed the ability to become scarily angry with some of his characters in advanced directing scenes. The only challenge to this choice is that he has listed Fridays and Saturdays (except for the performance dates) as conflicts.

We called back seven actors to read and sing for the Voice: John Nicol, Cam Pederson, Spotts-Falzone, Escudero, Ryan Christopherson, Billy Gleason and Brandon Homen. Nicol and Gleason were the two actors most considered for the role because they showed (both in the callback and in the past) that they could handle this character's vocal and musical demands. Nicol was deemed the top choice because he has shown a little more strength in music than Gleason. He has successfully written songs for voice juries, created music for the department's children's tour show and assisted as a vocal coach in an advanced directing scene. This skill in music was important because of the short rehearsal process and the lack of a vocal coach.

Tuesday, August 22

The cast met for the read-through today. I shared with them the shows' vision and what it means to me in today's Alt-Right America. Meza and Hampton then showed them their designs. All of this helped the actors get an idea of what this play will look and feel like in three weeks. As the actors read through the script it was easy to see what the actors felt right away about their characters and the script. Ryan Christopherson already had a vision of Reverend Mike as an extremely easygoing, hippy-esque character. His vocal choices immediately made me think of Jeff Goldblum as a heavy marijuana user. This was not necessarily what I originally envisioned for the character but thought it was a great fit. Kyleen Smith also seemed like she knew how she wanted to attack the character, Hildegard. Brandon Deutsch had a good idea to create a gruffly and almost militaristic voice for Leonard but it sounded too static over time. This is something we will need to keep an eye on. The sophomores (Escudero, Samantha Buckley and Megan Kueter) all seemed a little hesitant at the read-through. This might be because of inexperience but it is something to keep an eye on.

Wednesday, August 23

We rough blocked all of Act I tonight. The scene that we will need to work on again is the "date rape" scene (Act I, scene iv). In intimate scenes like this I have, in the past, allowed the actors involved to talk it out on their own and discover what works best for them. Buckley and Escudero were given those same instructions. This could be more problematic than previous intimate scenes I have directed because the action has a far

greater intimidation to it. Another somewhat problematic scene is the first scene of the show. Both Buckley and Escudero seem stiff and maybe nervous today. Maybe it is just because of their inexperience but we will need to find a way to generate more dynamic energy and movement here.

Thursday, August 24

We rough blocked all of Act II today. The punches that Leonard throws at Zamir were choreographed. That will be reserved for the next time we run this act. The final scene (the fancy Hooters) felt a little cluttered with the dance couples' entrances, exits and crosses. The dialogue between Felicity and Zamir also seemed off-pace. This should be a scene that we work on the next time we run this act.

Friday, August 25

I decided that it would be best to do a start and stop of Act I tonight. We continued to work on the dynamics of scene one. It vocally felt like there was some progress but they still have some issues with movement. This also might be the fact that they are still on-book. We made the discovery tonight that Reverend Mike should light a marijuana joint on stage when he refers to "Puff the Magic Dragon" as a hymn. We will need to make sure that is something we can get for a prop.

Sunday, August 27

Tonight we slowly worked through Act II. Deutsch will at times forget to cheat

out to the audience and we worked together to fix this issue. It was also advised to him to be mindful of his vocal dynamics. He continued to use his gruff voice since the read-through but it continued to sound too static. He thinks that it could be because he reads from his script too much still. Regardless he was informed that he does not need to stick with this voice if he cannot find more vocal dynamisms out of it.

Monday, August 28

Today was our last production meeting. Meza was informed about the fake marijuana prop that we would need. Paul suggested that I should ask for Hustoles's permission before we started to make or order any. O'Connell informed us that Smith advised him to make his light plot areas bigger. This new plot would use fewer lights than the previous one. It looked fine to me because we would still be able to light up all the areas that we needed.

After the meeting, Hamilton and I discussed what could be done to help the actors with the date rape scene. She advised me that I should choreograph the whole moment and not treat it like it is something other than choreography. It is important, though, that Buckley and Escudero understand that if they feel uncomfortable at any moment (even days later) that we can change the choreography. This made sense so I planned to implement these ideas to the next possible rehearsal.

At rehearsal Escudero was challenged to let his character laugh and relax more. Since Zamir's objective is often to appear as a likeable person it would make sense for him to be an easygoing, spontaneous jokester. Buckley's energy for Felicity has been

lower than imagined. She was encouraged to focus on Felicity's circumstances. The character woke up in a situation that would create panic. She awoke in a strange place, wore clothes she did not recognize, slept next to a stranger and has no memory of what happened the previous night. If the actor keeps these ideas in mind throughout the scene the character's stakes will raise. This will give her more urgency, energy and panic.

Tuesday, August 29

The set construction revealed an unexpected challenge. Thibert had placed some of the platforms on the stage for the living room area. It was clear at rehearsal that this space would be too small to fit five or six actors at once. I contacted Meza so that we could meet tomorrow and talk about this.

Tonight was the first rehearsal off book. We only worked on Act I tonight. Kueter and Deutsch still have lines where they sound disconnected to the character. I helped them with more line reads. This might be a continued challenge until they fully become comfortable with their lines. Buckley seems the most anxious about her line memorization. I remind her to breathe and relax the tension in her body when she nervously tries to remember her lines. It is important that the actors continue to feel that this is a safe and panic-free rehearsal space.

Wednesday, August 30

I had noticed that the set's platforms were smaller than I imagined and that it seemed miniscule compared to the rest of the performance space. When the actors

rehearsed on these they often appeared cramped. Visually there was too much performance space that we have not used. This was not what I originally saw when I looked at the model or groundplan. A meeting was set up with Meza and Thibert to discuss this challenge. We agreed to add another foot to the length and width of both the living room platform and the kitchen nook platform.

