THERE IS SOMEBODY THERE: DIRECTING CLOUD 9

by

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ABSTRACT


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This document is a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the Masters of Fine Arts degree in Theatre Arts at Minnesota State University, Mankato. It is a detailed account of Seth M. Honerman’s directorial process for Cloud 9 by Caryl Churchill. The play was produced in the Andreas Theatre and ran from September 18 to 21, 2019. The thesis chronicles the director’s artistic process from pre-production through performance in five chapters: a pre-production analysis, an historical and critical perspective, a rehearsal and performance journal, a post-production analysis and a process development analysis. Appendices and works cited are included.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER I

EARLY PRODUCTION ANALYSIS

This chapter contains the early production analysis of Seth M. Honerman’s directorial approach for Caryl Churchill’s Cloud 9, to be produced by Minnesota State University, Mankato’s Department of Theatre and Dance, September 18-21, 2019. The scenic design is by Emma Murphy, costume design by Dena Schedivy, lighting design by Ryan Hedman, sound design by Kyle Jensen, original compositions by Sam Verdick and technical direction by Jason Wagaman. The content within will examine the director’s main concept of the play, brief character analysis of each player and the major design elements desired to fulfill the director’s concept.

To begin, Cloud 9 immediately summons thoughts and images in relation to the phrase “being on cloud nine” and it would be appropriate to examine the title of one of Churchill’s best-known plays. That phrase is reported to have been first used in the late 1950s and most often relates to feelings of elation or well-being. Synonyms for this feeling are ecstasy, elation, euphoria and paradise which can further evoke feelings and memories. Churchill cleverly titled her play about sexual politics with this phrase to set the audience up for an evening of elation and excitement. What really occurs is an examination of gender inequality and the exploration of sex as a natural, necessary and enjoyable human act. The title entices an audience into a play that has a lot to say with the intention of leaving them feeling as though they are on “cloud nine” themselves.
The play draws on a variety of tools to convey its message and one of the primary ones is a change of style between acts. The first act is inherently farcical and the second uses more realism. Neither act can truly be defined by those stylistic parameters, but they can be used as the primary source of style for the two acts. While Act 1 focuses on comedy for dramatic intent and the second act shifts into a more reflective tone, they each utilize style as a point of emphasis. The farcical nature of Act 1 is found in the quickly paced dialogue and the use of entrances and exits. The results are somewhat like a comedy of manners in hyperdrive. The other major farcical element is the use of broad characterization. In her satirical commentary of Victorian ideals, to be detailed further in Chapter II, Churchill has written the characters to fit into some broad stereotypes of the period. It is in their development and discoveries that they break away from the farce style. Meanwhile, the second act takes on a much more realistic style. The characters appear, dress and speak in a much more realistic manner. By utilizing this stylistic approach, Churchill is drawing attention to the fact that the problems examined in Act 1 are real concerns in the more contemporary setting of Act 2. Her intent is to draw parallels for the audience to push them to contemplate the themes presented in the play. She does diverge from realism through the use of gender swapped casting and the appearances of ghosts toward the end of the act.

*Cloud 9* is a play that focuses on the ugliness of control and taboo nature of sex in public discussion while showing the remarkable nature of being loved, including self-love. Through this analysis, it is established that the play is driven by thematic thought and characters to focus on identity and representation. Churchill explains in an author’s
note that the play began from developing the idea of “the parallel between colonial and sexual oppression” (Churchill Plays 245). To emphasize this idea, Act 1 is set in Victorian Africa in approximately 1880. The action of the act centers around Clive, a patriarch, who imposes his views onto all those around him. His wife, Betty, is played by a man to exemplify the thought that Churchill wants her to be what men want her to be. His servant, Joshua, is played by a white actor with the same idea that the author wants him to be what white men want him to be. His son Edward, however, is played by a woman to show a youthfulness and how the strong hand of a male would be used to influence male behavior. The other characters are all played by the appropriate genders but their characteristics challenge Clive’s perspective. Harry Bagley and Ellen are both homosexual, Maud is an imposing in-law and Mrs. Saunders challenges the idea that women need men to be successful and happy.

Act 2 switches to a more contemporary setting, or at least to the time the play was written. Set in London in 1979, the second act focuses on changing sexuality. The central focus of the act is on the women and the homosexual characters. While a hundred years have transpired in setting, the characters have only aged 25 years. Churchill did this to highlight the Victorian ideals still taught up into the 1950s. The colonial period brings those ideas to the forefront of the play’s action and the modern London setting establishes that change is occurring in the form of loosening the patriarchal structure. This change is noted by a looser structure to the second act and a shift from representational style to a mixed style of presentational and representational. The characters have aged and found new aspects of their lives that are important to them.
This act also features a shift in the men and their feelings about control. Act 1 depicted them as struggling to maintain control and Act 2 shows them navigating how to let go of it. Betty, the major character of both acts, is now played by a woman because she is discovering more about herself and who she really is. It is through Betty that the audience gets a real sense of what the play is all about; it is acceptable and necessary for a person to be who they are, no matter how they identify themselves.

A summary of the events of the play will illuminate Churchill’s themes. Act 1 begins with a song that spoofs popular Victorian music. The company, except for Harry Bagley, sings together but Clive is clearly the one in control. He introduces the family one by one, beginning with Betty who tells the audience that “what men want is what I want to be” (Churchill Cloud 6). Clive then introduces Joshua who explains, “what white men want is what I want to be,” and Edward reiterates the point by saying, “what father wants I’d dearly like to be” (6). Clive then skips the rest of the family and the show begins. Churchill is establishing that the Victorian ideal of a family dynamic was that the father was in control of everything and set the example for behavior and class. It should also be noted that he determined when and who could speak, including not giving the women an opportunity to do so with the exception of Betty.

The sense of control that Clive has will be challenged throughout the first act. It begins right away when Betty accuses Joshua of being rude to her. She demands that Clive speak to him about it and Clive does so, however, he subverts Betty’s request by secretly siding with Joshua’s “joke,” as he calls it. Ellen then brings in the children and Clive is met with two challenges. First, Victoria refuses to speak to him; this will
become a continual joke throughout the act because Victoria is played by a doll. Second, Edward is discovered with one of Victoria’s dolls. He claims that he is just minding it for Victoria, but it becomes clear that Edward would rather partake in what is considered the more feminine play than the more masculine sport of riding. The arrival of Mrs. Saunders introduces another obstacle for Clive’s patriarchal control. Mrs. Saunders rode to the family’s home on her own and is rather outspoken about her thoughts and opinions. Harry Bagley arrives shortly after Mrs. Saunders and reveals that he and Betty are having an affair. Joshua observes part of their tryst and when Betty leaves, Harry offers a sexual interaction with him. The varying sense of sexual identity is a major component throughout the play.

Act 1, Scene 2 focuses on the sexuality of the characters. Clive starts the scene in an illicit affair with Mrs. Saunders. He still exercises his greater sense of control by forcing himself on her even when she says no. Eventually, she shifts her thoughts and consents but is denied any real pleasure from Clive, who ceases the activity after he has achieved sexual climax. Clive really is a satirical take on the British man who takes what he wants with little to no regard for others. The other main focus of the sexuality component is that Ellen exposes her sexual feelings for Betty and the audience discovers that Edward and Harry had a sexual encounter on a previous visit from Harry. By showing that two of the characters identify as homosexual, Churchill is showing a clear antithesis of the Victorian family values.

These family values continue to be tested in Scene 3. The men leave the women in the house while they go to punish servants who were forming an uprising. During this
time, there is a larger focus on Edward’s perceived maternal instincts in caring for Victoria’s dolls. Ellen wants to support Edward but is forced by Betty to punish him. Betty thinks that she needs to have Edward punished because he is not exhibiting the male behavior that is expected of him. Racial equality is also touched on in this scene. Joshua’s presence in the act is important throughout because he is a black servant played by a white man. Churchill is making a statement about racial relations by satirizing the thought that white colonists would be able to civilize natives. Joshua becomes a “civilized” individual in the eyes of Clive and Harry, but Mrs. Saunders questions Joshua’s behavior when she suspects that he was the individual who did the flogging of the servants. This horrific thought could be perceived as problematic in today’s culture but, when viewed through a satirical lens, a greater question is raised. What cultural ideals are worth turning away from to adopt others in hopes for a better life? The further problem that Joshua faces is that he is not living in the perceived better world. Instead of having freedom in his newly civilized life, he is subservient to the family and their wishes and must rely on them to grant him permission for life’s enjoyments. The two concepts of expected male behavior and servitude collide at the end of the scene when Joshua is openly mocking Betty, because he has the power of a man, and Edward reprimands him. Edward’s show of male authority goes against the feminine nature that he prefers, and it also trumps Joshua’s perceived authority over Betty because Edward is the master’s son.

Act 1, Scene 4 really delves into Clive’s insecurities. The scene focuses on Clive’s expectations of what a family should be and how women are the weaker sex. The common perception was that men are supposed to be the strong ones and be more
independent. They build better relationships with other men because they understand each other, whereas they find women incomprehensible. Much of this discussion takes place with Harry Bagley, who mistakes it to mean that Clive is making advances toward him. Clive is mortified when Harry expresses homosexual feelings for him, and he has lost all control that he once had. His immediate response to Harry is that the feelings aren’t real and that he should marry at once. The family and societal perception are most important to the British Empire and by marrying, Harry will continue that proud tradition. In a series of brief conversations, Clive veils his disgust about what happened by feigning to be concerned about Joshua’s parents dying.

Churchill’s attack on the patriarch sets the audience up for the climactic final scene. In an effort to regain his control, Clive orchestrates the wedding of Harry Bagley and Ellen, neither of whom want to be married. The family gathers for the festivities and they each try to appeal to Clive. Edward attempts to play with a doll again but lies to his father saying that he was minding it for Victoria. Betty begs for forgiveness and seeks Clive’s eternal love. Harry Bagley and Ellen feign happiness so that their marriage won’t be questioned. The evening leads up to speeches from Harry Bagley and Clive. The speeches seem forced and disingenuous. The act ends with Edward witnessing Joshua raising a gun to Clive and saying nothing. This action is Churchill’s final statement to indicate the metaphorical death of the Victorian ideals. The next generation, Edward, is turning against them and allowing an outside force, Joshua, to execute the oppressive control over individuals.
Act 2 is used to emphasize the changes that have occurred and are still being navigated. Questions of sexual identity are explored. There is still a fear of becoming open about oneself and yet there is no direct control over individuals. Scene 1 introduces a grown Victoria and her friend Lin who are at a park playing with Lin’s daughter, Cathy, and Victoria’s unseen son, Tommy. The park setting contrasts the open jungle plains of Africa in Act 1 by showing an open, yet structured, natural environment. The park is more public than the family’s homestead and functions as the source of control. Clive was the representative societal control of Act 1 and society takes this function in Act 2. Edward makes this evident by stating, “Don’t go around saying that. I might lose my job. . . . Someone might have heard you” (60). He is responding to Lin referencing that he is gay. Churchill is making a commentary that the discussion is more readily spoken about in public but there is still a fear of retaliation.

Act 2, Scene 1 provides new perspectives on the themes in Act 1. The first that Churchill addresses is the change in parenting and family relations. Lin and Victoria are at the park with their children, but they are disengaged from them. The societal expectation is that the children play on their own and when they do communicate with them, it is from a distance. Lin and Cathy do engage in more direct conversation, but it is typically defiant and rarely concludes; Cathy typically just leaves when she doesn’t want to talk any more. Churchill diverts from the prominent themes presented and touches on the smaller theme of violence presented in Act 1. In Act 2, instead of the violence being between two distinctly different cultures, it is taking place between two similar cultures. The conflict in Belfast is referenced by Lin, and Cathy has a proclivity toward violence
and guns. Victoria is uncomfortable with it and tries to stop the violence between Tommy and another child, while Lin encourages Cathy’s play. The real demonstration of thematic change is the arrival of Betty, who appears to still be following the Victorian ideals of how women should behave. This is in line with what the audience had seen in Act 1, but then she mentions she is leaving Clive to live on her own. This separation clearly tells the audience that the Victorian expectations have been left behind.

Relationships become the focus of Act 2, Scene 2, specifically their parameters. The scene begins with Edward and Gerry discussing the importance of their relationship to each other. Edward is very protective of the relationship and wants to know that it is exclusive, while Gerry is more open with it. Gerry breaks the fourth wall and invites the audience in on some of his illicit behavior with other men. As he leaves, Martin, Betty and Victoria enter discussing a new job prospect of Victoria’s which will require her to separate from her family. Betty believes that she needs to stay with the family and Martin is attempting to be encouraging and offers his support by telling her that she needs to make the decision. Martin’s perceived feminism is strained and Churchill notes that he still dominates Victoria throughout the act (Churchill Plays 246). Victoria and Lin find some solace in each other because they believe that they can understand each other better as women. Lin, however, doesn’t understand how to connect with her daughter who now refuses to wear pants because other girls made fun of her for not wearing a dress. Churchill concludes the scene with Victoria and Edward commiserating about men and their lack of understanding. There is a moment at the end of the scene that may be construed as taboo, but Churchill has a different intention for it. Edward expresses that
he wishes to know what it is like to be a woman and asks his sister to touch her breasts. He is seeking a deeper understanding of what it means to be a woman and shares that experience with a person that he trusts.

The third scene of Act 2 explores sexual liberation. Victoria, Lin and Edward enter a separate area of the park late in the evening to attempt to conjure a fertility goddess. The three engage in a chant of the goddess’s various names and begin an orgy. The main goal is to achieve a sense of sexual liberation by engaging in sexual activity to empower themselves as women; that also includes Edward, who is trying to engage fully with his feminine qualities. Martin arrives and the group pulls him into the orgy. His reaction is one of complacency and he states, “I was all for the sixties when liberation just meant fucking” (84). This line of dialogue shows that a period of change occurred from Act 1 and that the act of sex has become a form of freedom. Namely, sex is now more widely accepted outside of wedlock and not done in secrecy. The ghost of Lin’s brother Bill appears shortly after Martin and he reinforces the idea that sex is a necessary need for individual freedom. His monologue about life in the army shows the strain of regimented living and how his release would be found through sex. After the group all leaves, Gerry enters to provide another take on this freedom. After stating, “I can have sex any time,” he explains that he prefers to be alone and that he uses sex for personal satisfaction. Gerry’s perception of sex is challenged when he seeks out Edward. Edward has found solace and liberation in the orgy and appears in his Act 1 form being played by a woman. The dialogue between them calls back to Act 1 and causes Gerry to reconsider his solitude.
After some time has passed, Act 2, Scene 4 brings the play’s themes to Betty to see how she acknowledges the changes that have taken place. The family is now in different living arrangements that showcase a stark departure from the Victorian ideals of family dynamics. Victoria has left Martin and is now living with Lin, as well as Edward. Edward has openly embraced his nurturing qualities and lives with the women as the children’s caregiver. Martin is still active in the family’s life, but only through visitation weekends. Gerry arrives in the park and shows that there is merit in sexual liberation by connecting with Edward, Harry and Betty throughout the scene. Betty takes in all the changes and willingly accepts them. She sees that everyone is finding happiness in their new lives which allows her to identify the change that she needs to make in herself. As she starts to accept who she is, a strong and independent woman, ghosts of the past come to belittle her. First her mother expresses disappointment in her choices because she saw Betty as a success in her youth. Betty counters by stating, “if there isn’t a right way to do things you have to invent one” (94). Betty understands that change needs to occur and in a moment of self-discovery expresses that she has found herself through sexual liberation via masturbation. The play ends with Clive dismissing Betty for her behavior but she is visited by her past self who hugs her to show that self-love is the best acceptance of individuality.

The play is written for a cast of seven, four males and three females. Over the course of the two acts, 12 different characters are introduced, three of which appear in both. Betty, Edward and Victoria carry through each act and are played by different actors for each. In Act 1 Betty is played by a male, Edward by a female and Victoria is
portrayed as a doll. Act 2 switches all of them to their assigned genders. To effectively make the doubling work, Churchill has provided some guidelines on casting. She does allow for a variety of options on how to double characters, but she states that she does “like seeing Clive become Cathy, and enjoy the Edward-Betty connections” (Churchill Plays 246). Honerman made the decision to use the cast doubling from the original Joint Stock Company production after reviewing several other pairing options. That casting is set as Clive-Cathy, Betty-Edward, Edward-Betty, Maud-Victoria, Mrs. Saunders/Ellen-Lin, Joshua-Gerry and Harry-Martin.

Churchill’s choice to have the company double characters is rather interesting for several reasons. Using a smaller ensemble allows for the actors to work together throughout the play. It also forces a certain versatility upon the actor to clearly embody both characters. This becomes a key component for those actors who switch gender between acts. The Edward-Betty track will be difficult to cast because it will be a challenge to find a female actor who can be quite youthful in one act and become much more mature as the mid-50s matriarch of the family in the other. Clive-Cathy will need to be an actor who is outgoing and able to exhibit an exuberant energy as the young Cathy, while still presenting as a strong leader in Act 1.

To assist with the actors’ understanding of the characters, a brief analysis of each one follows. The first actor will portray Clive in Act 1 and then Cathy in Act 2. As the patriarch of the family, Clive is the first character that the audience is introduced to. He steps forward to take control of the play and leads the family in the opening song. A stalwart Englishman, he is devoted to the crown and all his actions are for Queen and
Country. In the opening song, he sings about his relationship to the other characters and their importance to him. He attributes all his wife’s appearances and possessions to his influence on her. He is immensely proud of the work he has done to civilize his servant, that he barely even recognizes Joshua’s race. When speaking of his son, he expresses that he is doing everything in his power to show what a man is supposed to be. The other family members mean very little to Clive and he doesn’t give them the chance to speak.

Clive’s primary objective throughout the play is to maintain a sense of control. He lives in the Victorian Era, a time when the patriarch of the family was the primary source of income and set the standard for family behavior. His desire to maintain control over everyone is demonstrated through his will to beat his children, mock his wife and take sexual pleasure from whomever he likes. In this case, he is having an affair with Mrs. Saunders, the neighboring widow. As a proper Englishman, he maintains a sense of control through his outer appearance. He stands brave and tall when he hears of the rebellion that is occurring with the native Africans.

Clive slowly loses his decorum throughout Act 1 as more and more people leave his control. Edward’s open defiance about playing with dolls, Joshua’s tattling, Betty’s affair and Harry Bagley’s homosexual advances send him into disbelief and he quickly reacts to regain control. He works to correct the problems by spanking Edward, dismissing Joshua, forgiving Betty and forcing Harry Bagley to marry Ellen. When he believes all is well again, he addresses the family during the wedding reception and is met with an ambiguous end as Joshua raises a gun at him. He is spoken of in Act 2 as Betty discusses getting a divorce from him.
Cathy is Lin’s daughter who has no father in the play. She parallels Clive in being strong-willed, having a penchant for violence and possessing a strong passion for guns. Her main objective is to earn her independence from her mother. She becomes openly defiant of Lin’s instructions and is frequently arguing with her mother. Cathy also shares the same desire to be in control as Clive did in Act 1. When things don’t go her way, she exhibits the flight technique by exiting the scene until she has found a new demand. The young girl differs from Clive by being allowed to have interests in feminine and masculine activities. She often plays in a dress because she doesn’t want to be made fun of by her schoolmates. This play, however, consists mostly of playing with a gun. Cathy loses some of her control at the end of the act when she is attacked and beaten while getting some ice cream. When last exiting, it is important to note that she recognizes the punishment for the boys who hurt her should be less severe than what Clive would have done in Act 1.