Tonight we only worked on Act II. We worked on the establishment of several scenes. These establishments are meant to help audience understand more about the characters and the setting before the dialogue began. Kueter was suggested to hum a song to herself while she worked on her puzzle at the top of Act II, Scene iii (Luella's meltdown scene). She instantly decided to hum "Popular" from *Wicked* due to the character's obsession with the play and theatre in general. We thought it would be fun to see Luella try to play board games with her dysfunctional family at moments where they would be stressfully waiting. These actions help establish the circumstances of the new scene and help the audience understand the character more. A props request was put in for The Game of Life and either Checkers or Connect Four. The former reflects in a small way Felicity's frustration with her life and Luella's hatred for hers. The later choices were chosen so that it could be played silently while the Voice says a monologue. These games are old enough and common enough to be found in this household.

Thursday, August 31

Hamilton attended tonight's run-through. The actors struggled with their lines so she decided it would be better to see it again next week. She gave me the notes she took

for Act I. Deutsch needed to be more grounded physically for Leonard. I had noticed this before and had helped him a few times to correct this. His anxious nature tonight I attributed to the fact that this was the first full run-through off book and that Hamilton was present. Hamilton suggested to give him a character or person to look at as a reference. She gave John Goodman's performance in "The Big Lebowski" as an example.

Hamilton also addressed the lack of absurdity in Kueter's performance. She suggested that Luella should be far more delusional than the actor had performed. This was another challenge that I had tried to address earlier. I had suggested to Kueter a few days earlier to attempt an acting technique called a character mask. She would create a new neutral position for her face to form when at rest. In this case I asked if she could allow an overly-pleasant smile and wide eyes to be the neutral face. This had helped her create a more absurd character but she has been inconsistent with it. Kueter has a natural desire to be more realistic in her acting. It is also possible that the same pressure that Deutsch felt tonight influenced Kueter's performance. Both Kueter and Deutsch were given these character notes.

Hamilton also suggested that the play should focus more on ideas such as absurdity, hysteria, menace and tension. The acting overall was far more realistic than it should be. She suggested that I should look at comedy of menace plays such as *Homecoming* or *Birthday Party*. While I agree that the play should be dark and make the audience feel uneasy at times it should not pass the point where the audience no longer thinks they are in a comedy. Durang expressly stated in his notes that the play should not

be too extreme with things such as blood and body parts with the torture. He felt that an audience would reject the idea that the play is a comedy if it became too gritty or realistic in the violence. Still I agreed with Hamilton that there are moments that we could make more menacing. This play should make people uneasy at many key moments but it also needs to be funny. The mixture will hopefully create more provocative thoughts than escapism.

Monday, September 4

We had the designer run tonight. The cast has significantly improved with the fluidity of their lines since the last rehearsal. Escudero still has some struggles with Zamir's absurdity. The actor has the urge to make Zamir more realistic. I suggested to find ways to make Zamir's sexual side more bizarre. Examples given were characters like Quagmire from "Family Guy" or Austin Powers. It is not expected that Escudero will turn Zamir into those characters but that he will use them as an inspiration to find the absurdity. In the hotel scene Zamir could lie on the bed and be bolder in his sexual references. A whip gesture with vocal sound effect was added to Zamir's mention of taming Felicity in the first bar scene. Emphasis on Zamir's sexuality toward Felicity also helps emphasize the theme of sexism.

Deutsch was asked to point his guns away from the audience as much as possible. It was explained that this choice should make the moment Leonard points his assault rifle at the audience more effective. He was also encouraged to continue to use nonverbals and explore the scene with small improvisations. Deutsch has been the actor most

willing to explore and try new actions at rehearsal. This has helped him find many of Leonard's eccentricities and I encouraged the other actors to follow Deutsch's lead.

After a conversation with O'Connell, we made the decision to put Felicity on stage in Act II, Scene ii. She is scripted to be heard offstage but it seemed unusual to not have her onstage when we have so much performance space downstage right during the butterfly room scenes. The original production could only show one room at a time with the turntable so this is likely why it was written this way. We blocked Felicity into the scene and marked the floor for her pool of light.

Meza and I talked about the position of the set after the run. The extra foot of length and width had been added to the platforms and the floor had been taped out to show the extent of the playing space. It was clear from the center of the house that the set was positioned more upstage right than upstage. This created a large blank area at upstage left. I asked Meza if it was positioned incorrectly. She explained that it was not and that it was designed this way to account for the space needed to move the butterfly room wall to the front of the kitchen nook. What was not considered by anyone was the large space available in the stage left wings to aid in this transition. From the sketches and groundplan that Meza gave me I never thought that there would be a significant amount of unused space on the stage.

Meza and I devised two plans. The most ideal plan would have us shift the set over upstage so that the platforms would be visually centered. If that did not work we would place the location of the butterfly room wall stage left of the kitchen nook to utilize that side more. O'Connell was present for this conversation and agreed to refocus

the lights if we could move the set over. Thibert was not at this rehearsal.

Tuesday, September 5

O'Connell talked to Smith about the need to refocus the lights. Smith explained that the lighting shop was too busy to be able to aid in this refocus. This forced us to use our backup plan since it would have taken O'Connell hours to refocus the lights by himself. The communication of this plan change could have been better. O'Connell, Meza and Thibert all talked to each other at some point in the morning or early afternoon about this. Thibert needed to be at class this afternoon so the department's technical director professor, George Grubb, worked on the set. Grubb approached me confused about whether the kitchen nook platform needed casters. I explained to him our new plan but he wanted Meza, Thibert and I to be on the same page before he continued. Thibert and Meza were messaged and we met with Grubb in the Andreas Theatre an hour and fifteen minutes later. It seemed that there was a communication breakdown with Thibert. Grubb suggested that the best way to avoid this in the future is to create a new groundplan for the design change.

There is still not enough energy in the opening scene. Escudero was advised to make the changes from pleasant to angry and vice versa instantaneously. This suddenness should make his anger issues more absurd and comical. It will also allow the scene to move faster. Another note given to Escudero was to try to slide in to the house when he enters in Act I, Scene ii. This entrance is another means to communicate that Zamir wants to be perceived as a suave and eccentric.