Betty is played by two separate actors over the course of the play. She becomes the central focus of the play because she is the one character who sees the greatest change from Act 1 to Act 2. In Act 1, she is a subservient wife whose primary desire is to please her husband. This desire is challenged by Harry Bagley and Ellen. Harry Bagley and Betty had engaged in an illicit affair previously and upon his arrival to the family’s home, Betty seeks to reengage in it. This seems out of character for Betty, but when she openly discusses her sexuality in Act 2, it is clear that she felt a sense of liberation when she was with Harry Bagley that she didn’t with her husband.
Struggles with maintaining the Victorian ideals create a lot of conflict within Betty. She sees that Edward wants to be different than what is expected of him, but she feels obligated to punish his feminine behavior and include his father in the process so that he can be raised with a firm masculine hand. As she fights the internal battle of seeking pleasure for herself, she is constantly punishing herself and begs Clive for his forgiveness. This depressing cycle continues into Act 2. Even though she has made the decision to leave Clive and start life anew on her own, she is constantly passing judgement of Victorian family values on her own children, as well as Lin. Betty seems to understand that she needs to find herself, but she doesn’t make that full realization until the end of the play.

Edward also makes a significant change over the course of the play and is played by two separate actors between Act 1 and 2. As a young boy in Act 1, he is very confused about what he should be and what he wants to be. His primary objective is to please his father and be the type of man that is expected of him. As the oldest child and being born a male, the expectation would be that he grows to take care of his mother and sister in the same manner that Clive does. Edward struggles to meet these standards set forth by Clive and the Victorian ideals because he is more interested in caring for his family in the way that Ellen does. He has a very nurturing attitude and exhibits it by playing with one of Victoria’s dolls. He also has a skewed sense of love because of a previous sexual experience with Harry Bagley. He knows that he wants a homosexual relationship and tries to engage in one when Harry Bagley returns to the family’s home.
In Act 2, Edward has accepted his homosexuality and nurturing tendencies. He is still afraid of the opinions of society and keeps his life choices a secret in public. To live an expected life, he has gotten a job as a park gardener. This job allows him to exercise his caregiving needs, but he is ashamed when Lin openly calls him gay because he doesn’t want to lose his job. As Victoria and Lin spend more time together in the park, Edward learns to follow Lin’s example of being more open and chooses to embrace his femininity. This choice is aided by a desire to stand up to the belittlement he receives from his partner, Gerry. After being called a wife and a woman by Gerry and recognizing his own desire to be a nurturer, Edward chooses to openly embrace who he is and goes to live with Lin and Victoria as their children’s caregiver.

The fourth actor will double as Maud and Victoria in Acts 1 and 2 respectively. Maud’s journey in Act 1 is limited. She represents the old ideals of the Victorian Era woman. Her language is often in reference to the past and deals with how children would respect the wishes of their parents. What is interesting about her is that she demonstrates moments of independence and strength against Clive. The patriarch tends to treat her as a frail elder woman but she in turn responds to him with phrases such as, “How kind of you Clive. I think I am strong enough” (Churchill Cloud 17). Maud’s real wish is that Betty become a strong woman as well. She wants to teach her important lessons and hopes to see her grow into a good mother.

The actress playing Maud has the fascinating switch to Victoria in the second act. Victoria is much like her mother, Betty, regarding not knowing exactly what she wants
from life. She starts the act as a woman who is most interested in getting free time from her children. While spending time with Lin, Cathy and her son Tommy, she disengages and wants to do the things that she wants to do, like read. She shouts instructions to her son off stage and only really engages with him when he goes missing. Her relationship with her husband is strained because he doesn’t understand her, and she is still searching for what she wants. The more that she talks with Lin, she discovers that she is tired of men. While not entirely sure that she is interested in a homosexual relationship, she does engage in one with Lin to explore her femininity and find herself. She finds happiness in living an open and liberated life with Lin and Edward at the conclusion of the play.

The fifth actor will have the difficult task of playing three significant characters. As the caregiver of the family, the first is Ellen who has a simpler course throughout the first act. Her role is merely to be subservient to the needs of the children and teach them proper etiquette so that Betty can focus on motherly duties. Ellen’s change comes in the struggle that she has with her feelings for Betty. She knows that they are wrong and she shouldn’t be attracted to another woman, but she desperately wants to embrace her true feelings. Ellen also struggles with disciplining the children. She sees the value of their individuality and it hurts her to force them into something else. Ellen is forced into a marriage to Harry Bagley to demonstrate the oppressive ideals of the Victorian Era. Ellen’s story is one of the more heartbreaking ones because the audience doesn’t get the opportunity to find out if she achieves liberation or not. There is hope that she and Harry Bagley would understand each other and that understanding will set them free.
The actress playing Ellen does get to showcase the opposite of those Victorian ideals by doubling as Mrs. Saunders in Act 1. Mrs. Saunders is an independent widow who lives next to Clive’s family. She is described by Clive as, “an unusual woman and does not require protection in the same way” (42). Being a widow has forced her to learn how to care for herself in ways that would be unfamiliar to women of the period. Mostly, this means that she has had to take up the duties the man of the home would have been responsible for and carry them out herself. This has made her incredibly self-reliant and she only seeks help from Clive because she fears the threat of the native people to be too much for her to handle alone.

Mrs. Saunders also openly refutes Clive’s advances at the top of Scene 2, showing that she is unafraid of male dominance. When she accepts his advances, it is merely so that she can benefit from the sexual pleasure another person provides her. She continues to be the primary example of the changes that are coming to the Victorian ideals when she calls into question the treatment of the family servants. Her reasonable doubt about the flogging of the Africans shows that there is forward moral thinking that challenges societal norms. She also influences Joshua by admonishing his behavior toward his own race. In Act 1, Scene 5, she announces that she will purchase property in England and introduce the threshing machine. Her exit from the play is a statement of power for women.

This show of feminine empowerment continues into Act 2 with the character Lin. She is a single mother who wants to be true to herself and be a good mother to her child. Lin communicates with her daughter, Cathy, as a peer and seeks to find compromises
with her. This parenting tactic is unfamiliar to the audience because they have been watching Clive and Betty force behavior on their children. Lin’s relationship with Cathy could be called strained because it appears that they constantly argue with each other and Lin tends to concede to the young girl.

While working to maintain a good relationship with her daughter, Lin is also trying to start a relationship with Victoria. She attempts to appeal to Victoria by a kindred dislike of men and then persists by telling her that Victoria would like having sex with her. She pushes the idea further by being an emotional support for Victoria in Act 2, Scene 2 by agreeing to love Victoria in all sorts of scenarios. Where Lin shows signs of insecurity is in her relationship with her brother. Bill is deployed to Northern Ireland and Lin hears that he has been shot and killed. She struggles with the violence that lead to his death because she believes it is unnecessary. His death also forces her to assume more of a masculine role in Cathy’s life because that’s what she believes her child needs. Lin’s strength eventually persuades Victoria and they end the play living together.

The sixth actor has an interesting journey as two men who have a skewed respect for women. The adventurer Harry Bagley makes his first appearance as a guest to Clive’s home in Act 1. He has been out exploring and is a good friend of Clive’s and chooses to return to his homestead because it is where he feels most comfortable. Harry Bagley is also quite promiscuous. His major desire is to find someone to love him so that he can put an end to the loneliness of exploration. It is discovered that he and Edward had had a sexual experience on an earlier visit to the homestead. Harry Bagley clearly regrets this excursion and tries to push Edward away. Instead he makes advances toward Betty, but
also feels conflicted about how that would betray his friend. In a moment of misunderstanding, Harry Bagley makes an advance on Clive and is immediately reprimanded by him. Clive forces him into marriage to honor the Queen. He wants to honor his friend and cure the “disease” that he has so he proposes to Ellen who accepts to keep up her appearances. While all seems right in the end, Harry Bagley’s wedding speech shows that he is unhappy, and the values cherished by the Victorian Era are not shared by all its subjects.

Martin is the other character portrayed by the actor playing Harry Bagley. Martin is a self-seeking individual, much like Harry Bagley. He feigns care for others but it is always to his benefit. As Victoria’s husband, he claims that his major objective is to make her happy. He tends to dominate her through his language and actions. In an impassioned monologue to Victoria, Martin tries to articulate that he wants her to feel comfortable and free to make her own decisions. The problem is that he focuses on what he will do in response to those decisions and not on how they will impact her. Martin is disengaged from the family and cares only for “helping” others. He is proud of his novel that is “about women from the women’s point of view” (73). Martin ultimately ends up alone and occasionally helps with watching the Cathy and Tommy. This is his form of freedom because it allows him to have sex with whoever he wants but still have a connection to Tommy.

The final actor plays the roles of Joshua in Act 1 and Gerry in Act 2. Joshua is a black servant to Clive’s family and has worked hard to become a “civilized” individual. He prides himself on separating from his native people and claims the family to be his
people. His initial primary goal is to be a good servant and be respected by Clive, unfortunately, he has a skewed perspective and believes that Clive treats him as an equal. This causes Joshua to have feelings of superiority over the women of the family even though he would be in a class below them. This causes contention with Betty throughout Act 1 and leads to a confrontation with Edward about appropriate behavior. When Joshua learns of his family’s death, he shows no remorse and refuses to go to their funeral because they aren’t his people. His turning point comes when he realizes that Clive doesn’t truly care for him after offering condolences and then demanding that he bring him a drink. Joshua and Edward team up to provide the climax of the act as Joshua pulls a gun on Clive and Edward turns away from what he sees. This action shows that the future, Edward, is ready to grow up in a less oppressive society and that the oppressed, Joshua, will revolt against their oppressors.

Gerry is introduced in Act 2 as Edward’s partner. He is the most liberated individual of all the characters at the beginning of the act. While he loves the stability of a partnership, he wants most to be completely free to live life in his own fashion. Gerry often belittles Edward for acting in feminine ways. He falters by still demonstrating the Victorian ideals that gender qualities need to be relegated to their binary definitions. Gerry makes a significant impact on Betty at the end of the act by demonstrating that it is perfectly alright to live alone and do whatever one wishes to.

Along with the thematic elements and focus on character, the design elements will impact the production greatly. Honerman believes that it is important to keep the play theatrical. Churchill was influenced by the teachings and ideas of Bertolt Brecht and this
play lends itself to his ideas of alienation of the audience to focus on the message of the play. The use of songs in Act 1 and the shift to presentational monologues in Act 2 also lend to this idea. Bearing this notion in mind, the following will detail the director’s thoughts on the production’s design.

Beginning with scenic design, the play provides some difficulty in creating a space that can be recognizably Africa in Act 1 and then London in Act 2. This production will be performed in the Andreas Theatre in the shallow thrust configuration. While this configuration provides interesting opportunities for staging, it does limit the use of furniture and large set pieces because of a smaller playing area. The director initially envisions the use of two matching benches and a ground row to create the environments of the play. A swing will be required for Act 2 to help establish the park and add another interesting dynamic for use of play within the performance. The ground row should be the element that is used to tie the two acts together. While the director doesn’t have any specific thoughts on what it should be, he thinks that it should be engaging and focus on the foliage of the two locations. The scenic design will also have to work closely with the lighting design to establish change of time and place.

With multiple characters being played by the same actors and a shift in time between the two acts, the costume design will be rather elaborate. As stated earlier in this chapter, there will be seven actors cast in the following roles, Clive-Cathy, Betty-Edward, Edward-Betty, Maud-Victoria, Ellen/Mrs. Saunders-Lin, Harry Bagley-Martin and Joshua-Gerry. That information will be most useful after the casting process has been completed, but it will provide some insight and perspective for the designer when
envisioning the characters. While the play is a satirically farcical, the costumes should still be period accurate. Their accuracy will assist the cast in alienating the audience. Seeing a grown man in a Victorian dress will create comedy and force the audience to question why the choice was made and what statement it is making. The farcical elements can be explored in the color of the costumes and their accessories. The primary question the director poses to the designer is what ties the characters together? All of them are related or in committed relationships. There should be something that shows how the characters are connected to each other and the period in which they live.

The lighting and sound designs are much more open to interpretation. As stated previously, the lighting design will need to work with the scene design to help establish changes in time and place. As each scene is in a different location in Act 1, it becomes imperative that they have distinct looks to tell the audience a change has occurred. Lighting can also aid in the alienation of the audience by using gobos to establish locations and force theatregoers to determine how and why the scene has changed. Additionally, the lighting can help establish that the play is a comedy by providing warm colors and bright moments, but it should find moments of seriousness in the darker moments of the play.

The sound design of the play will focus mostly on creating a soundscape throughout the two acts. This will establish the change of location for the audience and give focus to important dialogue. The musicality of Churchill’s dialogue will be enhanced with underscoring in both acts and a constant drumming in Act 1. Churchill uses music as another source of audience alienation to subvert expectations of scenes and
to draw focus to her lyrics. Original compositions will be created for the four songs in the play and underscore. They will focus on parody and spoof the popular music of the period.

Through the combined design elements, the play should focus on the separation of the audience from the world of the play. Churchill is clearly focusing on important thoughts that need to be processed. While she doesn’t provide any distinct answers to the big questions that are being asked about sexuality, gender politics and race relations, she does focus on the individual. Ultimately, the director wishes for the audience to understand that it is acceptable to laugh at the absurdities of oppressive control and feel confident in accepting their own individuality.
CHAPTER II

CRITICAL AND HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

_Cloud 9_ by Caryl Churchill was originally produced in 1979 by the Joint Stock Theatre Company. Following the short run at Joint Stock, the play was remounted at the Royal Court in 1979 with a brief revival in 1980. Discussion of a West End transfer began following the critical reception of the play and Churchill and director Max Stafford-Clark chose not to pursue it (Stafford-Clark 1912). The play then made its American premiere in 1981 at the Theatre De Lys in New York City under the direction of Tommy Tune. Stafford-Clark claims that it was with this production that the full potential of the play was realized and noted that the production ran for over a year Off Broadway (1941).

Joint Stock developed the play with Churchill through a series of workshops. The playwright reflected on the process in her author’s note for the play by stating that, “in the case of _Cloud Nine_ the workshop lasted for three weeks, the writing period for twelve, and the rehearsal for six” (Churchill _Plays_ 245). The company typically worked in this fashion. The writer, director and actors would come together initially to discuss and research a certain topic and then the writer would leave to write the play. Following completion of the play, it would be rehearsed and rewritten before public performances. The process was well documented by Stafford-Clark who kept a diary of all the plays that he directed. This diary was particularly useful when he published his book, _Taking_
Stock: The Theatre of Max Stafford-Clark written with Philip Roberts, because he used a variety of plays as case studies to examine his developing process. One such study was *Cloud 9*, in which he details the intricacies of the play’s workshop and rehearsal process. Churchill and Stafford-Clark first collaborated as writer and director respectively on 1976’s *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire*. In commenting on first sharing her process, Churchill stated, “It attracted me as a method of working, but I’d no idea what it was going to be like, and I’d never worked in a co-operative way. I’d always been shy about showing anyone my work before it was finished, but I liked being more open, and learnt enormously from it” (Roberts and Stafford-Clark 543). By including his early interactions with Churchill, Stafford-Clark was able to create an accurate historical account of her as a playwright who learned, engaged and thrived from the collaborative process.

The development of *Cloud 9* began with open discussion about sexuality. The material discussed in the process would help influence Churchill’s characters and eventually the setting of the first act. In an effort to provide a well-rounded mix of actors for the workshop, the group was comprised of a same-sex couple, a heterosexual couple, an ex-couple and what Stafford-Clark called “a healthy mix of heterosexual and homosexual men and women” (1401). The varied experience of the group provided the rehearsal room with a vast amount of information and testimonies for Churchill to manifest a script from. It also meant that the actors were in a very open and vulnerable position when sharing their personal accounts about family and sexual histories. While the play itself doesn’t represent real individuals, it does utilize their ideas and confessions
as part of the characters. All accounts of the workshop and the rehearsal process are now referenced with a sense of confidentiality using first names only.

Stafford-Clark’s account delves deep into the workshop process of exploring sexual politics. One actor regaled the director and playwright with the details of how to obtain oral sex in a timely manner while riding the trains. This story sounds familiar as it is the basis of Gerry’s Act 2 monologue. Through documenting these anecdotes, Stafford-Clark is able to lay the foundation of the play’s origins. Using sexuality as the central idea, the creative team developed various workshop improvisations to explore what the varied group of performers thought and believed about societal and private perceptions of sex and gender. Some improvisations focused on scenarios where sex was traded for favors, while others focused on gender-imposed scenarios, e.g., a woman walking into an all-male workplace or a man intruding on an all-female party (1502). It wasn’t until soon after this that one actor questioned the purpose of the workshop and stated, “We should talk more about our own lives. We are of a generation whose parents were repressed sexually and we are bound to start from that” (1521). At this point the direction of the workshop changed course and the actors started to work within improvisations that focused on their experiences. Churchill and Stafford-Clark began to ask more pointed questions regarding the actors’ thoughts and feelings.

After the workshop, Churchill was tasked with writing the script. As stated above, she took twelve weeks to process the information from the workshop and develop a story from it. In an introduction for *Vinegar Tom*, another collaborative effort with the Monstrous Regiment theatre company, she expressed, “I felt briefly shy and daunted,
wondering if I would be acceptable, then happy and stimulated by the discovery of shared ideas and the enormous energy and feeling of possibilities” (Churchill Plays 129). Churchill found the idea of working with others invigorating and these early partnerships set the stage for her to continue writing with others influencing the development of the text. This readiness to accept varying thoughts and opinions has allowed her work to flourish. Lancaster University Professor Elaine Aston expounds on Churchill’s openness stating there is a “willingness on Churchill’s part to embrace a new way of working; an attraction to a creative experience outside of her own” (Aston 145). Churchill continues to collaborate with others through workshops similar to the Joint Stock model or through repeated ventures including several recent plays produced by Royal Court Theatre.

Stafford-Clark suggests that the workshop actors’ feedback about wanting to speak about repressed sexuality may have been Churchill’s first exposure to the idea of setting the first act in Victorian colonial Africa (Stafford-Clark 1530). This setting allowed her to use the play as a means of satirizing the outdated ideals that seemed to still have a hold on contemporary family structures. As University of St. Thomas Professor Amelia Howe Kritzer explains in The Plays of Caryl Churchill, “Cloud Nine explores the Victorian origins of contemporary gender definitions and sexual attitudes, recent changes in societal regulation of personal relationships, and some implications of these changes” (111). It would be best to define what the attitudes of the Victorian’s were before exploring their implications on contemporary society.