Deutsch has felt the need to deliver Leonard's dialogue quickly. This might be because he associates speed with power. In earlier rehearsals he had the urge to make the character shout often. I suggested (as I did before) that he should find more dynamism with the character's voice. Christopher Lee was given as an example of an actor who played powerful, dark characters that spoke with a slower tempo. It was made clear that he should not try to make Leonard like a Christopher Lee character but to understand how power and tension can exist from a slow-tempo voice. He was also given some line readings. A word that he has had challenges with was the word "photo". He placed a stress on the second "o" which sounded awkward. I made sure that he was aware why this word has sounded this way.

Wednesday, September 6

Deutsch improved his line delivery tonight significantly with a slower tempo. A new suggestion was to allow Leonard to let his anger fume at different moments during the breakfast nook in Act I, Scene iii. He was also asked to place stronger emphasize on words such as "Mexicans", "Muhamad" and any other word that could show the audience Leonard's hostile prejudices. Tonight was the first night that Deutsch wore a hat and we discovered a great moment to use it.

Tonight we created a symbolic gesture for Leonard to use. While Leonard wondered why he associated with bullies he would adjust his red hat. This gesture should indicate to some audience members Leonard's similarities to current nationalists or white supremacists who wear the "Make America Great Again" hats. The only challenges that

arose with the hat was how it too often blocked Deutsch's face from light. He was advised to keep the brim of the cap as high as he can.

Christopherson had been advised to address "The Big Bang" as if it was not just his greatest work to be but the greatest piece of pornography that has ever been created. This mentality changed the emphasis and energy the actor had in the line. Nicol was made more aware of his hand gestures when The Voice directly addressed the audience. He had added many great, specific gestures but there still were some motions that were unnecessary. We found a neutral place for the hands to be when they were not used for a specific reason.

Thursday, September 7

Tonight was the first tech rehearsal for sound and lights. Kueter and I worked on Luella's meltdown scene (Act II, Scene iii) before we started the run. This scene troubled her. She had difficulty with Luella's motivation to go from one line to the next. And because of there was difficulty to find actions for Luella to do in the scene. I gave her several suggestions of what objects Luella sees in the room to help motivate her to the next line. Lines that were directed at Leonard could be said to his chair in the kitchen nook. The stem cell lines could be said while she played with the checker pieces. Dialogue about Terri Schiavo could be directed at the invisible television in front of the living room couch. With these visuals and my suggested route to cross the action came more naturally to Kueter. All this brought significantly more energy and interest to the scene.

Escudero still has moments where Zamir is played too realistically. I made some specific suggestions to help make the character more absurd. The dialogue where he describes what he does for work should be as overexaggerated as possible. This could involve the use of large gestures, an increase of standard tempo, etc. If the actor is motivated to both shock and impress the other characters with the dialogue this should happen naturally.

Deutsch was also given some line suggestions. In Leonard's first appearance he describes how he scorched several squirrels with one of his weapons. These lines have sounded flat for a while. It sounded as if Deutsch placed the strongest emphasis on words that referred to himself (e.g., "my"). Instead I suggested that he should focus on the verbs and imagine crazed Leonard as he killed the squirrels. In a similar case Deutsch was asked to envision a child version of Leonard who would torment neighborhood cats for the line, "Here kitty, kitty".

Johnson and I discovered the initial volume level was too loud for the music in both the Act I bar scenes and the Hooter's scene. We adjusted this several times while the scenes commenced. The music chosen for the Act I bar scenes needed to be changed. Johnson had chosen popular songs from the early 2000s that were performed orchestrally. Grubb (who watched tonight's rehearsal) and I agreed that this sounded too out of place for this bar's atmosphere. Johnson was reassured that she could look for songs with lyrics if they were played at a volume soft enough to avoid distraction. Unlike the preshow, intermission, postshow and transition music, these songs are only meant to create ambient noise.

Friday, September 8

Tonight was the first full technical rehearsal. The set was completely built but it needed to be painted. Meza had most of the props available. The ball gag was one of the few items that still needed to arrive but Meza assured that it would arrive in the mail within the next couple days. Thibert did not have the wings and curtains ready yet. It was clear after a conversation from him that he was unaware that this was his responsibility. He promised to get this done for tomorrow's rehearsal.

Hamilton attended tonight. At intermission she gave me a few notes. She mentioned the show had an energy deficiency. The actors needed to pick up lines faster. The scenes had become too realistic and dramatic because of this. Felicity should be a nervous wreck at the top of the first scene and use variations of that nervousness for the scenes that followed. Faster transitions—which were very slow tonight—would also improve the overall energy. All of this energy needed to build to the climactic reveal that Leonard brutalized Zamir.

I agreed with Hamilton on these points. The transition speed note did not surprise me much. To me the speed of the crew seemed typically slow for their first rehearsal. They had only today fully understood what it would be like to do their job. Previous experience has shown that it will take a couple rehearsals to get to the speed they need to for performances. Regardless I informed both Gilsdorf and Assistant Stage Manager Reegan Tolk about this need.

The actors had been told about our pace issues before. They were aware that the lines generally needed to be picked up faster. And Buckley knew from previous notes

that Felicity needed to awaken with a high level of anxiety. At this point I believe that the actors are still slightly worried about their lines. The slower tempo and slight delays between dialogue have come from their focus on the next line. I ensured them that they knew the dialogue and that they needed to be bold. Christopherson's vocal attack also needed to change. He had Reverend Mike use a slower vocal tempo to fit a marijuana-user-esque stereotype. I suggested that he should increase the speed slightly to allow the Act I bar scenes to move faster—Act I, scene vi was one of the slowest scenes.

First butterfly room scene—Act I, scene vii—was another which needed to significantly speed up. This was a scene where the actors took way too long to pick up their lines. The inconsistency with Hildegard's panties did not help. Hamilton suggested to make the panties two sizes bigger than they were and make Hildegard more sexually driven toward Leonard. While Hildegard did not appear to Smith or me as overly-sexual, we thought that this new direction could still work. It does not change the objectives of the character, only the tactics and obstacles. The panties then could be intentionally pulled down instead of accidentally falling down. It also played well with the relationship that eventually blossoms between her and sexual-deviant Reverend Mike. There was a moment in the Hooters scene where Hildegard put a finger up to Reverend Mike's mouth to hush him in seductive-esque way. Christopherson took an impulse to outrageously lick the finger in a bawdy fashion. I told the actors to keep that moment in the scene.