The Victorian period began in 1837 when Victoria succeeded to the English throne after her uncle King William IV. Her reign would last until her death in 1901,
providing decades of history to draw from. Churchill chose to focus on the family structure and its views on class and sexuality to frame the first act of Cloud 9. The late Professor Sally Mitchell explored much of the Victorian lifestyle in her text Daily Life in Victorian England. She determined that social class was the foundation of Victorian ideals. A family’s status established much of what they were able to participate in and there was no mingling amongst the different classes. Classes were identified through varying manners, clothing and values. Mitchell tells that, “the middle class despised aristocratic idleness; the majority valued hard work, sexual morality, and individual responsibility” (21). These ideals become the foundation for the family that the events of the play center on.

Churchill introduces the audience to the family immediately and establishes that Clive is the patriarch through his narration. During the opening song of the play, Clive introduces the family model by singing:

CLIVE. My wife is all I dreamt a wife should be,

And everything she is she owes to me, . . .

My boy’s a jewel, really has the knack.

You’d hardly notice that the fellow’s black. . . .

My son is young, I’m doing all I can

To teach him to grow up to be a man. . . . (6-7)

By establishing the family and the model that it is built upon early in the play, Churchill is able to alienate the audience’s thought process to the specific ideas of what she will then satirize throughout the act. Mitchell explains, “ideologically, the middle-class home
and family represented the essence of morality, stability, and comfort. The husband had legal and economic control over his wife, children, and servants” (142). It is through this concept of the Victorian ideals that Churchill is best able to tear them apart and show the underlying frustrations with maintaining a “moral” lifestyle.

The Victorian sense of morality begins with the behavior of the individuals within the family. Children were expected to be dutiful and strive to learn from their parents. Women have been continually debated and discussed through various viewpoints as being fragile (a male perspective) or strong workers. Instead, the more complete image was as centered on the home. This meant that she was subservient to husband, teacher to children, and missionary for Christ in public. There was no room for public displays of love or individual longing. It is in this image that Churchill tries to expose the inner longings of women through Betty’s hidden love of Harry Bagley. In a moment of confession, Betty confides in Ellen saying:

BETTY. Tell me what you think of Harry Bagley.

ELLEN. He’s a very fine man.

BETTY. No, Ellen, what you really think.

ELLEN. I think you think he’s very handsome.

BETTY. And don’t you think he is? Oh Ellen, you’re so good and I’m so wicked. (31)

Which then leads to:

BETTY. Ellen, can you keep a secret?

ELLEN. Oh yes, yes please.
BETTY. I love Harry Bagley. I want to go away with him. There, I’ve said it, it’s true. (32)

Churchill’s use of the self-deprecation and eventual trading of a secret shows that there is inner turmoil within women of the period. The Victorian ideals made these feelings immoral.

The immorality of lust or any sexual desire was regarded with deep disgust during the Victorian Era. Victorian scholar Walter E. Houghton explored sex and the Victorians more in depth in his book, *The Victorian Frame of Mind: 1830–1870*. He discusses that at the time, sex was unspoken of and very few individuals even understood what sex was prior to their wedding. He states, “for the sexual act was associated by many wives only with a duty and by most husbands with a necessary if pleasurable yielding to one’s baser nature: by few, therefore, with an innocent and joyful experience” (353). It is from this base knowledge of sex that the idolatry of woman became rampant amongst men. A woman was to be viewed as something to be worshipped. Clive and Harry Bagley both exhibit this worship in the second scene of the play. Clive’s expression is to persuade Mrs. Saunders to help satisfy his baser nature, while Harry Bagley’s worship of Betty is meant as genuine love because he is showing tenderness with her instead of having quick sex with whomever he comes across.

The interesting element that Churchill adds to these moments is that Betty is played by a man in Act 1. Through this choice of casting, she is adding a new element of moral taboo to the play. While Clive woos Mrs. Saunders, played by a woman, Harry woos Betty, played by a man. While the characters are two heterosexual couples, the
actors make up one heterosexual couple and one homosexual couple. It is in this casting, and the casting of Edward as a woman and Joshua, the black servant, as a white man, that Churchill can further explore sexuality, gender and race as it pertains to society in 1979 which resonates even in the current year of 2019. In a sneak peek video of their 2014 production, Connecticut Repertory Theatre Dramaturg Lindsay Cummings stated, “Characters that are a man and a woman, but they’re both played by men. Is that a heterosexual couple on stage? Is that a homosexual couple on stage? You can’t easily categorize it into the binary, so she’s forcing the binary to crumble” (CRT). This exploration of the binary structure of gender and sexuality has been the topic of much research and serves as a component of feminist theory.

To move forward, it is important to have some understanding of feminist theory and its relationship to this play. At the time Cloud 9 was written, feminism was in what is now referred to as its second wave. Eastern Washington University professor of philosophy and women’s and gender studies Mimi Marinucci focuses on gender theory and its relationship with feminist theory in her book Feminism is Queer. She states:

liberal feminism denies that accident of birth is sufficient to justify an inequitable distribution of good, including such intangible goods as rights and opportunities. By rejecting the notion that nature warrants the subordinate status of women, liberal feminism gives birth to the distinction between sex and gender. (115)

Using this rejection of subordinate status, feminism moved toward equity amongst women and women’s studies courses developed which included gender studies and
theory at their core. This information will be used as a foundation for examining Churchill’s play as a piece of feminist theatre.

Throughout the play, it is clear that the characters are searching for their identity. Whether they are trying to fight the imposed identities they are given throughout Act 1 or they are struggling to embrace their chosen ones in Act 2, they continue to focus on becoming triumphant. Janelle Reinelt writes about this in her essay “On feminist and sexual politics” for The Cambridge Companion to Caryl Churchill. She states, “Churchill challenges notions of fixed identity and normative sexual identifications, but in her juxtaposition of Victorian and contemporary moments, she is also vigilant to represent how the legacy of the past makes differentiation in the present complex and extremely difficult” (Aston 29). Ultimately, Churchill’s focus was on the body and identity. The past was a period of strict imposition on expression, whether through one’s identity or the use of their body, and it was often that the identity was confined to the binary definitions of the biological body.

As stated in Chapter I, the play is focused on thought and character before it focuses on plot, rhythm, diction or spectacle. Understanding that the primary thought of the play is an examination of identity through representation will allow the audience to fully engage with the characters. Philosophy theorist Judith Butler establishes the need for representation in Gender Trouble by explaining, “for feminist theory, the development of a language that fully or adequately represents women has seemed necessary to foster the political visibility of women. This has seemed obviously important considering the pervasive cultural condition in which women’s lives were
either misrepresented or not represented at all” (2). Using Butler’s understanding of the past and the accounts of the Joint Stock Theatre workshop participants, it is reasonable to correlate how Churchill came to set the play in 1880 for Act 1 and jump to the “present” in Act 2.

The oppressive nature of the Victorian era for women prevented them from earning the representation they may have been seeking. To further highlight this point, Churchill chose to cross-cast some of the roles. Janelle Reinelt discusses in After Brecht: British Epic Theater that “the cross-casting identifies strain between an expressive, experiential self, on the one hand, and the conditioning of social role and dominant ideology on the other (89). Butler adds, “it becomes impossible to separate out ‘gender’ from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained” (4-5). By adhering to these intersections, it is easy to see that gender becomes a binary structure as defined by social roles. What Churchill is attempting to do is willingly disrupt the cultural representation of what gender is. While Act 1 provides an alienated view of the characters being represented by the opposite gender of what is expected, it is in Act 2 where she completes the thought by expressing that the binary qualities associated with the gender can be exhibited by the opposite. This is most clear when Edward confronts Gerry saying, “I don’t know what you mean. Everyone’s always tried to stop me being feminine and now you are too. . . . I like doing the cooking. I like being fucked. You do like me like this really” (Churchill Cloud 79). The characters are now reaching a point where they are comfortable in their own identities that they are willing to stand up for themselves in a way that wasn’t possible in Act 1.
It is with this comfort that the characters begin to perform the gender that they feel. In gender studies, there is a belief that gender becomes performative and is an external representation of the internal feelings or character. Marinucci focuses on the active process of performative gender and its disruption of the binary system (Marinucci 105). By actively choosing to represent gender in the way that the characters believe is most important to them, they will disrupt the binary standards placed on them during Victorian oppression. R. Darren Gobbert clarifies this in *The Theatre of Caryl Churchill* by stating, “despite powerful forces of ideology, Churchill shows, people are not reducible to the social contexts that form them” (93). The ideology that Gobbert writes about is the family model of the Victorians. Churchill demonstrates that the characters are able to avoid those social contexts and leaves the audience with the idea that self-identity is most important. In her final monologue, Betty details how she discovered her true feminine self through masturbation. She says “I felt triumphant because I was a separate person” (*Churchill Cloud* 96). The triumph Betty feels is the goal that the playwright had for the audience. Understanding that the play is about identity and representation allows the audience to fully engage with the characters in a way that they will hopefully feel encouraged to feel “triumphant” themselves.

The play is not without its critics, however. In John Deeney’s essay “Workshop to Mainstream: Women’s Playwriting in the Contemporary British Theatre,” the author points out, “Criticism of *Cloud Nine* has frequently centered on Churchill’s perceived position as a socialist feminist during this period, and the play’s employment of a socialist-feminist dynamic in Act 1 which is diffused in Act 2” (Gale and Gardner 150).
Much of the criticism that Act 2 is softened can be attributed to the change of time. As the audience views events that are more closely related to what they may have known and experienced, they may find that the familiarity takes away from the alienation of the themes that Churchill provided in the first act.

The time in which the play is viewed may also explain some of the criticism. When the play first premiered in New York City, Frank Rich of *The New York Times* found much to enjoy but lamented the writing. In several instances, he rebukes the play stating, “Mr. Tune often succeeds in giving a seriously overlong evening the illusion of flight” (n.p.). Other concerns he had with the play included the wide variety of style used to tell the story. In one particularly scathing paragraph, Rich tells his readers, “the joke does wear too thin quickly.” While providing a valid argument for his assertions, he finds the biggest issue in the cross-casting of gender. He only saw the performance of the characters played by other genders and believed that they only served to give away the jokes before they occurred. While the idea of actors playing roles of the opposite gender was certainly not a new idea, it was a relatively uncommon practice in 1981. Rich had difficulty accepting the identities of the cross-cast characters and therefore struggled to accept the themes of the play completely.

Jump forward in time, much like Churchill did in the play, and more contemporary audiences are taking away different perceptions of the play. In the first major New York City revival, current *The New York Times* theatre reviewer Ben Brantley had a very different reaction to the play. He states immediately in his review:
Few writers have come closer to making sense of the hormonal urges that rule, transport and disrupt our lives than Caryl Churchill does in *Cloud Nine*, . . . because Ms. Churchill (*Top Girls, Love and Information*), one of the wisest and bravest playwrights on the planet, understands that sex is endlessly fluid, no matter the time, place or culture in which it is practiced (n.p.).

It is clear, through his use of the word “fluid” when describing sex, that Brantley is more attuned to a culture that is embracing the non-binary structure regarding gender and sexuality. Unlike Rich, who used the word “transsexual” to describe the cross-casting, Brantley focuses on the theme of the play as universal to audiences no matter when they see it. The play is about change and finding identity from oppression. Brantley seems to better comprehend this and concludes, “In charting unending states of change, Ms. Churchill manages to touch on innumerable permutations of sexual identity, while suggesting that its boundaries are endlessly permeable.” While the two reviewers for *The New York Times* found varying things to critique, both agreed that the play was significant, and its writer was crafty.

While *Cloud 9* was written 40 years ago, its message is still significant today in a culture that struggles to balance acceptance of paradigms outside of the binary structure that was imposed in the nineteenth century. Churchill crafted a play around finding and accepting identity through a collaboration with other artists. In giving up some of the control over what the play would be about, she was able to learn from others and be influenced by them. These influences provided her with material to explore gender and
sexuality in a period of strong feminist movement. Ultimately, the play proved to be a success with audiences because of its use of satiric wit and farcical elements in the first act, and a realistic portrayal of characters in the second. In most research regarding the themes of the play, the play itself is cited as breaking new ground and leading a movement of feminist theatre and an acceptance of non-binary sexuality. The play deserves a place in the Western theatre canon and will continue to prompt discussion about finding and owning identity.
June 14, 2019

This morning marked the first official production meeting of *Cloud 9*. A previous brief meeting with half of the design team was used to kickstart some design ideas. I wanted to get out my conceptual ideas for the production so that the designers could jump into their research processes. I discussed in that meeting that the play is a farcical and should be treated with the comedy first and foremost. I shared with them that I believed Aristotle would view the play as being thought and character driven before plot and spectacle. The focus of the play would be on how the characters navigate important topics including gender roles, race politics and sexual identities. The play is representational, and the farce is reinforced with satire to bring these thoughts forward. I also wanted to emphasize the idea that author Caryl Churchill was influenced by the work of Bertolt Brecht. His Epic Theatre used alienation of the audience to cause them to really think about what the performance was saying. The same elements could be used in the design of this play.

Specific design notes that I provided to the team included the following. For the scenic design, my initial vision of the play was to have it performed with two benches and adding a swing for Act 2. This production will be set in the shallow thrust configuration of the Andreas Theatre. It is a smaller configuration that could limit the
space for furniture and other design elements. Additionally, the back wall should be dressed in a way that provides an interesting backdrop. The set will need to collaborate with the lighting design to help establish locations during the scene shifts. Lighting will be used to create a lot of different locations as well as indicating time of day. Costumes have a difficult task in regard to dressing actors as two very different characters. I expressed that we would be using the original doubling of the characters, as referenced in Chapter I, for this production. The costumes should be appropriately period but can certainly find connections between the characters and work in bold colors to accentuate the farcical style. Lastly, the sound design will be a mix of soundscape throughout the play and some original compositions for the three songs Churchill wrote into the play. I have been in contact with the team via email throughout most of the summer and compiled these notes into a document for review.

I used the beginning of this meeting to do a quick formal introduction of the team so that everyone knew who would be working on what areas. Performance Advisor Paul J. Hustoles and Technical Advisor Steve Smith were also present. The meeting began with Scenic Designer Emma Murphy presenting her research. She began with the colonial period of Act 1 and what colony towns would look like at the time. Examples she presented were from South Africa and included Cape Town. Furniture was presented next. She took the research in the direction of what sort of furniture would be used outdoors and found wicker to be prominent during the period. Additionally, she had images of wrought iron patio furniture. Her research for the London park led to band shells and gazebos. For the back wall, she presented research on indigenous trees to
South Africa and London and found two trees that were remarkably similar in growth patterns and silhouettes. With the variety of options, she presented a rough sketch of two trees standing on the sides with a gazebo type façade that could provide another entrance. While I liked much of the research, I thought that it was in the wrong direction. Going back to the colony pictures, I steered her in more of a rural direction. Hustoles agreed and pushed even further the idea that these characters are living in the jungle and there would be practically no other signs of domestic living nearby. He also suggested looking at more London parks because they tend to be very open with little to no structures built in them. Smith asked what thoughts I had on the furniture and I shared that I found the wrought iron to be particularly captivating and would work for multiple scenes but would want to know if it would work for the shift to Act 2.

Costume Designer Dena Schedivy presented her research for the two time periods. Starting with Act 1 and the Victorian era, she went into depth about the silhouette of women’s dresses and coupled those details with fashion plate images. While they look marvelous, it was clear to me that they were garments for urban women. Hustoles also noted this and suggested images of real colonial women of the time would be more beneficial for seeing what would be worn in the rural jungle. The images presented of the men and young boys made perfect sense for me. I recommended that the men not follow any military dress as I think it doesn’t define any of the characters. For her Act 2 research, Schedivy had several images of men and women. The men looked great and showed off a variety of bright colors that would work well in the farcical style of the show. The women had a variety of clothing options, ranging from pants, pant suits
and skirts. The concern that I expressed to her was that the images were of women who were all the same age but the women of Act 2 range four years old to mid-fifties or early sixties. Hustoles suggested to also focus on one dress silhouette so that the audience wasn’t confused by potentially seeing a different time period than is intended.

Lighting Designer Ryan Hedman had little to share for this meeting but voiced that he had been looking into the different locations of the play. He is interested in the use of gobos to help establish these looks and plans to have some samples to share at the next meeting. Sound Designer Kyle Jensen shared that he was planning to look into sounds of Africa and focus on drums throughout the play. This did create a moment of confusion with Composer Sam Verdick as to who was responsible for the drums throughout. I expressed that it would be best if Jensen starts the process and then as conversations continue, we could see how they would influence the score. Verdick also shared his research for the score. The opening number he planned to model after a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta and the music in Act 2 he thought would have a more generic elevator pop music feel to it.

I was pleased that the team seemed to be excited about the project. We are planning to do the bulk of the work within a few weeks this summer and then return to it as classes approach at the end of August. It’s important to me that we maintain a forward heading and I asked that I see some new research from Murphy, Schedivy and Hedman. Jensen was planning to have sample sounds by the next meeting and Murphy will work on some rough floor plan options as well. It is clear to me who has had more experience as well. Jensen, being an incoming graduate student, has been very quick to respond to
messages and prompt with questions for any clarification he needs. The others are mostly new to the process, with the exception of Schedivy. Working with such a mixed team will be a challenge, but certainly one that will be quite educational.

**June 28, 2019**

After a two-week hiatus, the production team met again today. The time of the meeting changed to accommodate Schedivy’s class schedule but inadvertently caused a conflict for Hustoles. I knew that there would be members of the team absent from today’s meeting but had not expected him to have a conflict. I asked stage manager Ethan Hayes to send out reminders about the meetings the day prior as a means to avoid further absences. I was disappointed because I greatly appreciate and respect having Hustoles in the room to offer his years of experience and insight to improve the quality of the production.

I started the meeting by expressing my director’s objective to the team. I believe that if they are aware of my goals for the audience, they can be more effective in creating a collaborative design. The purpose of the play is to recognize that change is necessary and that laughing at the absurdity of what occurs in the play is part of the learning process. By laughing, they are accepting that it is silly to behave in accordance with oppressive structures. The team seemed to accept this, and no new questions were raised at this time.

Jumping into the work from the designers, we began with Murphy’s set concept. She wanted to put a long platform on the upstage side of the thrust that would be two feet
in height and a smaller platform in front that would be at a height of one foot. The trees would be incorporated by framing the ends of the platforms and a large Union Jack would be hung center on the wall. She stated that the department didn’t have any flags that would fit the size that was discussed; however, she did some research on them and found one for approximately $10. I was concerned about the heights of the platforms as well and Smith provided the solution. If we are going to use stock platforms, the height of the legs is easily adjustable, and the larger platform could be set to 16 inches and the smaller one to eight inches. This would make the step heights more universal and create less of a hassle for the actors. At this point, Murphy provided photos of furniture in stock that could be used for the various scenes. Some quick decisions were made about the use of iron-like benches and heart backed wicker chairs. I liked what was presented and asked for a to-scale ground plan and a properties list for our next meeting.