At the end of the rehearsal Hamilton posed a question that perplexed her: what does the end mean to me? She was not sure what Durang wanted the audience to feel or

think about with the final scene. Were they supposed to feel that passive liberals are just as responsible for radical conservatism because their response to problems is to ignore reality? Was the point to see that the entire world is awful and the only way to deal with it is to go insane? What does the end say about Zamir and Muslims? I was puzzled and frustrated by this because the end made sense to me but I did not know how to articulate it in the moment. The end reveals certain truths about characters—especially Zamir—but it is certainly not realistic. Hamilton advised me to sit down with the cast and make sure that whatever the end means that we are all in unison.

Saturday, September 9

Hamilton's question about the end was constantly on my mind until the next rehearsal. After some thought it, seemed clear how I interpreted the final scene. It is an opportunity to show the audience what could have happened if the characters lived in a world that was not controlled by extreme conservatism. The male characters are calmer and far less sexist. Leonard and Zamir feel free to express thoughts and emotions that they repressed to fit their social roles. The female characters are more confident, independent and happy. Luella is no longer crazed from her husband's abuse. Hildegard is able to move past her need to be with Leonard. I sat down with the cast and talked about these things before we began tonight's run. They agreed with this interpretation. This awareness of the end does not drastically change the entire show but it should make the final scene more cohesive.

The show moved a little faster tonight but still needed work. There was some

improvement with the line pick-ups. Reverend Mike's faster vocal tempo created a far more appropriate pace in the two Act I bar scenes. The first butterfly room scene—Act I, scene Vii—still presented challenges though. Smith's new seductive tactics have caused her to try a slower, breathier voice. Deutsch also played into the idea that Leonard feels awkward about Hildegard's seduction too much. It delayed his responses and made the scene predictable. The actors were made aware of these issues.

Deutsch was given additional instructions for his weapons usage. The last couple nights he had pointed the assault rifle at the audience at unspecific points and in what seemed to me a more passive way. He would slowly bring the gun up to side at about the height of his chest or hip. It reminded me of how one might see someone shoot in an action film. Instead I suggested that he be more aggressive with this action. When Leonard says the verb "mow" the weapon should rise to his shoulder so he can look down the sights. Leonard should point the gun violently from one area of the audience to the next until the moment quickly ends. This should make the audience feel the violence that Leonard threatens Zamir (among others) with.

Sunday, September 10

Tonight was our first dress rehearsal. The transitions are faster tonight than the last two nights but still need to be quicker. This note was not only given to the stage hands but to Gilsdorf. There were a couple transitions where she could have called the lights up a couple seconds sooner. Paul and I talked to some of the stage hands to find ways to get them on and off faster. This meant that we had to decide where the actors

and stage hands would go so they would not run into or wait on one another. We also stopped to discuss the two major quick changes near the end of the play. Everyone was made very aware that unnecessary delays could distract the audience from the play.

Most of the scenes moved at a far more appropriate pace. The first butterfly room scene is still problematic though. Smith's tempo is still too slow. Deutsch still plays into the idea that Leonard feels awkward by the flirtation for too long. I advised Smith to try to use a tempo similar to what she has seen of the character, Ulla, from *The Producers*. This character seemed like a good example because she has both seduction and a more energetic tempo. I also made Smith aware again that her strong breathy vocal quality is what really slows the character down.

Monday, September 11

Hamilton attended tonight's rehearsal with Jameel Haque. Haque is the committee member of this thesis from outside Minnesota State Mankato's Department of Theatre and Dance. His presence and opinions were valued as he is a History Professor with expertise on Islam and Middle Eastern cultures. Hamilton spoke with him throughout Act I and they provided me with several thoughts at intermission. The most important thought was their urge for me to cut out three of Zamir's lines. These lines contained sensitive subjects such as burkas and arranged marriages. They were lines that Hamilton thought were intended for a different patron-type than the one we would encounter in Mankato, Minnesota. Haque and Hamilton also suggested to change the line about Zamir's parents being from Pakistan. Instead Zamir could simply say that his

parents are immigrants. This would cleverly continue to make Zamir's heritage ambiguous and far more relevant to current immigration issues in America.

Hamilton stated that while Act II ran at a nice pace, Act I needed to run faster. She compared it to the speed necessary in a vaudeville show. Act I ran at about one hour and twenty minutes tonight and I thought that it would probably be best at one hour and fifteen minutes. Hamilton thought that if I urged the cast to perform the show in one hour that they would be able to perform it at about one hour and ten minutes. I took her advice on this and looked for other ways to cut down on time. The cast was given more specific notes about where to cut down on beat length, quicken the tempo slightly and pick up lines faster. In Act II, Scene v, for example, Buckley had waited until Deutsch finished his exit before she started her next line. She was instructed to continue her dialogue as Deutsch began his exit.

The first butterfly room scene—Act I, scene vii—continues to be slower. It is not clear if Smith knows how to quicken Hildegard's tempo and remain seductive. The new panty size has also thrown off the rhythm of the scene because they were too large to control when they would slide down. Hamilton and I brainstormed over this and she suggested that Hildegard should not be a very successful temptress. Instead Smith should play Hildegard as someone who is overly desperate, pathetic and disgusting. The panties would be made smaller so that Smith could clumsily and deliberately pull them down.

Tuesday, September 12

Tonight was our preview. These previews are generally performed before an audience of both students from Minnesota State Mankato's Department of Theatre and Dance and members of select retirement homes. There appear to be few—if any—from the latter demographic tonight. The audience that did attend sounded as if they enjoyed it. They laughed and reacted to most of the things they saw. Many of them talked excitedly with the actors after the show. Yet, because most of these are our department's theatre students, it is hardly fair to know if it will be successful with other patrons.