As for the rest of the design areas, costumes seemed to be in a good place as well. Schedivy spoke with faculty Costume Designer David McCarl to get more direction on research. She was told to look into the British Raj period for more insight into what Joshua might wear. Additionally, she brought in new research photos for Act 2. After giving some feedback on what I felt worked well and what didn’t, we moved to Hedman’s contributions for lighting. He provided several gobo options to look at for vegetation effects. A leafy effect was selected for Act 1 and a more branch like effect would be used in Act 2. I did have several questions for him to consider for the next meeting. I need to know how he plans to address the passage of time and vary the looks between day and night scenes. I also asked him to think about the effects to help create
the interior scene for Act 1. Jensen and Verdick had little to add, other than they are busy at work to get things written. I know that work is getting done and I appreciate that the team is willing to meet over the summer to continue making progress on the production.

July 5, 2019

Walking into today’s meeting, I knew that several people would not be present. Jensen, Verdick and Wagaman all had other commitments for the day and Hayes would be present over the phone. Hustoles, however, was able to attend today’s meeting and provide feedback on what was discussed last week. The discussion began, as I always do, with the scenic design. Murphy brought in her drafting for the ground plan which revealed more concerns than were discussed at the last meeting. The platform appeared to be too long which eliminated the up right and up left floor entrances. Additionally, the downstage platform appeared to be much too large. The discussion was had to remove one of the three 16-inch platforms to allow for the use of the two upstage floor entrances and to move from a four-foot by eight-foot platform downstage to a two-foot by six-foot platform. It was also discussed that more of the scenery should be thrust out into the audience. To do this, Hustoles suggested putting some sort of bush or other greenery in the two downstage voms. This will add to the sense of vegetation permeating the setting of the two acts. The swing that is needed in Act 2 was also discussed as a set piece that could be brought deeper into the thrust. Hedman has experience working with the swing and recommended a location that would work best for hanging it from the grid. Murphy was appreciative of the feedback and was ready to make adjustments to the ground plan.
Schedivy was up next with her first draft of Act 1 costume sketches. The sketches looked quite a bit like the research photographs. There were a few questions that I had for her, or more specific things to consider as she continues to refine the design. The first was regarding Mrs. Saunders and Ellen. There are several quick changes in the script that only last half a page. This means that the two women need to have a similar base costume and then some significant items to add or remove. I also asked about the women who are being played by men and if they need to be wigged or not. Schedivy said that she wanted them to be and everyone at the table agreed.

Hedman was the last to speak about updates to the design. He presented a light plot that separated acting areas and explained that he would be using a standard window gobo for the interior scene. He and Murphy then discussed the floor treatment. Murphy had a rather dark green with minimal yellow highlights in it to represent grass. I felt that this was going to be too dark and we needed to look at lightening it. This would then give Hedman more room to play with colors. The color of the platforms was also discussed, and a dirty white was suggested to give texture and variety to what the lights can provide in the realm of color variety.

**August 23, 2019**

The production team was gathered back for the first time in over a month to start working toward finalizing design ideas. It was a delight to have nearly all of the production team there for the first time. Hayes was the only member absent and I was slightly concerned about that because he had not contacted anyone about his absence.
[N.B. Hayes later contacted the team and informed us that he was called away on a family emergency.]

Despite Hayes’s absence, we were able to continue our design discussions. Murphy brought in a white model for everyone’s reference to indicate a change that she and I had made earlier in the summer. The ground plan had indicated a cumbersome six foot by sixteen-foot platform upstage and a stock four by eight-foot platform downstage. The adjustment was made to make them a four by sixteen-foot and a two by eight-foot platform. The difficulty with the white model was that it wasn’t placed on a ground plan, so it wasn’t accurately telling us how the set was going to fit in the theatre. Aside from those minor problems, the model worked well to show how the space would change from scene to scene and allowed me to get started with pre-blocking the show.

One challenge I had with the look of the design was that so much of it would be a two-dimensional paint treatment on flats. I was looking forward to having some sort of three-dimensional texture on the set and was very impressed with a sample of rainbow grass that Murphy brought in for the African terrain. When told that the small bundle she had cost nine dollars, the entire team balked, and we understandably decided to go with the painted flats. The problem persisted, however, when Murphy introduced three-dimensional vines for the trees in Act 1 but not Act 2. I felt that the three-dimensional addition should be included on the grass flats to provide unity to the design.

The paint treatment for the show also proved somewhat problematic. Murphy’s colors for the greenery in the tree leaves worked well, but the tree bark was too vibrant and dark of a brown for my liking. I felt that it didn’t quite match what we had seen in
the research images and Hustoles added that the trees would most likely have a weathered look to them. The suggestion was made to try adding in a gray tone to age the look of the bark. The floor treatment was my biggest concern. I hesitate to paint the entire space a bright green to give the appearance of grass. The initial look was a green base with yellow and beige highlights on top. I suggested moving to a more balanced look between the beige and green and Murphy offered starting with a beige base and then adding green highlights. I agreed and Hustoles and Smith suggested creating a sample on black painted luan.

Schedivy then shared her colored renderings from Act 1 and sketches for Act 2. The colors in Act 1 are in line with the research images of the period and the brown tones will play nicely opposite the greenery in the scene design. Maud’s dress was presented as a darker plum color. While a great thought in the design process, the color will depend on what is in stock for that costume silhouette. The sketches in Act 2 all made sense for the period and Schedivy had the foresight to include layered pieces that would alter the looks slightly depending on the scene. All-in-all, the costumes appear ready to go into production.

The rest of the meeting flew by as Hedman, Jensen and Verdick had little to report. Jensen and I will work a little more closely when the show is in rehearsal to determine exact places for sound to add to the tension in the play. Verdick is at work on adjusting the opening song and has the specific cues for where the added songs will be put in the script. I believe that the production is in good shape and progressing in the right direction.
I feel more confident in my abilities to work with the design team and to better communicate my ideas to them. Much of this confidence comes from the support of Hustoles and Smith in the production meetings. They have rarely changed or corrected any of my thoughts on the designs but have rather been supportive and added to my comments to reinforce them or clarify them for the design team. I take this support as a sign of my growth as a communicator and facilitator of the collaborative process.

August 26, 2019

Today was the big audition day for the first three productions of the season. *Cloud 9* was being auditioned with *Arsenic and Old Lace* and *Newsies*. I was rather excited to see the monologues that everyone had prepared and to test my hearing as I listened to the British dialects. Those interested in auditioning for the plays were required to prepare a 30 second monologue and if they wanted to be considered for *Cloud 9*, that monologue was to be a Caryl Churchill monologue with a dialect. The excitement for the day was that I would see the monologues and then be casting the show remotely because I had a prior engagement out of town.

*Arsenic and Old Lace* director Heather Hamiltion and I shared an audition room and viewed all the monologues. I entered the audition room with three roles that needed strong performers and the other four roles I could be more flexible with. The primary roles included Clive/Cathy, Betty/Edward and Edward/Betty. Those three roles focus on the central theme of the play and would require actors with strong skill sets and a certain
level of maturity. The other roles have their own complications, but I would be able to handle coaching younger performers to where they needed to be.

As the day started, I anticipated seeing several monologues from Cloud 9 but I did not anticipate seeing as many monologues as I did from Churchill’s Top Girls. The quality of auditions ranged from clearly new students and those who had little acting experience, to those who were seasoned performers. The dialect work also showed the same range and I found that it was easier for me to decipher when phonemic substitutions were missed than I had originally expected. Overall, I was quite impressed with the work that the students presented, and I had a variety of casting options.

When casting the show, I wanted to be as diplomatic as possible in consideration of the other two shows that were casting. The first step I took to approaching the casting was to eliminate consideration for any actor who did not present a monologue with the dialect. I took those choices as the actors informing me that they were not comfortable with the intimacy that the play will require. From that point, I narrowed the list to actors that I felt were coachable in skill set and in dialect. The list of approximately 60 actors quickly narrowed down to approximately 20 for the seven roles that I needed to cast. I also wanted to take into consideration the vocalists and dancers who auditioned for me, as I believed that they would have preference for Newsies. After I had my list narrowed down to a first and second choice for each role and a small list of potential actors for a variety of roles, I shared with Hamilton to compare for any overlap. I had one second choice actor who was on Hamilton’s list but we decided to leave it until discussions with
Newsies director Hustoles. I left my list with Hamilton to take into the casting room later that night and headed to St. Paul.

After a few hours, I received a message from Hustoles asking for two new choices for the role of Betty/Edward. Knowing that it was one of my primary roles, I requested that two of my other first choice actors be considered for it and the second choice for their original casting would move into the role. Within 15 minutes, I received a phone call from Hustoles announcing that I had a cast. In the role of Clive/Cathy is Trevor Belt. Belt showed great use of the dialect and a comfort with Churchill’s work and he has an intimidating physical stature that I was looking for in Clive. His size will then offer a humorous juxtaposition to Cathy in the second act. The role of Betty/Edward was cast with Ryan Christopherson. He was my first choice for Harry Bagley/Martin but fit the maturity and medium physical stature that I needed for Betty and he was one of the two new options that I provided for that casting. Edward/Betty was cast with Megan Fischer. Her audition was geared toward Edward and she demonstrated remarkable pain as a young boy who is being forced to become something he is not. The role of Maud/Victoria will be played by, new to the MFA program, Lindsey Oetken. Lydia Prior will have the extra duty of playing three characters as Ellen/Mrs. Saunders/Lin. Her audition showed a moment of fierceness that I hadn’t seen from her before and demonstrated growth in abilities from previous productions. Harry Bagley/Martin was filled with junior Zac Gaulke, who physically compares to Belt which will provide an interesting juxtaposition as Martin versus Belt’s Clive. The last role of Joshua/Gerry was a difficult one to cast and was the only role that I had to resort to the potential actor list.
Braden Joseph was cast in the role and was included as a potential casting because of the visceral nature of his monologue.

I felt that the audition process went smoothly and I am very excited to get into the rehearsal room. The cast varies from junior level students to two MFA students and brings a lot of experience with them. As a director, I am excited to see what they will add to the process and how my thoughts and visions of the play will be changed and adapted to suit the strengths and skills of my cast.

**August 27, 2019**

For the first day of rehearsal, I had scheduled to discuss the dialect, theatrical intimacy and read through the play. In my excitement for the project, I launched right into the discussion about the dialect. Most of the cast was familiar with the international phonetic alphabet, but two members were not. I anticipated that I would cast some people who had not had that training, so I made a quick reference guide of common phonemic substitutions for the cast to use throughout the process. They all seemed to respond well to the discussion and I also informed them that I would be working with them throughout the process to learn the dialect.

After that discussion, I realized that I hadn’t introduced myself or allowed the cast to introduce themselves to each other. This play is very ensemble based and requires everyone to interact with each other in some way, so it would benefit them to get to know each other quickly. The energy in the room was immensely positive and I was thankful that the cast was quickly engaging with each other. This engagement made the next
section of the rehearsal easier because it was all about comfort. There is a lot of physical contact and intimacy written into the play and the cast needs to have a strong sense of comradery to feel comfortable with each other in these moments. I led the cast up to the Andreas Theatre so that they could see roughly the space that we will be working in and to give them some more space for the exercise. The exercise is to build comfort and trust through the action of showing partners boundaries and verbally asking consent for any contact. To begin, partner A uses their hands to smoothly and slowly show partner B where they are comfortable being touched. Then they ask permission to touch partner B and if given permission, slowly glide their hands through the same spots. Partner B then verbally acknowledges where there were boundaries. At any time that partner B does not want to touch a space that partner A is comfortable with, they can say a pause word and move past it. We determined that “pineapple” would be our pause word because it relieves the tension of the situation. Each partner takes a turn sharing where their boundaries are.

Following the intimacy and consent exercise, we gathered to read the play. The cast is very enthusiastic about it and a lot of strong choices were being made for the varying characters. Christopherson started Betty off with a distinct falsetto voice which I felt wouldn’t be necessary. He eventually settled into a more habitual tone and I encouraged him to think of using a thin vocal quality to find Betty’s voice. Prior struggled some to differentiate Ellen from Mrs. Saunders in the first act, but she recognized this and asked me for some clarity about the characters so that she could make new choices. I encouraged her to think about Ellen as meeker and Mrs. Saunders as more
assertive and how their vocal qualities would differ. Overall, the read through went well and there will certainly be plenty for us to work through in rehearsals to establish character and find the balance of humor and seriousness of the play.

**August 28, 2019**

Day one of blocking did not go as I had entirely planned. The goal of rehearsal was to block the entirety of Act 1. In addition, Murphy would be present at the start to share what she had been working on for the scenic design. Her portion of the rehearsal went quickly, and we were able to start staging within twenty minutes of rehearsal. The first act has a lot of movement in it because Churchill wanted to focus on the humor of what she was satirizing. This means a lot of entrances and exits, like the movement in a farce. In addition, there is a lot of physical contact throughout and staging all of it took me longer than anticipated. We made it through the first two scenes of Act 1, which is over half of the act, but I will now have to adjust the schedule for the week. Tomorrow’s goal will now be to finish staging Act 1 and then stage Act 2, scenes one and two. Friday will now be used to finish blocking Act 2 because I don’t want to shortchange the time to properly stage the orgy scene in the middle of Act 2, Scene 3.

**August 29, 2019**

Tonight’s rehearsal seemed more productive than last night’s. The same number of pages were covered in the script, but the difference in staging five scenes as opposed to two, gives a greater sense of accomplishment. The cast has been very engaged in the
staging process and they all feel comfortable enough to ask clarifying questions about any of my blocking. In my rush to get through all the moves in a particularly busy section of Act 1, Scene 5, for example, I neglected to instruct Joseph where to cross. He stopped and asked if I wanted him to be involved in the fight choreography I had just given some others or where his character should move. I realized that I meant to have him counter away from the conflict and went back in the script to correct my mistake so that he knew where his cross should be.

As we continue with the staging process, I realize that I am not coaching the actors much. My focus has been on the movement of the scenes and getting the basic travel paths conveyed to the cast. As I move forward with rehearsals, I need to provide a greater focus on what the actors are doing and provide them with feedback on new techniques to try in their performance. The dialect is another aspect that I need to devote more effort to coaching. I’m not hearing many mistakes but I have not been closely listening for them. When we come back from the holiday weekend, I’ll refocus on listening for the phonemic substitutions as well as vocal qualities. The vocal qualities will help the actors distinguish their different characters. Christopherson and Prior will need to have the most distinction, and I have a few techniques that I’d like them to try to provide a variety of characters for the audience.

Until the staging is complete, I find it difficult to focus on the other aspects of the performance. I think that this stems from staging in a thrust configuration and my attention has been taken up by making sure that the blocking is engaging and doesn’t close off the audience from too much of the action. Working in a thrust configuration is a
relatively new challenge for me as I have only staged short scenes in one. I like the
complication that it provides and am excited to get into rehearsals further so that I can
explore how it looks from different angles. Working with an advisor will also surely help
me by providing a new set of eyes on the blocking to address any concerns or missteps I
took in staging.

August 30, 2019

Today was our penultimate production meeting before we go into tech rehearsals.
The production team has been doing a really nice job of keeping me informed throughout
the week when things come up that need immediate attention, rather than waiting for the
weekly meeting. A question about step depth, for example, was posed by Wagaman
earlier in the week. The initial design was for a six-inch depth, but standard is a ten-inch
depth. My concern with going to the ten inches was the amount of space needed for
actors to pass through. What we discovered was that we could move the platform
upstage at least two feet which would then give ample room for the actors to enter the
stage without tripping over audience members or the step.

The meeting itself went quite smoothly and a lot of questions were clarified.
Murphy had several questions about props, the most interesting one being what I needed
from Victoria’s doll to show damage. I explained that the script calls for Joshua to cut
the doll open and shake out sawdust. What I need is for Joshua to damage the doll in
some way; this could include tearing a piece off of it. Murphy said that we could easily
accomplish pulling the head off it using Velcro and then asked if I would want a fake
blood effect to come out of the doll. I don’t think that that would be necessary, and I suggested that it look more like cotton stuffing that pulls out. Hustoles then suggested adding a bit of sawdust to give a stronger visual effect as it puffs out.

Schedivy updated the costumes from our previous discussion and provided color renderings for Act 2. The designs look great and she informed me that the biggest build for the show will be Belt’s Cathy costume. Hedman and I then discussed the window gobo and if it could have a greater length than originally planned. He is going to explore some options and we will work it out in tech. Jensen’s questions were about preshow music, which was something that I hadn’t put much thought into. He clarified and asked if I wanted to mix the styles of the two acts and I decided that the preshow music should set the audience up for Act 1 and the intermission music could set them up for Act 2.

Verdick then gave an update that the music is almost complete, and he is working on finishing accompaniment tracks. Wagaman had a question about the swing and how it would be used. I explained that it would be set during intermission and that it is seen for all of Act 2 so we would want it to be hung with cable to cut down on visibility of how it is hung.

The budget was discussed last and I think that we were pretty realistic about expenditures. Lighting and props requested $75 each and costumes requested $200. Scenic offered to split the remaining $600 because their spending would be fairly minimal, so the final budget worked out to scenic having $300, costumes would have $300 and lighting and props would each get $75. Jensen was certain that sound had no
expenditures. At this point, our next meeting will be used for any final fine-tuning questions and preparation for tech rehearsals.

Later this evening, we finished blocking the show. While the process wasn’t exactly how I had planned it, I was glad that we took the extra day to finish staging. It allowed me to be more specific with the actors in regards to how the movement should flow and provide character thoughts as we progressed. I think that by taking the extra day, everyone benefitted from the more relaxed pace and it allowed the cast the opportunity to process the script and the blocking in a more controlled manner.

I was a little concerned about how I wanted to stage the orgy scene. Churchill leaves it fairly open to the director by writing in the stage directions that the women pull Martin down and caress him. The moment is interrupted by the soldier, but I wasn’t sure when I wanted that to take place and how far the orgy should go. Upon rereading the scene and thinking about the context of the surrounding events, I decided that Churchill wasn’t going for a vulgar or drawn out event, but just the idea that something could happen between these people if they wanted it to. Instead, the moment is most revealing for the person who mocks it the most, Lin. This made the staging remarkably simple and I think the cast was surprised at how little physical contact was included. The final result is simple in its earnestness and I think will still provide the audience with the laugh that is intended.

One other interesting thing I had noted from the cast as we finished blocking was how they are all approaching the characters. It is clear that some of the cast have had experience playing multiple roles in a play and are using a variety of skills to help
distinguish them. Others, however, are fairly consistent in their approach to both of their characters and I’m left with the task of helping teach them some new tactics and techniques to create a character. The actor who I think will struggle the most with this is Prior. She has a good grasp on the differences between her three characters, but Lin is the only one who seems to be realized the fullest. Belt has shown that vocal quality changes and pitch variation are quite effective, and I will start with those ideas to help Prior distinguish Ellen from Mrs. Saunders.

Now that the show is completely staged, I can really start to dig into the characters and the humor of the play.

**September 2, 2019**

Tonight tested the actors’ dedication to the script and memorization as we began off book rehearsals. It is certainly daunting to think that a week ago we were auditioning the show and now it is blocked and memorized. First, I should express my surprise at just how well the rehearsal ran. I thought that it would be a much rougher start to the off book process, but it went rather smoothly. I always begin these rehearsals with a few guidelines so that the process goes a little easier for all involved. The first rule is that there is no need to apologize for anything. Everyone in the room is there to support each other and get the play in good condition. That means that there will be issues and problems that occur, but the actors shouldn’t have to worry about them because they are expected. The next guideline is that if they need to stop and call for line, they should do
so in character. I think that these are pretty simple guidelines and outside of the two of them, there shouldn’t be any problems that come up during the rehearsal.

The plan for tonight’s rehearsal was to work scene by scene. We would run a scene off book and then go back to work through it. I thought this would be a helpful tool for the cast to help solidify the memorization that they had already done. As we did this for Scene 1, I realized that it was going to take too much time to discuss character and blocking adjustments. We had only progressed through the first two scenes before our rehearsal break and I knew at that rate we wouldn’t finish the act. When we returned, I told that cast that we would just run the next three scenes and then I would go back to cover any specific blocking adjustments that I had.

The rest of rehearsal ran smoothly, and I was pleased with what was accomplished considering the initial failure to meet my rehearsal goal. Tomorrow, I plan to attack it with a different approach. I’ll run through the act and then go back to work specifics. That should provide more time to cover all that needs to be accomplished.

September 3, 2019

In preparation of running Act 2 off book, I anticipated having a less smooth rehearsal because the cast likely spent more time preparing Act 1 over the weekend. I should have anticipated more of this because Oetken openly told me that she was not as prepared as she wanted to be and did not have much of the act memorized. Several others nodded in agreement with her. While I was surprised, I decided to take it in stride and provided the cast with an anecdote about how I came into an off book rehearsal and
told the director the same thing. My fellow cast members decided that they too would use their scripts for another day and our director was quite angry and dismissed us to go learn the lines. While I wanted to release the cast to go learn their lines, I couldn’t afford to lose a rehearsal and I just hoped that the run with scripts in hand would help aid them in their process.

The run of the act went well and provided me with a lot of things to discuss with the cast. The major point that I wanted to address with them all was the difference in representational and presentational speaking. Joseph and Fischer each have very specific presentational moments in Act 2 where they directly address the audience and they aren’t currently addressing all of the audience. The trick to this style of performance, in my opinion, is to treat it as if it were a public speaking engagement. All too often what happens in those engagements is that the speaker doesn’t know how to captivate the audience’s attention. They will frequently scan the crowd and attempt to literally address all of those in attendance. Instead, what I explained to them was that they should focus on where there beat changes are in the monologues. During those changes, they can shift their focus to a new audience member. By specifying one or two audience members per point, they will draw the attention of the person that they’ve focused on and all of the other audience members with follow the direct gaze. It creates a false sense of comfort that they aren’t being looked at and allows them to ease into the audience role again.

After our notes session, we went back to fix some problem blocking. One particular moment that needed to be addressed was in Scene 4. I gave the cast some freedom in moving around the space during an argument. During the run, they trapped
themselves between the two benches and it just looked like an unorganized mess of people. To fix the problem, I pulled Prior, Oetken and Gaulke out from between the benches and restaged the scene using the perimeters. This really enhanced the feelings of the argument because the characters had room to walk in and out of engaging with their cast mates.

Overall, I wasn’t displeased with how the rehearsal had run considering the cast basically informed me that they would not be off book. I am still frustrated about that, but I would rather have a productive rehearsal and give them another opportunity to say the words aloud to help with memorization. Tomorrow night is the designer run through and Hustoles will be attending as well. I’m looking forward to receiving feedback from the production team and Hustoles on things that can be improved and to get a small sense of what audience reactions might be like.

September 4, 2019

Tonight’s rehearsal did not go as planned. I’m a little surprised by where the cast is regarding their memorization. Most of the cast has had a lot of experience and I expected more of them to be ready to work off book than there are. With the exception of Oetken and Prior, the cast seemed to rely on their scripts through nearly half of the run. Those two also used their scripts, but to a lesser degree. I’m finding it increasingly frustrating because of the limited time that we have to put the production together and the majority of my coaching will depend on the actors being prepared, otherwise, they are exhausting their focus on just trying to retain and call forward the right words.
I was also surprised to learn that Hustoles would be unable to attend the run through tonight. Due to schedule conflicts with Newsies, he was not able to provide me with any feedback today about where the show is. I have confidence in the work that I have been doing to know that we are on the right track with the production, but I greatly respect his input as part of my learning process. I knew that these types of schedule conflicts would be a challenge for us to work around and am sure that we can find another date or solution for me to get some early feedback.

The scheduled run went smoothly, and the production team was present so that they could see what the cast and I have been working on. Some laughter peppered the performance as they watched and gave me an idea of where our audiences might provide moments of their own. The majority of my conversation with the designers was focused on lights and sound. Navigating the transitions between scenes was the most important topic for me so that we can establish those moments when we get into tech. The flow of the acts is important, and I want to keep the pace moving throughout the play so that it doesn’t feel like it starts and stops with each new scene. Jensen will provide musical interludes between the scenes. Act 1 will focus on the building rebellion of the characters against Clive by paralleling their feelings with the discussed native rebellion through the use of drums. Act 2 will then use popular music of the period that reflects the growth of the characters. Jensen had mentioned a interesting idea for the opening of the act to create a feeling of searching through radio dials. I think that this could be brought into the scene transitions as well.
Tomorrow’s rehearsal is scheduled as a work day and I know I have several things to focus on. The first is the combat. The actors aren’t yet comfortable with the slaps that they need to perform and the fight between Betty and Mrs. Saunders in Act 1 needs to be polished for timing. Christopherson is also struggling with the movement in Act 1 as Betty. I have a few thoughts for him and just the two of us will start the rehearsal working through this acting style. The comedic timing of other bits in the show needs to be drilled so that the cast knows how to perform it to get the desired effect. Lastly, I need to get the songs staged into the play. The cast has been working with Verdick outside of rehearsals to learn the music and now that they all have it, I can stage those four moments. The show is in a good position to continue to develop, but I need the cast to put in their work as well to get the most work done in the time we have.

**September 5, 2019**

I’m in a significantly better mood following tonight’s rehearsal. I don’t often break up the rehearsal to work with individuals, but I’m glad that I did for this one. Working with Christopherson on the movement component for Betty seemed to be pretty revelatory for him. I took the time to go through my old class notes and have been doing further research on the period acting style for Act 1 and selected a few key elements to share with him. He took all the notes very well and we discussed them as we worked. His habitual posture is a more relaxed shoulder and a slightly caved in chest. The opposite is true of the period, which required a pulled back shoulder with an extended chest. Christopherson and I walked around the stage in rehearsal skirts to get a feel for
what it would be like for him to move in the period style. As we walked, I would instruct him to switch back and forth from his habitual movement and the stylized movement. Overall, I felt that he had a strong understanding of how the movement would change his approach to the character.

Following my time with Christopherson, we spent the rest of the evening working on fight choreography, pacing and music. The fights had all been staged, but I needed to take the time to work out the fine details with the cast. Some of the actors have had stage combat experience but several have not, and were unfamiliar with some of the smaller details to help cover a slap. The biggest issues we faced were working on nap placement and follow through. I explained that the knap is for the safety of the victim and where they place their hand is the target for the attacker. Then, once the slap is set in motion, a step forward to allow the hand to follow through provides extra distraction from the false contact and convinces the audiences that a slap has occurred. After we finished with the fights, I worked through some pacing on a few sections to focus on cue pick up and the rise and fall of tension and finished our work with choreographing the opening number.

The last hour of rehearsal was given to the actors to use the time and each other to help solidify lines. I’m at a point of being unable to move forward with much more work unless they are completely off book. I explained to them that I would be in my office getting work done and would be available for any questions that they may have, but I wanted to remove the added stress of me being in the room. After the hour was up, Christopherson, Gaulke, Prior and Oetken all remarked that the time was greatly appreciated, and they felt that they had gotten a lot of productive work done.
September 6, 2019

Tonight’s scheduled rehearsal was a full run of the show. Hustoles was able to adjust his schedule with *Newsies* to attend the run and take notes for me. During the run, I was struck by how humorless Act 1 was. I was trying to determine what was happening that took much of the comedy out of the run that we had worked to put in. What I discovered was that there was still some hesitancy about memorization and, more importantly, that I had not been talking to the cast about the comedy in the right manner. There is a significant amount of contrast that occurs in the play and every character shows this contrast by not showing their true thoughts and feelings. Instead they express the things that they think the others want to hear and the comedy occurs when their true desires or emotions are revealed. Once I realized this, it completely changed the way that I viewed the play and I had many notes for the actors on places where they can play into the contrast between dishonesty and honesty.

After the run, I met with Hustoles to get his feedback. As a young director, this is one of my favorite elements of the directing process at Minnesota State Mankato. What I find so enlightening about it is that the advisor’s feedback can help reaffirm the work of the director, provide new insight to a problem they may not be aware of or give simple corrections to improve quality. The bulk of our discussion was about the style of the play and how it can play into the contrast that I had discovered during the run. What Hustoles noted as the largest concern in Act 1 was that the script seemed to lend itself to a farce, but what we were presenting was too careful. He suggested really going for the comedy and pushing an almost outrageous style. I was glad that he brought this up because I had
taken a note about thinking that there should be more exaggeration from the cast to help create a larger contrast in the characters. Now, if Act 1 is more farcical in style, then he suggested that Act 2 be presented in an almost realistic style. I realized that I was pushing the comedy too hard and going against my original intentions for the act. There is a sweetness in Act 2 that isn’t present in Act 1 and I think that it allows the audience to more closely relate to the characters. Simply put, Act 1 should make fun of the constraints of the world and Act 2 should present the individual growth of the characters.

The rest of our discussion was mostly focused on Joseph’s and the cast’s use of the dialect. Hustoles expressed that he was concerned about Joseph’s performance because it seemed like there were no acting choices being made. I didn’t disagree because I felt that he lacked a sense of the text. I had been trying to have discussions with Joseph about the depth to Joshua in Act 1 and how he acts differently with Clive than he does with Edward or Betty. Those notes weren’t being taken and I was attributing a lot of it to lack of memorization, but it is a valid concern moving forward.

As for the dialect, Hustoles stressed that I needed to focus on the use of the /a/ sound and the /æ/ sound. I really appreciated the specific notes on the dialect because I am still training my ear to hear all the substitutions. I left the discussion feeling confident in where I have directed the play so far and reassured that I know what I need to do next to continue pushing the actors and the production forward.

September 8, 2019
Returning to rehearsal from the weekend was a fresh and exciting time for me because I couldn’t wait to dig into the feedback I had received from Hustoles on Friday. Several members of the cast had asked how the discussion went over the weekend and I told them to just wait and see how Sunday would go. I was very pleased with the progress of the evening and thrilled by how the cast took the new changes. The rehearsal consisted of just working through Act 1, but we approached it with a stop and go process. This allowed me to really focus on specific problems and adjustments.

I started rehearsal with a quick review of some of the dialect concerns that were noted on Friday and then explained to the cast my revelation on the contrast that I want them to play. We then jumped into the act and began working on incorporating some more of the farcical elements of grander gestures and specific timing. I always enjoy stop and go rehearsals because I think it is a great way for table work to come back into the play and it reminds the actors of their motivations. As we worked through the scenes, the cast took notes and adjusted quite nicely.

The biggest shift was in Joseph, who took my notes about playing two faces and developed a loving “I’ll come at your beckon call” attitude with Belt’s Clive and a scowling, gruff attitude with Christopherson’s Betty. It was great to see this shift of personality and growth from him as a performer. Gaulke also took his note about creating specificity and having a more rigid posture very well. Prior made some more adjustments to Mrs. Saunders so that she seems to be more masculine and presents herself as someone who wants to be one of the boys. With these discoveries and
adjustments to the characters, much more of the humor was being presented. Overall, it was a very productive rehearsal and I can’t wait to dig into Act 2 in the same way.

**September 9, 2019**

For tonight’s rehearsal I wanted to focus on some of the monologues that are direct address to the audience before we started working through all of the act. I sent out an email to the cast and stage management to inform them that I was adjusting the call times and asked that Joseph be called at 6:35 p.m., followed by Fischer at 7:05 p.m. By working with these two first, it would give me time to really dig in and develop the stories that they are sharing with the audience.

I was most interested in working with Joseph because, up to this point, he has simply been reciting the monologues. I wanted to discuss them with him to get his perspective on them. He generally understood what was being said in the first monologue and described it as a moment where Gerry could share with the audience his true feelings about Edward through an anecdote about his other sexual encounters. We talked about how this wasn’t quite landing. The full point of the monologue is to show that Gerry appreciates people who are quiet or closed off to others. He doesn’t want much of an interaction outside of the sexual acts committed. Additionally, the monologue is meant to build and fall throughout to titillate the audience before arriving at its conclusion. After a second run through, I felt like he had a better grasp of what was being said and I turned my attention to how he is physically portraying the story. He had been using minimal gestures that mostly consisted of lateral waves and putting his hands
in his pockets. I asked him to try to illustrate the story for the audience. There are so many opportunities for him to use illustrative and symbolic gestures that would enhance the visual effect. After this discussion, we attempted another run of the monologue and I noted that Joseph was showing signs of stress and nervousness because he was having progressively more issues with remembering the lines that he had just performed. I expressed that I felt like he was moving in the right direction and that he needed to focus on the confidence of sharing with the audience.

After working with Joseph, Fischer came in to work on her final monologue. I believe that this monologue is the most important one in the play because it wraps up Betty’s journey and shows us the conclusion. Fischer has a nice grasp of the importance of the monologue and I wanted to work to discover the humor and sincerity within it. The first thing we worked on was to add more gestures to show an understanding of the text within the body. Much of the monologue is a discussion about Betty getting to know herself through her body and Fischer wasn’t making any contact with herself. I stressed using the text as a guide, especially because there are several moments where Betty talks about touching various parts of her body. On our second run through of the monologue, she made some choices, but she was unsure of their effectiveness. I encouraged her that the room was a safe space to make choices that would only be shared with me and the stage managers because I know that sometimes, showing self-intimacy is harder than with another person. Unfortunately, as we went to run it again, the rest of the cast was starting to arrive. I stopped Fischer to prevent putting any more pressure on her nerves and told her to continue to explore the monologue and the gestures that she could use.
The rest of the night consisted of working through Act 2. Getting Christopherson to be believably gay as the adult Edward is one of the bigger challenges of the act. While Gerry does tell Edward that he’s “putting it on,” I believe that Edward just wants to outwardly show his natural effeminacy. I explained to Christopherson that he should feel more covered up in Scene 1 because he is in a public place and wants to hide that side of himself so as not to bring unwanted attention. When he is alone or in close privacy with family or his lover, he can let his truer self show. This should be a focus on the effeminacy and not an outright flamboyance. He made a great adjustment for this in the second scene and then fell back into his masculine habitus for the following scenes and I continued to remind him to think about that self-identity.

The act itself went well enough but the cast is still unsure of their words. They need to trust that they know them and the cues will start flow better. This act is much more dependent upon the text than Act 1 because the text is what engages the audience whereas the physicality is more important in Act 1. I’m pleased with the work done tonight but getting more concerned about the comfort that the actors have with their Act 2 lines. Hopefully tomorrow night will show an improvement.

September 10, 2019

We took publicity photos for the show tonight and I got my first look at some of the costumes for Act 1. I’m very excited to see them all, because the first act looked great and Schedivy is staying very close to her renderings. Following photo call, we ran the show and stopped to change some of the choreography for the opening number. I
don’t believe that I am a choreographer, but I am certainly taking a stab at creating a stylized movement piece. The cast took the adjustments really well and I’ll continue to tweak minor things throughout the song.

The run of the show went fairly smoothly but Act 2 still has pacing issues. I will focus more on that tomorrow night when we are doing our light tech. Due to the length of the run, I opted to let the cast go home and I would email out notes. Most of what I want to work on in Act 1 is committing to choices and then the pace in Act 2. I think the show has made tremendous progress and I’m looking forward to seeing it with the technical elements being added.

**September 11, 2019**

I began tonight’s rehearsal with staging the final song. I hadn’t gotten the music for Churchill’s “Cloud Nine” until a few days earlier and I needed to determine how I would stage it. The song has a great disco beat and was written for Fischer and Gaulke to sing. There are moments in the lyrics that reflect the characters and many more that don’t, so I decided that the song was meant to be a complete juxtaposition with the play until the final verse. The cast grooves to the tempo of the music for the majority of song, but at the end, Cathy enters and the “modern” family that Churchill has written forms in front of Betty. The lyric states, “and it’s upside down when you reach Cloud Nine.” This new family dynamic is completely at odds with what Betty knows and she now has to navigate the new relationships that she is a part of. I think that the song will be a fun
moment of confusion for the audience leading into the final scene where we discover all the growth that the characters have had.

This was our first light tech for the show, and I was excited to see how Hedman interpreted the script through his design. The use of the gobos really added a great texture to the stage and certainly helped clarify that we were in the African jungle and a London park. I noted in the first act, however, that the first and fourth scenes looked remarkably similar in coloring and they are at two different times of day. The first scene is evening, just before bed, and the fourth scene is early in the morning. I asked Ryan if we could vary the color so that they weren’t so similar in look and could really delve into the different times. I’m uncertain how I like the look of the third scene as well. The characters are inside the house and it is quite dark because they have all the shutters closed to prevent seeing the flogging that is happening outside. When Clive enters, he opens the shutters and a large window gobo appears. It functions superficially but the aesthetic seems off. The scene is very gloomy and seems to contrast the farcical nature of the act. I’m hoping that Smith had some good advice for Hedman and I’ll try to format new thoughts during tomorrow’s tech run.

Act 2 looks very nice. I think that Hedman has chosen some smart looks for the park and he makes great use of color and brightness in the third scene. The one problem that I had for that scene was that when Belt appears as the Soldier, the group center stage was lit, and he was not. The opposite needs to occur because we are shifting our focus to this otherworldly being. Aside from that, I had very little notes for Hedman because I wanted his advisor to give him some feedback first. I understand lighting design and can
articulate my needs and wants but I have not designed lights, so it is easier for me to let
the experienced ones talk first and then I can respond to the new material. The run went
smoothly and I feel like the cast is getting to a point where they need to perform for an
audience. Tomorrow night, we add sound and I’ll be interested to see how that affects
the flow of the play.