The first butterfly room scene was better but could be faster. Smith had more control with the panties but still had uncertainties. She felt stressed from all the changes that we have suggested recently. To transform Hildegard into a more disgusting character seemed to overwhelm her. I told her to forget about that suggestion and that what was important was to show how desperately Hildegard needed Leonard's love. Her tempo could then quicken when she is excited about Leonard or slow when he rejects her. This made Smith feel more confident about what she needed to do.

The cast was reminded of how the final scene needed to be stylistically different than the scenes before it. It should appear far happier and more idealistic than the previous radically conservative scenes. Positive words like "pleasant" are used constantly and should have some emphasis. The dancing characters should side with Felicity's liberal opinions when she has serious conversations with Zamir. All of this can only be caused from the previous scene when Felicity takes off Leonard's hat. While she stares at the hat she makes the decision that this story will not have a happy ending if we

start in this extreme-conservative world.

Wednesday, September 13

Opening night had a good response. Although, because there were many theatre students in this audience, it was hard to know how the older patrons felt about it. It seemed as if all the audience members laughed at one point or another but there seemed to be an uneasiness too. A few family members of mine came tonight and that seemed to be how they felt. The audience enjoyed the play but were also affected by some of the darker topics.

The show seemed to run the smoothest it has ever run tonight. Even the first butterfly room scene picked up in speed. Smith was less breathy and had a slightly faster tempo. It still felt awkwardly long at times. This might have been because of Deutsch's reaction time was not always quick in this scene. Act I ran about an hour and eighteen minutes. Act II ran about fifty minutes.

Thursday, September 14

Tonight's crowd had few theatre students and more senior citizen-aged patrons. My parents were also in attendance with one aged in the 50s and the other in the 60s. This audience sounded quieter than the previous two nights. Many more of the play's theatre "inside" jokes seemed lost on this audience. However they still appeared to enjoy the play. They laughed at jokes that the student-heavy audiences seemed to miss. Even the date rape scene—Act I, Scene iv—did not seem to make people leave at intermission.

There were a couple of little issues with tonight's performance. Deutsch has started to underarticulate some of his lines to find more dynamism in his voice. It generally happened when he went for a lighter volume and a breathy quality. I brought this to his attention after the performance. Smith had her panties break on her tonight but she recovered well and was able to continue after she quickly tied them back together. This was put on the costume fix list but I contacted Hampton that evening to make sure she knew about it immediately for tomorrow.

Friday, September 15

Tonight was our most responsive crowd yet. This is because we had many theatre students from out of town in attendance. Minnesota State Mankato's Department of Theatre and Dance had plans to host the United States Institute of Theatre Technology's (USITT) 2017 Northern Boundary Section Fall Regional Conference tomorrow. These USITT students were welcomed to watch the play the night before the conference for a discounted rate. Well over 100 patrons were in attendance tonight. The cast and crew responded well to this audience. The show was the smoothest it has ever been.

Saturday, September 16

Closing night went very well. While not as responsive as last night, it was likely the second-best night. The first butterfly room scene felt relatively smooth minus one small delay from Deutsch. The audience once again seemed to enjoy the show but there seemed to be a sense of uneasiness from some of the patrons. Former Minnesota State

Mankato Dean Jane Earley was in attendance and seemed conflicted when she spoke to me. She immediately said that she enjoyed it but expressed that there were moments that she felt uneasy. The moment where the assault rifle was pointed at the audience was one of the moments she quickly pointed out. This somewhat confirms my suspicions as to how the audiences felt. The play generally seemed both enjoyable to watch and provocative.

CHAPTER IV

POST PRODUCTION ANALYSIS

This chapter contains the post production analysis for the director's production of *Why Torture is Wrong, and the People Who Love Them* by Christopher Durang. The director will identify the strengths and weaknesses of his pre-production analysis. He will examine his creative process both in detail and in a general overview. Conclusions will be made about his process and how he should proceed to improve his directing ability.

The pre-production analysis proved to be useful for this project. It covered most of the essential plot points, themes and character purposes for the play. The director felt that he already knew what parts of the design, casting and rehearsal process would present the most challenges because of this analysis. Many of these challenges were overcome early or easily. One area the director wished he had articulated better in his pre-production analysis was what the final scene meant. If it was not for performance advisor Heather Hamilton's questions, the director feels that this would not have been as clear. Thus the audience could have left the theatre far more confused. A strong understanding of the conclusion is a fundamental part of play analysis and it upsets the director that the specificity of this moment was overlooked in Chapter I.

The director's overall communication of his concept seemed clear to the designers. His original concept statement should have described the world of the play

more but he was able to give details about the world with additional descriptions. Thanks to all the stylistic details the production team understood quickly what the unified direction was. It was not until the rehearsal process that the director realized that the styles could have been even more absurd than originally envisioned. The finished designs however did not detract from the play as there was still plenty of absurdity within them.

Set designer Macaria Meza created a scene design that fit our low \$500 budget, communicated the conservative 1950s theme and worked for quick transitions. The director emphasized at the concept meeting this transition challenge and Meza made sure that all her designs fit this need. Meza cleverly used 1950s-esque colors and mid-twentieth-century furniture in the home. This mixed relatively well with early-2000s props and alternative locations. It is likely that there could have been more 1950s-esque furniture chosen if there was a larger inventory or budget available. The same could be said of the early-2000s props and furniture. While the Minnesota State Mankato Department of Theatre and Dance has many resources available, it is not always possible to find the perfect pieces for every set design or prop list.

The most unfortunate part of the scene design was the miscommunication over how the space should be used. This is primarily the fault of the director. Meza had designed the set's platforms to be far more upstage right than they needed to be. The platforms also could have been much larger than originally designed. They made several scenes appear cramped—especially those that took place inside the parents' house. Of

course Meza designed this mainly to account for the production's need to move a wall for a quick transition.

The director feels frustration over why he was not aware of all the extra space before the build began. It might be because the director never possessed a copy of the Vectorworks program groundplan. He possessed a sketch of a groundplan that does not appear to scale. The director should have obtained the Vectorworks program to keep a copy of the production's groundplan for himself. Alternatively the director could have asked Meza to place the model in a scale drawing or model of the performance space. These observations from the director could have helped change the set's outcome.

David Thibert, the technical director, completed his tasks but not without some delays and communication errors. It was sometimes evident that this was his first technical direction. Both Thibert and Meza made the set construction sound very simple. The director expected it to be finished during the week of August 28 through September 1. Yet the build was not complete until September 6—the day before sound and lighting tech. This significantly delayed Meza's paintwork on the set. The director should have realized this and encouraged Thibert to finish earlier. At tech Thibert was also unaware that it was his responsibility to clear the wing spaces and place the curtains. The director should be more aware of which production team members are new and might not fully understand their responsibilities.

As a first-time costume designer Rosemary Hampton did sensational work. Both she and Meza provided the director with lots of design details early. She was finished with her sketches and ready to build, pull from stock or buy costumes by the end of July.

There were some slight modifications after she looked through stock and was given a \$100 budget but she kept the big ideas of her designs intact. The parents looked 1950s-esque. Felicity and Zamir had more contemporary appearances. Reverend Mike looked like a stereotypical porn-maker with his 1970s clothing. And Hildegard appeared as a semi-proper, contemporary business woman. This all fit the characters and the conservative themes of the play.

The biggest challenges with Hampton's designs were the pieces that needed to be removed. It took a long time to discover the proper size for Hildegard's panties. Because Minnesota State Mankato has only a couple pieces of underwear in its Department of Theatre and Dance's costume storage, Hampton had limited choices for this joke garment. She could not exchange the piece for another so she would have to make time to resize it. The director should have made this more of an effort to find the correct size a week earlier than it was found. This would have not only benefited Hampton but actor Kyleen Smith, too.

Hampton's costume quickchanges were the other problematic parts of her design. They were not nearly as quick as they should have been. The director did inform both Hampton and production stage manager Kendra Gilsdorf months ago about how these needed to be less than thirty seconds. However the director does understand that some of this is problematic because of the specificity of the clothing. Hampton needed to purchase several dresses of identical shape but different color. There were limited options to fit into her budget and the dresses that she bought did not simply slip on and off. With more resources available this might have been an easier fix. Yet the

quickchanges lasted approximately thirty seconds every performance. It is possible that this did not bother the audience too much or at all.

Samantha Buckley's portrayal of Felicity fit the show's need for a strong, grounded feminist character. Buckley has a naturally mature feel about her that makes her seem like a rational and intelligent person. She also has a natural tendency to want to make her character realistic and mind-centered. This helped make Felicity the character most grounded in a sense of reality but it also sometimes hindered Buckley's ability to fully respond to the world around her. There were many times at rehearsal where Buckley would barely react or not react at all. This would make Felicity appear unenergized—which would counteract some scenes. It was difficult to see if this was caused by her need to remember her next line or her natural tendency to internalize her character's thoughts. Regardless, Buckley improved Felicity's tempo and appearance of anxiety over time. The director wonders if it would have mattered if he had pushed even more for Felicity's anxiety earlier. It is possible that it would have made little difference because of the actor's line memorization worries.

Felipe Escudero's performance of Zamir was appropriately handled with a serious delicacy. The director and actor wanted to make sure that Zamir was not portrayed as a Muslim stereotype. Instead they both focused on the idea that this is a zany New Yorker that grew up in a poor, immigrant household. Escudero found the realism of the character's dialogue quickly for the serious moments of the final scene. Yet he needed to be pushed at times to play into the character's absurdity more. Like Buckley, Escudero has a natural tendency to want to make his characters realistic and very subtle. The

director made numerous suggestions for absurd-esque character actions to aid him. He eventually found more actions on his own.

The most difficult challenges with Zamir were his anger and date rape actions. Both needed to be done in such a way that the audience could find the action bizarre. If these actions were too unsettling or realistic the audience would likely find it harder to empathize with Zamir later. This is why the actor and director chose to make Zamir's temper tantrums sudden. Zamir would abruptly become angry and then just as abruptly become his neutral, jolly self. The date rape needed even more delicacy. Escudero needed to rub his hands over Buckley. The director and the actors found the best way to do this without discomfort for the actors. O'Connell was instructed to bring the lights down on them while it occurred to shorten the time the audience watched. Buckley was encouraged to snore and Escudero was encouraged to giggle to create a bizarre combination of sounds. The snores typically made the audiences laugh a little so at least that worked to alleviate some audience anxiety.

There were several challenges that Brandon Deutsch faced with his performance of Leonard. While older than the previous two actors it seemed apparent that Deutsch had the least amount of experience on stage. Deutsch would sometimes struggle with weird mispronunciations, inarticulation and lack of character connection. The director gave him many specific notes and line reads to help him overcome these difficulties. Yet the actor did not have many issues with the implementation of these suggestions. Deutsch's attack on Leonard changed the most since the start of the rehearsal process.

The overall reception of the play seemed to be positive. Even on the quietest night patrons were still audible with laughter and applause. Yet when audiences talked about the show in detail they seemed somewhat nervous. The director hopes that this is because of the dark subject matter. Yet he also fears that people do not know what to say about it because they are still confused about the final scene. It is possible that it is the combination of the two. Regardless the play's central themes of torture, sexism, Islamophobia and other dangers of extreme conservatism seem to have been communicated effectively—if not bluntly. And because of that the director has found this an effective production.

CHAPTER V

PROCESS DEVELOPMENT

This chapter contains the director's thoughts of how the Minnesota State University, Mankato's department of Theatre and Dance has helped his artistic development. He will break down all classes and faculty interactions that have contributed to this development.

Research-oriented classes such as Theatre Research, Theatre History I, Theatre History II, Dramaturgy and Theatre Theory and Criticism were instrumental in how the director prepared his work in pre-production. These classes gave him insight on how to locate credible sources, analyze data and discuss information. It made the director more accustomed to look through multiple books and articles quickly to aid his writing. Before these classes the director would usually only use a couple of internet sources. To have more seemed overwhelming. He would spend too much time gathering information from a single source that he would often run out of time to get other sources. Through these classes the director has learned how to effectively skim for relevant information quickly. Now his bibliographies are much larger and the research is far more creditable.