September 12, 2019

Tonight was not what I had expected it to be. I’ll come back to this thought, but I
want to talk about the addition of sound in the tech rehearsal first. Jensen was quite
excited to be at rehearsal and to get feedback from me regarding the sound design. The
first issue occurred in the opening song. The track that was being used was not the
correct tempo and had two separate beats moving at the same time. The cast was lost,
and I decided to let it play out so that we could correct the problem for tomorrow night. I
spoke to Jensen about it and he informed me that he was using the tracks that were last
dropped by email to him and the dropbox had not been updated. I asked him to connect with
Hayes because he had the latest versions of all the tracks.

As the play progressed, I was making notes on how the soundscape filled each
scene. In the opening scene, all I could hear was blowing wind that rose and fell like
waves. I was hoping to hear more outdoor sounds of animals or insects and asked if they
would be added. Jensen explained to me that he hadn’t mixed everything for the space
yet and was going to be taking notes on where he needed to do that work. The second
scene soundscape was appropriate through the use of regional birds to South Africa,
however, the use of the Alpine Swift, a common type of swift that migrates to South Africa in the winter, became very repetitive and drew attention because of its shrill screech. I asked if we could keep it but to bring its level down and to use it much less frequently. For Scene 3 I asked that we have no soundscape because we are indoors. The rest of the act seems to function well.

The design for intermission was unclear to me. After the blackout, there was an immediate seventies rock song that started playing and it felt jarring to me. I was told that this wouldn’t occur until approximately five minutes into intermission and I was left wondering if that meant that we would have five minutes of silence following the first act. Faculty member George Grubb was present for the rehearsal to provide feedback for Jensen and the other designers and he also asked questions about the intermission process. While I was listening, it struck me that the act needed a tag and I thought that the drums we had been using for scene transitions would work best. Jensen and Grubb agreed, and the conversation progressed to determining if we should use an intermission cell phone announcement. I was trying to be overly creative and said that I would write one that fit the period for us to use. Grubb asked if there was a purpose to that because it would then be at odds with the preshow announcement because that was not period. I’ll have to think about this for the night to decide on what I’d like to do to come back from intermission.

The rest of the evening’s sound tech went well and I think that Jensen has a good grasp on what he is doing. The rehearsal itself did not go very well. I’m not sure if the opening song falling apart set the mood for the rehearsal or if tonight was just going to be
an off night for the actors, but it was probably the roughest run of the show we have had. I described it in my notes as a “rollercoaster of a rehearsal” because I was seeing some truly fabulous work from the cast in new places, but I was also witnessing low energy and an almost constant sense of confusion. Lines were being dropped and skipped in places they had never been an issue before. The energy of the cast appeared to be dependent on Belt. If he was on the stage, there was tremendous amount of energy from everyone, but if he was absent, so was the group’s energy. I wasn’t sure what to do about it and decided to just address it at the end of the rehearsal.

Ultimately, I think that the cast is nervous about the early audience that we have coming in two days and they let small issues upset their process tonight. I expressed that I needed them to focus and energize the play. There are great moments of humor that occur throughout, but they won’t play if the cast doesn’t either. I also stressed to them that they need to trust and believe in themselves. I have seen the show go quite well and I want the cast to know they know their material. They can, and have, certainly risen to the challenge of putting together a play in a very short amount of time. Now, they just need to take the next step of self-assurance that they will persevere and perform to the best of their abilities.

September 13, 2019

There was significant improvement from the cast at tonight’s rehearsal. I was initially worried that we would have another rough run because the general mood of the group seemed to be dour. Prior came in stressed and I spoke with her about it and gave
her time to collect herself. While she was away, the rest of the cast ran the musical numbers so that we could create balances for the tracks. Afterward, I spoke with the group and reassured them that tonight would be a better run if they wanted it to. The things that happen in previous rehearsals cannot be changed, but we can adapt and learn from them. I explained that, by letting go of the frustrations of yesterday and taking the opportunity to learn from the mistakes that were made, today would be a better day. This seemed to really resonate with them and carried into the work they were doing.

There were two moments in Act 1, Scene 2 that weren’t working for me that I wanted to go back and adjust to help them land. The first was the opening scene between Clive and Mrs. Saunders. The scene has an inherent chase feeling that arises from Clive’s insistence that Mrs. Saunders have sex with him. I staged it in a way so that it appears to be an actual chase and there was no rising tension occurring. I asked Belt to think of it as more of Clive trying to at first tickle Mrs. Saunders and then build to just trying to catch her. This would give the moment some more immediacy and build Clive’s frustration on each failed attempt leading to a beat change. Belt and Prior were happy to meet the challenge and the scene works much better.

The second moment was during the game of catch. Edward is supposed to get frustrated and throw the ball off upstage right. This throw is difficult because it required Fischer to turn into the throw and didn’t give her a lot of opportunity to focus on where the ball would go. I decided to make the throw easier, I would have Joseph cross to stand behind Gaulke. This would give him the opportunity to taunt Edward as Joshua, thus prompting Edward to throw the ball in frustration at Harry and Joshua and eventually
blame Joshua for the missing ball. This creates a straight-forward throw for Fischer to get the ball off upstage left. The adjustment worked well and we will add that moment to the preshow calls.

Technically, I think that the show is in a good place. The painting is nearly complete, and I feel that Murphy has done a nice job of providing a facsimile of the foliage. I was shocked to see the trees standing and one of them was not yet painted. Murphy explained that she had hoped that the tree would still be down to paint it on the ground, but that she had made plans to come in tomorrow to finish the painting and would do the tree using a ladder. Additionally, Hedman pointed out to me that the masking drapes upstage were creating sightline issues for several seats. The seats on the end of the rows at the upstage side lost most of the platform. I spoke with Hagaman about how difficult it would be to adjust the drapes to move them further offstage by approximately three feet. He informed me that it was a matter of just sliding the chain across the pipe to where we wanted them to be.

Lighting and sound are nearly where I want them to be. Hedman and I focused on a few time of day shifts that were far too quick and drew attention to the lights changing during the scenes. I expressed that I really liked the effect that he was going for but wanted to make it much subtler so that the audience wasn’t taken out of the moment because of a quick light change. As for sound, the alpine swift problem was still present and the outdoor soundscape was still being used in Act 1, Scene 3. I spoke with Jensen about them and he had already taken notes about correcting those errors. In Act 2, I felt that his music selections for the scene shifts worked well, but I asked him if he could find
a female artist for the shift between scenes two and three because of the empowering nature of the end of Scene 2 and the exploration of femininity at the beginning of Scene 3.

I feel much better about where the production is compared to last night. Tomorrow night we have first dress and the cast of *Newsies* will be attending the show. I will make it clear to them that they are seeing a dress rehearsal and that there are likely to be issues. I’m sure that they understand the situation and will be very receptive to the show regardless of any technical issues that may occur.

**September 14, 2019**

Tonight’s soft preview and first dress went remarkably well. I originally felt prepared when the possibility of the *Newsies* ensemble coming to first dress was mentioned. Then I felt less and less prepared as we had our difficulties with memorizing. By the time came for tonight’s rehearsal, I was reaffirmed in our preparation. I wanted to first explain to the audience members that they were viewing a first dress rehearsal and to expect that some things may not look finished or go according to plan. Being an audience of our peers, they were very receptive to that announcement. In addition to the *Newsies* cast, Hustoles was there to provide final feedback on technical elements and the progress made from the last rehearsal he attended.

At this point in the process, I have started to take significantly fewer notes. Most of what I have for the actors are small detail things for them to adjust. One example is in the wedding scene of Act 1. After Clive kisses Mrs. Saunders, he admonishes her and is
quickly followed by Betty and Maud, who should be upset that he kissed another woman. Instead they agree with Clive and accuse her of being a bad woman. Previously, I had Christopherson and Oetken staged to the far left and far right with Belt up center. I found that if they went to stand just behind his shoulders it would create a tighter and more powerful image, as well as heighten the humor of the backward nature of supporting the villain. Other than these detail driven notes, I have only been communicating with the designers to finely adjust their work.

The costumes all worked rather well for the first dress of the show. I had minor questions for Schedivy about accessories, but nothing that was going to be a major project for her in the costume shop. In Act 1, I had noted that Christopherson’s bust appeared to be rather large and if that was intentional, we should consider padding his buttocks as well. This would give him more of the feminine silhouette that I expected. All of Prior’s changes from Ellen to Mrs. Saunders and back, appeared to work very well. For Act 2, I wanted to know if Gaulke would be wearing a belt, because his shirt continued to come untucked and if he didn’t have a belt, he should have suspenders to help correct the problem. Belt’s dress for Cathy looks great and moves well with him, however, Hustoles noted that he should have some sort of mock girl’s underwear and not shorts under the dress. I agreed with that observation because, having a daughter equivalent to Cathy’s age, I have seen how young girls will play with their dresses and we don’t want the audience to be taken out of the moment because of an anachronistic costume piece.
As for the other technical elements, the majority of the focus was on lighting and some notes for sound. Hustoles noted that we shifted scenes frequently in each act and there was not a standard shift look. I had one moment where the lights shift from Act 1 Scene 4 to Scene 5 created a scene shift look, but I had not asked for Hedman to incorporate that throughout the play. Hustoles encouraged me to consider that to help the audience follow the play and have a better understanding of when a scene has shifted.

After that, I had specific notes for Hayes in the calling of the show. Two moments in Act 2 had been called early and the lights shifted before the actors were in place. This threw off the timing of the blocking and I provide Hayes with the proper cues for the calls. As for sound, the biggest note that I had was the use of music in Act 2. The song “Cloud Nine” by the Temptations is meant to play after the radio announcer speaks and the cutting that Jensen used didn’t establish what the song was for the audience.

Additionally, the use of the radio dial was beginning to take a prominent focus from the play’s material and Hustoles also noted that the final radio shutting off sound before curtain call was a distraction. I asked Jensen to try and eliminate the static sound, or shorten it, because it was starting to sound more like a HAM radio to me rather than the turning of a radio dial.

I was quite pleased with the way that the rehearsal ran, and the small audience seemed rather receptive to it. I believe that having them attend gave the cast a better sense of where an audience would find humor in the script and allowed them the time in rehearsals to start adjusting things. I also noted that one of the elements that we were underutilizing was the use of emphasis. For the sarcasm to be effective, it should be
exaggerated to a certain degree so that it cues the audience to laugh because it isn’t being taken seriously. I encouraged the actors to explore where they may have areas of emphasis in their dialogue that could use this exaggeration. Outside of that, the feedback I received from students was positive and Hustoles also remarked that he was surprised by the efficiency and preparedness of the performance. The show is in great condition and now has several days to adjust before an audience arrives.

September 16, 2019

Today began with a significant frustration and ended on a positive note. After Saturday’s performance, Sunday’s dress rehearsal went smoothly, and I was planning to take lobby photo pictures at tonight’s rehearsal. That plan was interrupted when Gaulke caught me after a class to remind me that he was not going to be at rehearsal tonight. I at first thought that he was just trying to tease me as we have student preview tomorrow night. He then informed me that this had been on his conflict sheet since day one of rehearsals and he had purchased tickets to a concert months in advance. I was frustrated because I felt like I couldn’t say no to him and require him to be at rehearsal and I was irritated with myself because I had not followed up with Hayes to get copies of the actors’ audition forms with those conflicts. I told Gaulke to enjoy the concert and I would honor the conflict simply because I felt that the show was performance ready.

This left me with the difficult task of determining what to do with a dress rehearsal without one actor in a very ensemble-based play. I considered having Hayes read the lines from the booth and run the entire show. I also thought about running all of
the scenes that did not include Gaulke. Ultimately, most of the options for running the show without him seemed to be fruitless for myself and the rest of the cast. Taking into consideration that most of my notes from the previous rehearsals were about the light and sound shifts at scene breaks, I decided to do a cue-to-cue rehearsal for just the scene shifts. I informed the cast not to get into costume for the rehearsal and I would explain when rehearsal started.

When we met, I had to first explain to Schedivy my decision was made because we were down an actor for the run. She was understandably confused why I requested no costumes be worn for a dress rehearsal but understood when I explained the situation. I then met with the cast and took my responsibility in the last-minute change of plans and stressed to them that I held no ill-will toward Gaulke. It is extremely important to me to accept my own failings and to encourage an ensemble environment. I then explained that we would be working a cue-to-cue rehearsal and I would let them out early to have a relaxing evening before we started to have audiences.

The rehearsal went well, and we were able to make small adjustments to the calling of cues and the timing of some of the light changes. All in all, the difficulty that I thought I would face turned into a welcome reprieve from the taxation of another full dress. I want to credit the work of the actors and the designers for this evenings success because if they had not been prepared, then tonight could have been very difficult with a missing actor.
September 17, 2019

Tonight’s student preview went well, and I was again pleased with the work put forth by the cast and crew. There was no indication that we were missing an actor the night before and the show went rather smoothly with a few minor exceptions.

The first issue was a sense of distraction for the cast. I spoke with public relations director Corrie Eggimann about possibly live shooting a dress rehearsal to avoid a long and difficult photo call because of the significant costume changes involved. Eggimann was open to the idea and came in to shoot the preview. Ideally, this would have taken place the night prior, but seeing as we were missing an actor, we couldn’t do the live shoot. I explained to the cast that Eggimann and student photographer Victoria Finger would be taking photos throughout the run and to just carry on as though nothing were different. I also explained this to the very small audience we had for our student majors’ preview. The shutter clicks became a hindrance for the actors at the beginning of the run. Cue pick ups were lagging, and they all seemed generally distracted to start but settled back into the rhythm that they had established previously.

As for the audience, there seemed to be a sense of enjoyment during the play along with a strong sense of shock. I would frequently observe the audience to see how they were responding, and while there was plenty of laughter, it was often through covered mouths as if they thought they shouldn’t be laughing. I will be interested in tracking the audience responses throughout the run of the show because I have not been given a good gauge of what moments are always going to get a laugh and what will not. Tomorrow’s performance should give me a little more insight because it will feature less
students and I’ll get a generational response as well. I’ll be curious if there is more open laughter because of a slightly higher average age or if it will continue to be conservative laughter because of the content. Either way, I am excited to open and share this story with others.

**September 18, 2019**

Tonight marked opening night of *Cloud 9* and I honestly couldn’t be more proud. The work that the cast and creative team have put into the production has been remarkable. To think that the cast auditioned only 23 days prior is daunting, but they rose to the challenge to put forth the best production that they could. The play is challenging in both subject matter and skill required to present it. All the individuals involved met that challenge and were completely prepared for tonight’s audience.

The audience itself was not especially large but they were engaged. A house count revealed that there were 50 individuals who attended the show. I found myself both disappointed and unsurprised by this small number. It is frustrating that so many hours of work are put into the development of a production and then so few people will come to see it. I’m not sure what the answer is regarding the marketing of the studio season, but I hope that more attention will be brought to it in the future, a topic that I had discussed with public relations director Corrie Eggimann. That being said, the smaller audience is unsurprising because I know that the marketing for the show has been minimal. Knowing that certainly helped prepare me and my disappointment quickly fled as I watched the audience engage with play.
The actors were putting on one of their best runs of the show and their energy was palpable. I think that knowing there was a paying audience in the house, no matter how small, was just the encouragement that they needed to take another step forward in their performances. What made it interesting for me was observing the variety of emotions and reactions of the audience. For much of Act 1, there seemed to be a sense of disbelief that pervaded the room. It was as if they couldn’t fathom a man playing a wife or a white man playing a black character. This disbelief was matched with a sense of questioning whether it was appropriate to laugh or not. I’ll attribute a lot of the hesitation with the humor of the first act to the current awareness of social issues in our present political climate. That was certainly one facet of the play that I had anticipated and am hopeful that the production will at least start a discussion for audience members. I certainly recognize the difficulty of the material for individuals to digest, but I will firmly hold that it is written as scathing satire of the issues and should be laughed at.

As mentioned earlier, the cast was in great shape for the performance. They were notably picking up cues and keeping the play moving at an appropriately brisk pace. The only major issue that occurred was in Act 1. In the moment where Betty and Maud try to tug the doll out of Edward’s grasp, the head of the doll snapped off and flew into an audience member’s lap. The bemused patron gladly tossed the head back to Christopherson who came to fetch it and he dropped it into another chair. The whole ordeal sparked quite the riotous response from the crowd, yet the actors maintained their composure and carried on with the show.
Overall, I felt that tonight’s opening performance was well received, with the slight exception of three patrons leaving during the second act. I’m not sure if the content became too troublesome or if the shift in style from Act 1 to Act 2 triggered their reaction, but for the vast majority of the audience to understand and appear to appreciate the play is a success to me. I’ll make a point to track the audiences throughout the week to see if more theatregoers leave and then try to pinpoint what exactly it is that triggers them to do so.

**September 19, 2019**

What a complete turnaround tonight was from last night. The audience was quite engaged throughout the play and uproarious laughter was brought throughout the first act. It really felt like the audience was watching a farce in Act 1 and then there was a huge shift in response in Act 2. This is exactly what I had been hoping for in the direction of the play. I was glad to hear such a vocal response to the taboo topics in Act 1 because it reaffirmed that audiences understand the comedy of contrast that pervades this cast of characters. On the opposing side, I think that it is important to note that the audience was still engaged in the second act, but in a different way. Act 2 was significantly quieter than Act 1, and I was watching audience members openly weep as they left the theatre. Churchill’s play can certainly be polarizing, but tonight was an example of the power of thought that she writes in her plays. Again, I will be very interested to see what the last two audiences do in response to the play.
September 21, 2019

Tonight was the closing of *Cloud 9*. With our highest attended audience (approximately 97 by my count), I sat and observed their response to the show as well as attempted to enjoy the show. The difficulty that I find as a director watching the show is that I can’t simply let go and watch the play. I feel a compulsive urge to take note of all of the minor things that I would want to correct. Thankfully, I left the notebook in my office and couldn’t take note of any concerns I had. One piece of advice I have tried to adopt is that once the production has opened, it is the actors’ and no longer mine.

While keeping that in mind, I turned my attention to the audience. It has been quite interesting to watch their responses over the course of the run. It seemed like there was no consistency to what they would laugh at. As I mentioned previously, Thursday night’s audience found the play the most humorous. The other three nights seemed to have varying degrees of laughter in the first act and a more subdued approach to the second. I believe that the distinct styles of the two acts are responsible for the varying responses. I had mentioned that I felt that Thursday night’s crowd seemed to be what I was looking for most in the audience response, but perhaps I was too hasty in that assessment. I certainly wanted the audience to laugh at the absurdity of what the characters are doing in Act 1, but I also wanted to ensure that they were thinking about what they were laughing at. While the other audiences may not have been as boisterous in their responses, I did note that they were almost constantly smiling and would curb their laughter to make sure that they heard what was happening next. I’m certain that I’ll continue to ponder the audience response to this production for quite some time.
I was pleased with the response the actors had to audience as well. Over the course of the run they were able to adapt their performances to add a little pizzazz to moments and create strong empathetic responses in Act 2. The work that they put into learning this play and developing complete and distinct characters has been marvelous. In addition to the actors’ work, the production team and crew put a lot of time into creating a well-crafted production. While I am pleased with the production and feel it was a success, it has been a personal challenge. I look forward to reflecting on it.
CHAPTER IV

POST PRODUCTION ANALYSIS

This chapter will be an examination of the final production elements for Seth M. Honerman’s direction of Caryl Churchill’s *Cloud 9*. The director believes that the true success of a play is a positive response from the audience who has paid for an evening of entertainment. This production certainly received mixed success by this standard. While many audience members appeared to enjoy the play, there were several patrons who walked out of the performance. This mixed response isn’t the only indication of the success of a production, but functions as an immediate assessment. In addition to the majority of the audiences enjoying the production, there is a necessity to examine the process to determine what successes the production can claim pride in and what areas of improvement that the director needs to focus on in future projects. Each of the elements detailed in Chapter I of this paper, along with additional production elements, will be analyzed to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the production.