Excellent academic composition was also highly prioritized in these classes. New compositional skills have been taught to the director which allowed him to write more succinctly. Before these classes the director too often tried to write in a complex and bombastic manner. Both instructors Matthew Caron and Paul J. Hustoles stressed the

need to cut unnecessary words. This has taught the director to write shorter and more direct sentences. Such streamlined sentences and improved grammatical skills have proved useful in other forms of communication, too (e.g., email).

The department chair, Hustoles, gave an annual writing seminar at the beginning of the director's three years of graduate study (2015-2017). These seminars would include both verbal and visual explanations of what the department expected from the MFA candidates' papers. They were also very useful because they covered specific grammatical rules that the graduate students might too often overlook. For example "i.e." was too often used in place of "e.g." by the director. Commas were also overused by the director which too often caused confusion from readers. The director has a far broader understanding of proper academic grammar because of these seminars.

Numerous acting classes have proven useful. The director already understood basic acting to a reasonable degree before his attendance at Minnesota State University, Mankato. He possessed a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre Performance from The University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. Yet the director has had the opportunity to learn various new acting concepts in pursuit of his MFA. The re-exploration of old topics in pursuit of the degree have also been useful because it has reinforced his knowledge in these areas.

Minnesota State, Mankato's Advanced Theatre Speech I, Advanced Theatre Speech II, Acting Techniques, Dialects I and Dialects II spent more time on vocal aspects than his previous education. Four semesters of Private Voice lessons were also extremely useful. These classes have made him more aware of how the voice can be manipulated and sound dynamic. Hustoles's emphasis on vocal dynamics (time, tone and tension) and

the International Phonetic Alphabet contributed most to the director's new vocal awareness. Because of this, he was able to identify solutions to many of the vocal challenges that the actors dealt within the rehearsal process.

The Stage Combat class with David McCarl was very useful since the director's experience in this area was extremely limited before. This class furthered his understanding of the craft with more experience and details. In all three plays he has directed at Minnesota State, Mankato the director has had to create small fight scenes. McCarl's class has helped the director confidently imagine and create the simple choreography for Leonard's attacks on Zamir.

Hustoles's Advanced Acting Techniques also proved useful for physical acting. It added new ideas such as psych centers, gesture types, mask technique and anthropomorphization. The director used the basic ideas of mask technique when he coached Megan Kueter on Luella's neutral face and mannerisms. He even used some of his knowledge of gestures when he directed John Nicol. This class proved most useful for this cast because of the general lack of experience throughout.

Carron and Hustoles's Advanced Directing classes made the director more aware of picturization and composition. Before these classes he was unconsciously aware of picturization. He understood that tableaux and blocking could communicate information to audiences without dialogue. These instructors broadened the director's understanding of how much the visual placement of things affected a performance. This is why the director was so concerned when he discovered the original size and placement of the set.

This had a significant influence on how the director staged the scenes and, thus, how the audience perceived the play.

Hustoles's Intermediate Acting class and the director's opportunity to teach Acting for Everyone has provided opportunities to both observe and teach fundamental acting techniques. Intermediate Acting also introduced to the director the idea of establishment and buttons. An establishment would be an action or group of actions that could communicate ideas about the setting and characters before the first line was spoken. A button would be a final action or stage picture in a scene. The purpose of the button is similar to how a period in a sentence indicates that it is over. The director used these techniques in all of the play's scenes.

The director has had the opportunity to take multiple introductory design classes, too. McCarl's Costume Design for Directors helped make him more aware of the costume designer's process. He knew that costumes communicate who a character is to the audience sooner than the dialogue does. Therefore the director had conversed often with costume designer Rosemary Hampton about who the characters are and how the audience should perceive them.

Steven Smith's Lighting Design for Directors made the director aware of the limitations and bluntness of this design area. One basic idea was that a character or set that receives a lot of front light will appear less threatening because there are few shadows. This was useful when the director communicated with the lighting designer, Dalen O'Connell. They used the bluntness of the lights to create strong contrasts between scenes and character focus.

John Paul's Scenic Design for Directors was useful beyond the ability to communicate with a scenic designer. It allowed the director to explore different ways to create interesting compositions. This additional view on composition allows him to have detailed conversations with the designer who will most impact the director's work. Other than the miscommunication about the set's location and size the director felt that he communicated the show's needs effectively.

Hustoles's Designer and Director Communication Seminar placed a stronger emphasis on the specificity of style than the introductory design classes. The class showed how designers and directors might have various definitions of styles. Thus it is important for the director to over-explain and define what the concept and styles mean. If this is unclear it could lead to an unified production. This is why the director attempted to be as detailed as he could for this production's concept meeting.

The director's process of *Why Torture is Wrong, and the People Who Love Them* is significantly different from plays he director before he attended Minnesota State Mankato. These new skills that he has acquired made the direction clearer, smoother and less problematic. Challenges were overcome with less difficulty than they had been in the past. He shall continue to use these skills as he moves forward into the professional theatre world.

APPENDIX A

REHEARSAL SCHEDULE

Why Torture is Wrong, and the People Who Love Them

Rehearsal Schedule

Week	Date	Call Time	What
1	Tuesday, Aug. 22	6:30 P.M.	Read Through
1	Wednesday, Aug. 23	6:30 P.M.	Block Act I
1	Thursday, Aug. 24	6:30 P.M.	Block Act II
1	Friday, Aug. 25	6:30 P.M.	Finish Blocking/Work Trouble Spots
2	Sunday, Aug. 27	6:30 P.M.	Work Act I
2	Monday, Aug. 28	6:30 P.M.	Work Act II
2	Tuesday, Aug. 29	6:30 P.M.	Work Act I (OFF BOOK)
2	Wednesday, Aug. 30	6:30 P.M.	Work Act II
2	Thursday, Aug. 31	6:30 P.M.	“Stumble Through”
2	Friday, Sep. 1	6:30 P.M.	Run Show
3	Sunday, Sep. 3	No Rehearsal	Labor Day Weekend
3	Monday, Sep. 4	6:30 P.M.	Designer Run
3	Tuesday, Sep. 5	6:30 P.M.	Publicity Photo Call/Run Show
3	Wednesday, Sep. 6	6:30 P.M.	Run Show
3	Thursday, Sep. 7	6:00 Crew. 6:30 Cast.	Light/Sound Tech
3	Friday, Sep. 8	6:00 Crew. 6:30 Cast.	First Tech


3	Saturday, Sep. 9	6:00 Crew. 6:30 Cast.	Tech Run
4	Sunday, Sep. 10	6:00 Crew. 6:30 Cast.	First Dress
4	Monday, Sep. 11	6:00 Crew. 6:30 Cast.	Full Run
4	Tuesday, Sep. 12	6:00 Crew. 6:30 Cast.	Majors Preview/Lobby Photo Call
4	Wednesday, Sep. 13	6:00 Crew. 6:30 Cast.	Opening Night
4	Thursday, Sep. 14	6:00 Crew. 6:30 Cast.	Show/Production Photo Call
4	Friday, Sep. 15	6:00 Crew. 6:30 Cast.	Show
4	Saturday, Sep. 16	6:00 Crew. 6:30 Cast.	Closing Night/Strike

APPENDIX B

POSTER

507-389-6661 MSUTheatre.com

*Why Torture is Wrong,
And The People Who
Love Them*



A Dark Comedy
by Christopher Durang

This production contains mature
language and themes.

7:30 P.M.
Sept.13-16, 2017
Andreas Theatre

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Theatre & Dance
MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY, MANKATO

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MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY MANKATO

On the Mainstage

Little Women

Music by Jason Howland; lyrics by Mindi Dickstein;
 book by Allan Knee;
 based on the novel by Louisa May Alcott
 Co-sponsored by
 Consolidated Communications
 Sept. 28-30 & Oct. 5-8, 2017

The Aeneid

By Olivier Kemeid; translated by Maureen Labonté;
 based on the epic poem by Virgil
 Oct. 12-15 & 18-22, 2017

The Diary of Anne Frank

By Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett,
 newly adapted by Wendy Kesselman
 Nov. 2-4 & 9-12, 2017

Next in the Studio

These Shining Lives

By Melanie Marnich
 Nov. 15-18, 2017

Fall Dance Concert

Dec. 1 & 2, 2017

Why Torture is Wrong,
And The People Who
Love Them



A dark comedy
 by Christopher Durang 7:30 p.m.
 Sept. 13-16, 2017

Theatre & Dance

MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY, MANKATO

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John David Paul
 Scene Design

Melissa Rosenberger
 Acting, Directing and Dance

Steven Smith
 Lighting Design

Daniel Stark
 Dance Technique & Composition

Nick Wayne
 Musical Director

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APPENDIX C

PROGRAM

Why Torture is Wrong, and the People Who Love Them
By Christopher Durang

Christopher Durang is an American comedic playwright who is best known for his Tony Award-winning play, *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*. His work has been known for its outrageousness and absurdity. This play, *Why Torture is Wrong, and the People Who Love Them*, has these elements, but also contains plenty of satire.

I chose this play because of its commentary on radical conservative behavior. Since 9/11, irrational fears, such as xenophobia, Islamophobia and Arabophobia, have spread throughout America. Even more recently, extreme conservative groups such as Nationalists and White Supremacists have felt revitalized because of these fears. Within the last year, national news networks have shown crowds of people demanding that Muslims, Arabs, Mexicans and others be deported. Even the subjects of women's and LGBT rights have nationally been brought into question in the last 12 months.

This play presents these ideas through a bizarrely comical story. We invite you to join us on this provocative and funny journey.

— Donald C. Hart

Cast

Felicity Samantha Buckley
 Zamir Felipe Escudero
 Luella Megan Kueter
 Leonard Brandon Deutsch
 Reverend Mike Ryan Christopherson
 Hildegarde Kyleen Smith
 Voice/Narrator John Nico

Setting

Bronx, New York,
 and Fort Lee, New Jersey,
 2007

Faculty Advisors

Heather Hamilton
John Paul

Why Torture ... is presented through special arrangements with
 Dramatists Play Service,
 440 Park Avenue South,
 New York, NY 10016

Production Staff

Director
Donald C. Hart
 Scene Design
Macaria Meza
 Costume Design
Rosemary Hampton
 Lighting Design
Dalen O'Connell
 Sound Design
Caisha Johnson
 Production Stage Manager
Kendra Gilsdorf
 Technical Director
David Thibert
 Assistant Stage Manager
Reegan Tolk
 Lightboard Operator
Arianna Rotty
 Sound Board Operator
Lauren Meidl
 Stagehands/Dressers
Paige Tiefenthaler
Jameson Bernhagen
Taylor Oeltjenbruns
Brandon Flowers

APPENDIX D

PRODUCTION PHOTOGRAPHS



Leonard (Brandon Deutch) threatens Zamir (Felipe Escudero) shortly after they first meet.



Zamir (Escudero) caresses Felicity (Samantha Buckley) after he drugs her.



Luella (Megan Kueter) dissociates to escape her dreary reality as Felicity (Buckley) watches.



Leonard (Deutsch) aims his assault rifle at the audience.



Leonard (Deutsch) schemes to torture wounded Zamir (Escudero).



The shadow government (Deutsch, John Nicol and Kyleen Smith) capture Zamir (Escudero).



Hildegard (Smith), Reverend Mike (Ryan Christopherson), the Voice (Nicol), Luella (Kueter), Felicity (Buckley) and Leonard (Deutsch) gather together at the climax.



The Voice (Nicol) sings in a Frank Sinatra-esque style within the fantasy ending.



Felicity (Buckley) and Zamir (Escudero) see what could have been.



All the characters (Nicol, Smith, Christopherson, Escudero, Buckley, Deutsch and Kueter) restart the play to show how it could have ended differently.

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