It would first be appropriate to examine the use of style in the play. As stated in Chapter I, the play uses two primary styles in Act 1 and Act 2. Act 1 features a more farcical style that is characterized by the broad characters and quick pace of the dialogue and entrances of characters. Act 2 takes on the style of realism, with minor exceptions in the form of gender swapped casting and the appearances of ghosts in the end of the play.
The director found that approaching the style of the play was a much more difficult task in Act 1 than it was for Act 2. Due to the thematic material of the play, it is hard to call Act 1 a farce. It is certainly farcical, but not directly comedy for humor’s sake. Approaching the difficult material, including homosexuality, adultery, slave culture and gender inequality with care was the director’s foremost responsibility. The struggle that he had was finding a balance of handling the naturally humorous dialogue with the inherently serious topics. The best approach used was to treat the first act as a satire with farcical elements. This allowed the actors to overexaggerate their characters and what they were saying. By overexaggerating, the actors created a humorous juxtaposition between the intent of what was said and how it was said. This contrast then provided more of the comedy.

After the director worked with the actors to understand the importance of the contrasting elements that carry through the first act, he took time to assess the audience response to it. The audience understood most of the moments that were focused on in rehearsal. They responded with mixed laughter, however, never reaching fully boisterous levels. The exception to this was the audience in attendance on Thursday, September 19. This audience found much more of the play humorous and responded with large chortles of laughter. Unexpected moments of laughter came during scenes such as the exchange between Edward and Harry Bagley about “what we did before,” or Edward telling Joshua to obey orders. While Churchill certainly intended these scenes to be humorous, they had never received such a large response and the following two performances had much more subdued responses as well.
The realism of Act 2 was much easier to bring to life for the director. With the style focusing on more realistic elements of performance, the conversation with the actors changed from understanding comedy to understanding the empathetic response and sincerity of the characters. One example of this occurs in Act 2, Scene 1 where Lin and Victoria are discussing Lin’s pride at getting to keep Cathy following her divorce. Victoria tells her she shouldn’t be proud, and Lin responds with, “I’m a lesbian.” Actor Lydia Prior didn’t quite understand the significance of the line and asked for clarification. Honerman pointed to the reality of the time period, where it was not socially acceptable to be an out lesbian and that, by getting to keep Cathy, she was making progress for gay rights. Moments of discovery like this helped the actors contextualize the realities that each character was living in.

The audience response to the second act also varied night to night but was generally consistent in being more subdued than their response to Act 1. While the second act isn’t a drama, it does take on a more serious tone than Act 1. This shift in tone brought the audience into the play more and helped to illuminate the thematic ideas that Churchill was presenting. The audience always had a laugh at actor Trevor Belt and his transformation into Cathy, but they quickly accepted the concept that he was a four-year-old girl. They found the orgy at the top of Scene 3 to be rather humorous. The moment that seemed to unite all the audiences was their captivation with actor Megan Fischer’s final monologue. In that final moment of the play, all audiences were silent and engaged with what Fischer had to say, which is the play’s central message about becoming an individual.
Through the audience engagement during the play and conversations following performances, the director noted that the assessment of the play being thematically driven was accurate. Many members of the audience who spoke to the director remarked that they wanted to go home and process the play. The comment, “there’s a lot to think about,” was frequently stated in conversation. For the few members of the audience that read the program note, the end result of the play was clear in its attempt to tell the audience that it is important to embrace their individuality. The interesting observation from most of these conversations was that the patrons would often say that they did not like the play, but they appreciated the quality of the production and the message that it was conveying. The director observed this as well and understands that something may not be liked but can still provide value. In this case, the thoughts of the play are the value that audiences should take away from it.

Churchill’s thoughts are best conveyed through the characters that she has written and the choice to use actors changing roles between the two acts. The director chose to use the original Joint Stock Theatre Company doubling with the following cast: Clive/Cathy played by Belt, Betty/Edward played by Ryan Christopherson, Edward/Betty played by Fischer, Ellen/Mrs. Saunders/Lin played by Prior, Maud/Victoria played by Lindsey Oetken, Harry Bagley/Martin played by Zac Gaulke and Joshua/Gerry played by Braden Joseph. The following will include detailed analysis of the actors work in portraying the characters, as well as the director’s role in casting and acting coaching.

Belt was dealt one of the most difficult tasks in the doubling by portraying a patriarchal figurehead and a four-year-old girl. The director’s vision for the role was to
have a strong looking male for the role of Clive, which would then juxtapose with the innocence of Cathy and parallel her sense of control. Belt’s large frame and ability to carry himself with presence made an ideal pairing for the roles. His initial approach to Clive was to adopt the idea that everything that he did was for Queen and country. He had a firm grasp on the idea that Clive was an Empire man and believed in all the Victorian ideals. This approach worked for much of the character development, but it did not lend well to the comedy of manners and farcical style. Honerman focused on Belt exploring the contrasting nature of Clive. While the character appears to be upright and rigid in his morals, he is often up to no good. The seduction of Mrs. Saunders and the joy at “providing justice” to the natives are clear indicators of the façade cracking. When given this direction, Belt took a new approach of finding the malicious joy in both scenarios. This new tactic heightened the contrast of the character and made him just overexaggerated enough to allow the audience to both laugh at and despise him.

The approach to playing Cathy was radically different. Honerman and Belt discussed the character at length and specifically the need to play her with a level of sincerity to prevent her from becoming a caricature. One of Belt’s inspirations for the role was the director’s three-year-old daughter. He adopted mannerisms from her to help ground Cathy in reality. These mannerisms included tugging on his clothing, looking down and away when nervous or upset and stamping his feet and throwing his fists when angry. The sincere approach to the character worked wonderfully and the audience suspended their disbelief enough to watch what was really happening in the play, rather than laugh at the antics of a grown man pretending to be a child. It is in that sincerity that
Belt earned the thoughtful response that Churchill initially intended with the Clive/Cathy parallel. It is humorous that the man who had all the power in the first act now has the least amount of power. Both characters exert demonstrations of seeking control, however, which ties them together. Ultimately, Belt created two completely developed characters that remained true to their ideals and succeeded in creating an empathetic response in the audience.

Actor Ryan Christopherson was cast in the dual role of Betty/Edward as a means of challenging him to perform roles outside of his comfort zone. His physical stature was important to consider when being cast opposite Belt’s Clive and he fit the role well by having a slimmer figure that could lend itself to femininity. As Betty, Christopherson struggled with the physicality of the character. The director wanted Betty to be believably a woman and a major component of this performance would rely on the period style of acting. While Christopherson made significant growth in the development of the upright posture and feminine step, it was inconsistent throughout the performance. That being said, he made smart choices of specific moments to drop the composure to highlight the contrasting feelings that Betty has throughout the play. Moments such as following the slapping of Edward in Act 1, Scene 3 or attacking Mrs. Saunders in Act 1, Scene 5 provided great contrast for him to drop into his natural physicality to alert the audience that the character is having difficulty maintaining her composure.

As Edward in Act 2, Christopherson made a complete change to his performance style. Taking on a more casual tone, lowering his pitch and dropping the thin vocal quality used for Betty helped to distinguish Edward. He also approached the character
with a looser physical approach as compared to the restrained posture of Betty. While he understood the emotions that Edward was experiencing, he was not portraying the femininity of the character. Honerman and Christopherson discussed how this would likely be true in Act 2, Scene 1 as he is trying to hide his true nature from the public and his employers, but he would be more comfortable when he was with his partner or close family in the subsequent scenes. He made a strong attempt at demonstrating Edward’s feminine qualities without becoming too flamboyant and thus unrelatable. While Honerman felt that these qualities could have been less subdued, he was pleased with the authenticity of Christopherson’s approach to Edward which made moments such as touching Victoria’s breasts at the end of Act 2, Scene 2 and the show of excitement at reconnecting with Gerry in Act 2, Scene 4 more empathetic for the audience.

As the other actor to portray Edward and Betty, Fischer was up to the challenge of playing a young boy exploring his femininity in a masculine world and a grown woman seeking to find her true self. By Fischer’s own account, she felt that she identified more with Edward than Betty at the beginning of the process. She clearly understood the physicality of playing a young boy and approached it in a free and energetic manner. The director focused most of his coaching on the desire to express femininity through playing with Victoria’s doll. Moments needed to be created where it was clear that Edward was actually playing with the doll rather than just holding or cuddling with it. The process created instances of doing the doll’s hair and playing games like patty-cake. In building these moments, Fischer was able to capture the child-like imagination of Edward and show the struggle he had of trying to hide his true feelings.
While Fischer stated early on that she didn’t connect with Betty as well as Edward, she was willing to explore Betty’s desires. Her initial focus was on playing the age correctly and believably. The director steered her more toward text analysis to clarify questions about Betty’s journey to self-acceptance. The discussion revolved around the slow shift in Betty’s language from being more rigid in structure and focused on societal norms to becoming more impulsive and engaging with others. There are hints of her looking to break free in Act 2, Scene 1 such as “I’m going to need a job, because I’m leaving your father,” but the growth really happens in Act 2, Scene 4. Fischer better understood the changes Betty goes through and her delivery of the play’s final monologue was truly exceptional. Where she most succeeded was in the differentiation of Betty from Edward. The energy of both characters was similar, however, she approached Edward with care to avoid caricature. The honesty of Edward then informed the sincerity and discovery of Betty, particularly in the play’s final scene.

Prior had a distinct challenge in creating three equally compelling characters between the two acts. In Act 1, she had to flip back and forth between Ellen and Mrs. Saunders. These changes often occurred with less than half a page of dialogue between exits and entrances. Her development of the characters was slow going initially. The difficulty she faced was not having all the tools that are taught at Minnesota State Mankato at her disposal. The director took time with her to discuss a variety of options she had to help distinguish the two women. Prior adopted two techniques that gave a wider range between the characters. The first was to focus on vocal quality. By changing the pitch of her voice and using a thin quality for Ellen and a variation of the
throaty quality for Mrs. Saunders, she created a distinct vocal change. Exploring psychological centers was the second technique she used. As Ellen, she used a more heart-based center to show her care for the other characters. Mrs. Saunders blended genital and stomach centers to create the illusion of a woman who was wildly independent but sought power to maintain her independence. Honerman was pleased with the differentiation of characters and found them to be effective.

Prior was cast for her ability to draw an audience into her performance. As a somewhat outsider, Lin is a gruffer character and comes from a lower class than the rest of the characters in Act 2. Her approach to Lin was to blend a desire for femininity and a show of masculinity to show Lin’s conflict as a single parent. Prior allowed her femininity to come out when she was being tender and loving with Victoria. The masculinity came forth when she adopted her parent persona as a protector of Cathy and Tommy. By showcasing these two facets of Lin’s personality, Prior was able to create a remarkably genuine character and a strong foundation for the other actors to build their relationships from.

The dual roles of Maud and Victoria were well executed by Oetken. Oetken was a relative unknown talent to the director and showed a sense of comedy in her audition by using a selection from Richard Bean’s One Man, Two Guvnors. That comedy led to her casting and the director was delightfully surprised by the depth of Oetken’s abilities. She immediately established clear characterizations for Maud by using a stiff posture and stern voice. Initially, the vocal dynamics between Maud and Victoria weren’t enough to differentiate them. Honerman offered the varying vocal qualities technique to help her
find a more distinct voice for Maud in particular. As the overbearing mother-in-law, it was decided that she should have a air about her that put her above all the others. Oetken took the technique and characterization and developed a blended throaty and harsh voice that gave a strong sense of menace from Maud.

As Victoria, Oetken relied on her habitual vocal quality to embody the character. As a graduate student, she had a strong sense of character analysis and felt comfortable expressing the character’s strengths of intellect and parenting. While her relationship with Prior’s Lin played well, there were moments where it appeared to be forced. Some of the motivations for her to connect with Lin were lost and this fault can be placed on Honerman for not providing further coaching to clarify them. One such moment included the argument with Lin about whether or not to move into a house with Betty. While Oetken understood the emotions of the scene, she didn’t connect the blocking to the text. In this instance, it should have been the director’s duty to clarify the blocking and provide the motivation behind it. Regardless of some of these moments, Oetken created a well-rounded performance that exemplified the play’s central idea of self-identity ownership.

Zac Gaulke’s performance as Harry Bagley and Martin became disarmingly charming. Gaulke has an affable air about him which the director felt would work best for the role of Martin. This quality also worked in Harry Bagley’s favor as well, but also hindered part of his development. Ultimately, the director would have liked Harry Bagley to be more respectable in his physical presentation and be able to shift into a suave wordsmith. Gaulke instead provided a stern attitude, when need be, and more relaxed flirtation with the other characters. This approach to the character made him
more relatable for the audience and edged into a somewhat broader comedic take on
some of Harry Bagley’s more intimate moments. The shocking moment where he
embraces Clive became instantly comedic because of the endearing quality of Gaulke’s
performance. The director worked with Gaulke to focus more on the rigidness of the
character to provide more of a contrast to his lascivious relationships with Betty, Edward
and Joshua. Much of that work came through and he was able to create many humorous
moments throughout the first act.

Gaulke’s performance as Martin was a much more realistic, well-rounded
color. Martin is difficult to portray because of his inherent misogynistic tendencies
that he is unaware of. Gaulke handled the role with care and never pushed him into the
obvious caricature that he could have been, similar to Clive in Act 1. By showcasing an
honest belief in what he was saying, he was able to make Martin empathetic and still
laughable.

Joseph subverted the director’s expectations by providing a strong audition,
displaying an intrinsic drive and strong sense of character. This drive proved to be
essential in his development as an actor and the development of the characters of Joshua
and Gerry. Through many conversations with the director, it was noted that there was
cern with playing Joshua and a desire to not portray him in a way that would cause
direct offense. The results were a character who appeared to be flat and lacking in
emotional depth. The director worked with Joseph to understand the satire of the
character and pushed him to explore the comedy of contrast by “putting on a mask” for
Clive and letting it fall away whenever he was not present. Joseph took this idea and
found that it helped provide a more genuine nature to the character when Clive was off stage. The contrast then helped to set up other actors for moments of humor. One great example of this is when Joshua quite cheerfully shouted that “Jesus will protect us!” and Belt’s Clive was able to then hesitantly respond with, “He will indeed and I’ll also get you a weapon” (Churchill Cloud 18). Joseph’s strengths in the first act were as a supporting player to add to the commentary of the play but not exaggerate it.

Joseph seemed to be much more comfortable in the role of Gerry. He understood the character rather well and attacked Gerry’s monologues with passion. He, similar to Prior, is a younger actor and lacked some more advanced techniques that would help him raise the level of his performance. Honerman discussed the use of gesture at length with him to give him new thoughts on how to deliver the two large monologues. As he explored a variety of gestures, he built the monologues up to engaging stories rather than recitations. The only quality that the director would have liked to see more of was the grit of the character. As a man who constantly sought hook-ups and treated his partner with a sense of disdain, Joseph could have made Gerry more unlikeable at the beginning of the act to show a greater journey through loneliness by the end of it.

Along with the actors’ development throughout the process, the design elements helped shape the world of the production. The scenic design is the first element that the audience engaged with. As stated in Chapter I, the production was staged in the Andreas Theatre in the shallow thrust configuration. The space is significantly smaller in reality than it appears to the eye in a drafted ground plan. The director originally wanted to simply use two matching benches and an upstage ground row that reflected the foliage of
the two locations. Scenic Designer Emma Murphy’s research on the two periods was thorough and the most interesting take-away was that there were two trees that were indigenous to Africa and London that looked remarkably similar. This became the basis for the background of the design and she then added a small platform to function as either a verandah or park gazebo. Through the director’s urging, she designed foliage that would be placed in front of the upstage platform to give a stronger sense of location. The Act 1 pieces would resemble African rainbow grass and the Act 2 pieces would be trimmed hedges. Lastly, the floor treatment needed to evoke the sensation of grass.

In execution, the set worked well for its simplicity but had several inconsistencies. The platform worked well to mix the two worlds of the play. Unfortunately, it made no clear statement as to what it was or why it was necessary. Discussions in production meetings included the possibility of railings being mounted for one act to better represent the space but they were abandoned later in the process. The trees were a nice element of the design to show the similarities between Africa and London. Their two-dimensional, somewhat cartoonish look, however, did not add to the realism of Act 2. Additionally, this problem carried into the foliage in front of the platforms. The Act 1 look was painted grass flats that matched the aesthetic of the set, but in Act 2 they were replaced with realistic appearing hedges. The use of the synthetic hedges disrupted the look of the trees and left the design feeling inconsistent.

Murphy was also in charge of the prop design for this production. The props needed were few and she did a fine job with preparing them, but a few items could have had more attention. The first was the wedding cake in Act 1, Scene 5. The cake was a
simple three-tiered cake that had been painted white. The director felt that something was missing, and a frosting trim was added. The trim was merely gold paint that had been added and it looked rather sloppy. Additionally, the director was told a frosted flower would be placed on top to give it more character. That decorative element was never added. The other major issue with props was Cathy’s bag in Act 2, Scene 1. The initial bag was a simple black backpack that was not of the period. Honerman requested that it be replaced with a bag that would look more like a young girl would own it. The result was an even more contemporary backpack with a pink geometrical pattern that was used at the final dress rehearsal. The backpack was replaced with a retro style pink backpack that Honerman found. The other props worked well by adding to the production in a way that didn’t take focus.

The costume design by Dena Schedivy was nicely executed. The challenge of the play is initially the period styles, but the real task is the cross-gender characters. The designs for them were clear and then it was up to the casting process to determine how the designs may be altered. Schedivy was able to stay true to her initial designs but just altered the sizes that were needed. The first act costumes were designed to be accurate representations of the period and the finished products were mostly pulled from stock. Christopherson’s costume came from stock and was altered slightly by adding padding in the bust and bustle to create a more feminine silhouette. Schedivy’s designs for Act 2 were also true to the period and her final looks were again pulled from stock. The one exception was Belt’s dress for Cathy. Her design was a simple pink dress with enlarged sleeves and buttons. Due to Belt’s impressive physical stature, the dress was built to
exaggerated levels including extra large sleeves and over-sized buttons. What could have been a clownish costume was built to an appropriately proportional size to support the actor rather than overshadow him. The one misstep in the final execution of the design was putting Christopherson and Joseph in similar colored red shirts for the second act. This made them blend together more than the director would have liked because it appeared that they lost their individuality. Overall, the design truly came to life and added to the characters’ representations.

The lighting and sound designs were both executed well and added to the environments of the play. Hedman’s lighting design reflected the director’s desire to showcase changing times of day and the foliage of the settings through the use of gobos. Through the tech rehearsal process, Hedman had been very receptive to the director’s notes and developed scene change looks that helped establish their beginnings and endings. Real successes came in the form of the colors used to establish the time of day. Hedman achieved clear dusk and dawn looks by using muted oranges and purples. Act 2, Scene 3 was an unexpected delight to see. The scene takes place during a late night “orgy” and the ghost of Lin’s brother appears. The lighting was used in a way to highlight the brother but kept him in a slightly backlit down light special creating a shadow effect on his face to enhance the ghost-like appearance.

The same process of easy communication was true of Jensen’s sound design. The development of the soundscape throughout the play helped establish location from scene to scene. The ambient sound was never intrusive and highlighted the text. Sounds of birds, animals and children supported moments where characters described being in the
open air or amidst children playing. Jensen also added the idea that the second act scene shift sounds follow an established cue from the turning of a radio dial during the act’s opening radio announcer. With each scene beginning with a radio dial shift and a song, it established the idea that thoughts were changing and there was a searching quality that paralleled the characters’ journeys. The two designers worked well together to blend the two elements together for cohesive environments.

Along with the sound design was original music by Sam Verdick. Verdick contributed music for three songs which included “Gather Round for England,” “A Boy’s Best Friend is His Mother” and “Cloud Nine.” Churchill wrote the lyrics for the first and third song and the other song is an old traditional song. At the director’s urging, all the song’s received original music from Verdick to create a unified style. Verdick’s approach to the opening number was to make it an anthem. This worked very well in establishing the mood of the play and juxtaposing the reverence of pride to the irony of the casting. In a fault of Honerman’s, “A Boy’s Best Friend is His Mother” seemed to carry on for too long. A verse, or even two, should have been cut to shorten the moment for conciseness and maintaining the pace of the play. Where Verdick succeeded most was in his disco dance beat that was perfectly period for “Cloud Nine.” Taking inspiration from The Temptations song, “Cloud Nine,” Verdick crafted a song that felt exhilarating and infectious. The music added to the world that the characters were inhabiting and Verdick had a strong understanding of how the music could enhance scenes rather than become the focus.
The technical direction from Jason Wagaman and stage management by Ethan Hayes were both executed effectively. Wagaman kept the director informed of the progress throughout his build so that rehearsals could be planned effectively. There were no major issues in the set construction and pieces came together quickly with all elements in a performance ready state. As for Hayes’s experience as a stage manager, he handled the process efficiently and professionally. As a first-time stage manager, he was learning the entire process on the job. The director was quite impressed with his detailed organization of cast announcements, blocking and line notes and production meeting minutes. While the minutes and rehearsal reports seemed sparse, all of the information was contained in a concise, detailed structure. One problem that Hayes will continue to work on is the command of cue-calling. On a night-to-night basis, there would be at least one miscalled cue. He informed the director that this occurred due to two factors: the first being that the cues were marked incorrectly in his prompt script and the second was that the board operators felt that they knew the cues well enough and would run them without waiting for the calls. By performances, these issues had been corrected and Hayes kept the production on schedule.

This production featured two additional elements that the director has had little experience with. The first is choreography. Honerman does not claim that choreography is a strength of his. With minimal dance experience, he relied on the use of stylized movement and gestures to create an interesting moment to enhance the music. The songs did not require more than this simplified style, with the exception of “Cloud Nine,” which could have become a strangely juxtaposed dance number in the more realistic second act.
The director would certainly adjust some of the choreography to make more stylized choices to enhance Churchill’s text for the audience. The second component of the production the director has done minimal work with is stage dialects. It was a welcome experience to put to use the training he had received the previous summer. By working with the dialect and needing to learn the correct sound substitutions, the director was forced to become better at his craft to help coach actors.

Ultimately, while there is a level of success and failure in the execution of the production, it is the director’s responsibility to ensure that the collaborative vision of the production team is achieved. Honerman had opportunities to make adjustments to some of the design elements during the run, or even at final dress rehearsals. Choosing not to address them was a decision made out of the fleeting nature of theatre and knowing that the production had a short run. The director recognizes his role in the collaborative communication process and is still developing within those skills. Learning when to keep pushing for what is wanted and when to step back has been a valuable lesson.

The director’s objective with the play was for the audience to be engaged through laughter at the absurd strictures that people place on themselves or let others impose on them. Through that laughter they will hopefully engage in self-reflection and acceptance of self-identity. Through observation of the audience on a nightly basis, it was clear that the humor of the play was effective, and the striking moment of self-reflection occurred during Betty’s final monologue. Many theatregoers have approached the director since the production has closed and remarked that they enjoyed the play and went home discussing it or thinking about it. In this response, the production was a success.
CHAPTER V

PROCESS DEVELOPMENT

Preceding admission to the Master of Fine Arts program at Minnesota State University, Mankato, the director worked primarily in educational theatre settings. These experiences included working with high school students on their early acting and theatrical development and collegiate undergraduate students studying theatre and speech communication. Working in educational theatre shaped the director’s approach to direction and the craft of storytelling. It has also invigorated the desire for continued education and development of his skills as a director. This chapter will focus on the foundation established for Seth M. Honerman as a director and an examination of how the classes, projects and assistantship duties have further developed his skills.

The director’s role while working with high school students was to establish a foundation of theatre for students that would not experience it in a classroom setting. Through the production of school plays, the director was able to teach basic acting technique, stage craft and theatre etiquette in a hands-on process that allowed the students and the director to learn from each other. While the students learned the basics, the director learned lessons on communication and was able to hone blocking and composition skills. Working with students in an extracurricular setting was also a challenge in navigating effective use of rehearsal time and working to ensure that a quality product was created with a minimal allotment of time and monetary budgets.
Additionally, it taught the director important lessons on the effectiveness of negotiation and creating positive relationships to foster beneficial interactions for the future.

Effective time management would often be a struggle to ensure that all students involved were getting enough rehearsal time. This process was also paralleled in the director’s experience at the collegiate level. Those productions were performed at a small state university that had a small theatre department that frequently used students outside of the program to fill casting requirements. The director’s role was to bridge the differences between theatre majors and non-majors to create a cohesive production that effectively told the story the director desired. The skills learned in the high school environment assisted with communicating thoughts and theatre background to non-major students and work with majors allowed the director to focus on acting coaching to enhance character development and technique.

The coursework for the pursuit of the Master of Fine Art has been an exciting and educational experience. Through the Advanced Directing courses, the director was allowed to work on five small pieces to hone specific skills. In professor Heather Hamilton’s course, the focus was on two ten-minute scenes and a twenty-minute cutting. In *Unnamed Lands* by Nicholas Sawin, he was able to focus on character relationships and the varying tactics that are used to navigate difficult conversations. The direction of *I Hate Hamlet* by Paul Rudnick gave the director an opportunity to hone skills in composition and blocking in the style of farce. A cutting of *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* by John Cameron Mitchell and Stephen Trask was used to focus on text analysis and use
of lyric to tell the intended story. These scenes received immediate feedback that proved to be valuable insights from both peers and the instructor.

In continuing the education provided from Hamilton’s Advanced Directing I, professor Paul J. Hustoles introduced new thoughts and concepts in Advanced Directing II. The course focused on short twenty-five-minute scenes but included smaller projects to develop the director’s skills. These smaller projects included works by Sam Shepard and Harold Pinter and focused on establishing a story and rhythm and pace. Having a strong understanding of these tools will help the director to create more engaging and dynamic plays. Additionally, a period styles project forced the director to examine an unfamiliar script and effectively direct it to fit the period in which it was written. This project is especially helpful for a director that will be pursuing a career in education. Educational theatre tends to be one of the primary sources of period style productions because it provides students the opportunity to learn the foundations of their craft.

The course track that has proven to be most beneficial in developing communication skills with a production team has been the Design for Directors courses. At the time of this writing, the director is in the process of sound design and has completed work in scene, lighting and costume design. Having a better understanding of color theory proved handy in establishing the style of *Melancholy Play* and recognizing when certain colors would help accentuate themes in *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*. Through the process of learning the foundations of each design area, the director is better equipped to have more collaborative conversations with his designers. Additionally, they provide the director with enough skills to begin designing projects of his own if a
designer is unavailable. These courses have provided an educational opportunity and will continue to do so as the director works with a variety of designers with varying degrees of experience.

To continue the development of this collaborative communication, the Designer/Director Communication Seminar focused on the director playing each role of a production team. This course forced the student to be open to communicating directorial and design ideas over the course of seven faux productions. Through the skills learned in the Design for Director courses, text analysis and cohesive design ideas were further developed. The course focused on providing and understanding a clear director’s concept so that a production team could effectively create a unified production.

Theatre Speech II was an extremely beneficial course that allowed the director to better understand the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) and its use in proper stage speech. Through projects designed to examine the range of the voice and its qualities, the director has been able to put elements of inflection and emphasis into his course objectives with Acting for Everyone. As the director has grown in acting coaching, many of the skills taught in this course have been useful tools to assist actors. In the coaching process of Cloud 9, the director was able to utilize the various vocal qualities to help differentiate characters that actors were doubling. The projects also aided the director’s experience of performance and continued to push him to explore his own capabilities to better communicate with actors as they find their full range of abilities.

Following Theatre Speech II were Stage Dialects I and II. These courses explore ten commonly used dialects for the stage and at the time of this writing, the director is
learning the seventh, Italian. Continuing the education of the IPA, the courses focus on transcribing text to a standard American pronunciation and then applying phonetic substitutions to create a standard dialect. Using the IPA as a basis for the class helped to make the skill objective, rather than subjective, and reinforced the director’s abilities of transcription. Having a working knowledge of the dialects has allowed the director to become a stronger coach for his actors by being able to provide instant feedback on dialect work. This process was just utilized as the director coached the British dialect for his production of *Cloud 9*.

Stage Combat was a nice reminder of the safety and precautions taken in the theatre to create a realistic story while attending to the needs of protecting performers. The variety of combat techniques also provided the director with new tools to use for incorporation throughout future productions. *Melancholy Play* and *Cloud 9* featured choreographed fights in a farcical style that drew attention to the technique of proper combat. Combat can be carefully explored in the rehearsal process and learning proper techniques has provided the opportunity to continue choreographing. Additionally, the director feels that as intimacy continues to become a focused discussion in productions, it could be added as a subsection of combat. The purpose for this is to destigmatize the ideas of intimacy and show that it is meant to be a choreographed moment as well.

Advanced Acting Techniques provided the director with an extensive variety of tools to use with actors as they develop characters. Vocal qualities were further explored in this course as well as psychological centers and anthropomorphizing. The units on gestures and rhythm were also very helpful in establishing emphasis for actors. These
skills proved useful in coaching actors in Honerman’s production of *Cloud 9* to give varied approaches to each actor’s different characters between acts.

Theatre History I provided an excellent opportunity to refresh the significance of theatre in historical context and the development of the art form. Learning about the six elements of tragedy put text analysis into a new perspective and boosted critical thinking about the variety of plays that are written. Different forms of theatre were also learned, providing the opportunity to look at the influences of other theatre on Western theatre and the assimilation of them (e.g., Japanese bunraku puppetry in productions such as *The Lion King* and *Frozen*).

Theatre History II continued to provide new insight on various aspects of theatre. The course was also designed to focus on the changing styles used in theatre and their development. By examining the history of romanticism, realism, absurdism and many more, the director was given new skills to analyze scripts. Additionally, the class was designed to function as an educational opportunity for graduate students to implement differentiated instruction. In small groups, the focus was on focused instruction to aid in the development of study skills and comprehension with undergraduate students. A full day presentation on any significant person or element of theatre history allowed for experience in engaging a large class in lecture format. These educational opportunities allowed for personal growth in lesson planning.

Theatre Research served as one of three graduate student only courses and promoted the significance of continuing education. New historicism became the basis of the course as the director thoroughly researched four topics for formal papers. This
process of researching current topics to find answers to difficult questions posed in the field of theatre provided an engaging opportunity to focus on individual interests as well as their significance to the theatre community. This course additionally focused on improving student writing skills to aid in the process of seeking publication.

In addition to the focused contemporary research in Theatre Research, Dramaturgy provided contextualized research for specific plays. Learning the process of dramaturgy was critical for a director because it enhanced the pre-production analysis process. Learning the important topics to a script and being able to present them clearly for cast, crew and production team helped enhance intrinsic knowledge and collaborative communication.

Theatre Theory and Criticism served as another graduate student only course that focused on developing an appreciation of theatre’s development and its potential future. This discussion-based course forced the director to be open to varying opinions and philosophies. Through these discussions, new ideas were formed on the importance of art and the necessity to continue to provide it for the public through any means.

A significant difference from the program at Minnesota State Mankato is that the director had no previous experience with production meetings. During Honerman’s first project, Sarah Ruhl’s *Melancholy Play*, he was exposed to the process of communicating his conceptual ideas to a production team for the first time. The process was very enlightening and encouraged the director to focus on his communication approach to clearly identify his needs and wants in the design components of the show. The process
was far from smooth but allowed him to learn through mistrials and gain more confidence in sharing ideas and thoughts with designers.

Honerman’s major project, *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* by John Cameron Mitchell and Stephen Trask, marked a turning point in his preparation. The project was scheduled for early in the fall semester and required careful and thoughtful organization to be mounted in less than three weeks. This organization led to a strong collaborative process to create a unique experience. The play earned several recognitions for the design work at the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival Region V festival, including a special collaborative award for the entire production team.

In addition to the directing projects in fulfillment of the master’s degree, Honerman worked on several out-of-area acting projects and one in-area dramaturgy project. The first acting role was in Hustoles’s production of *The Aeneid* by Olivier Kemeid, translated by Maureen Labonte, as Achmaenides. This role provided the opportunity to portray a featured character along with participating in an ensemble-based performance. The ensemble nature of the play was intended to create scenes using minimal scenery and the actors in a way that would support the primary focus of the scene. Hustoles taught the director many lessons about how to effectively communicate with actors to reach desired results and how to use inventive staging with minimal sets to create a variety of settings.

The second acting role was as King Duncan in Hamilton’s production of William Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*. It quickly became an impassioned role to show the care of a king who attempted to unite a people. As an actor, Honerman appreciated the care with
which Hamilton handled the scheduling of the production to best use the cast’s time. Additionally, the passion she showed carried through to the cast and encouraged the best out of performances.

The process of a dramaturg is different for every production and Honerman had the opportunity to work with Hustoles on his production of *Peter and the Starcatcher* by Rick Elice. The process included thorough research of the period of the play, the period of the author, the intricacies of piracy and, per the director’s concept, the late Victorian period focusing on childhood experiences. In addition to the research completed, work was done to provide actors with a glossary of important terms, thematic research and analysis and in-depth character analysis. While Honerman did not work with the actors directly in rehearsal, he did work with the production team in preparation of design elements. Additionally, a lobby display was created for the audience to engage with the play before they entered the theatre.

As part of the Graduate Assistantship, working as a Box Office Manager has provided Honerman with opportunities to focus on more of the managerial aspects of directing including scheduling and training, critical thinking and customer service. Managing a staff of ten undergraduate students requires focus on effective time management to ensure that the box office is properly staffed and that the staff is knowledgeable about the policies and procedures that they will be utilizing to best serve patrons. Customer service for the box office involves a great deal of communication with the patrons and discussion about the season and what their interests are. These
conversations improved his understanding of how the patrons receive a variety of works and can provide useful insight into season selection for future jobs.

In addition to the box office, Honerman works as an instructor for THEA 101, Acting for Everyone, a course offered as a general elective course. The director has a background in education and possesses a Master of Science in Education Studies which has served as a benefit in developing lessons plans with clear objectives and learning outcomes. The course is geared towards teaching theatre basics and etiquette to students who have minimal experience in theatre and developing strong communication skills. The director focuses on understanding goals, tactics and conversing with one another in daily situations and for future career paths. The most common student is an elementary education major, and it is easy to apply these principles to their profession. Working with these students continues to refresh the director’s acting skills and develop new approaches in teaching to ensure that objectives are being met.

The course of study at Minnesota State Mankato has certainly furthered the skills and knowledge Honerman possesses and will continue to grow as he completes the degree. At the time of this writing, only the internship and the completion of three more courses are needed for conference of a degree. The goal of earning the Master of Fine Arts is to provide outstanding educational opportunities and the director feels that the more he learns, the more prepared he is for future employment.
Mon. Aug. 26 – 4:00p.m. – Auditions
Tue. Aug. 27 – 6:35-10:00p.m. – Introduction to intimacy, dialect, and the play
Wed. Aug. 28 – 6:35-10:00p.m. – Block Act One
Thu. Aug. 29 – 6:35-10:00p.m. – Block Act Two
Fri. Aug. 30 – 6:35-10:00p.m. – Review show

Mon. Sept. 2 – 6:35-10:00p.m. – Off book/work Act One
Tue. Sept. 3 – 6:35-10:00p.m. – Off book/work Act Two
Wed. Sept. 4 – 6:35-10:00p.m. – Run show (Designer run)
Thu. Sept. 5 – 6:35p.m.-10:00p.m. – Work TBA
Fri. Sept. 6 – 6:35p.m.-10:00p.m. – Run show

Sun. Sept. 8 – 6:35p.m.-10:00p.m. – Work Act One
Mon. Sept. 9 – 6:35p.m.-10:00p.m. – Work Act Two
Tues. Sept. 10 – 6:35p.m.-10:00p.m. – Run show (Publicity Photo Call)
Wed. Sept. 11 – 6:35p.m.-10:00p.m. – Run/work show
Thu. Sept. 12 – 6:35p.m. Call; 7:00p.m. – Light/Sound Tech
Fri. Sept. 13 – 6:35p.m. Call; 7:00p.m. – 1st Tech
Sat. Sept. 14 – 6:35p.m. Call; 7:00p.m. – 2nd Tech

Sun. Sept. 15 – 6:35p.m. Call; 7:30p.m. – 1st Dress
Mon. Sept. 16 – 6:35p.m. Call; 7:30p.m. – 2nd Dress
Tues. Sept. 17 – 6:35p.m. Call; 7:30p.m. – Majors Preview
Wed. Sept. 18 – 6:35p.m. Call; 7:30p.m. – Opening
Thu. Sept. 19 – 6:35p.m. Call; 7:30p.m. – 2nd Performance (Photo call following)
Fri. Sept. 20 – 6:35p.m. Call; 7:30p.m. – 3rd Performance
Sat. Sept. 21 – 6:35p.m. Call; 7:30p.m. – Closing Performance/Strike to follow
APPENDIX B

POSTER

CLOUD 9
By Caryl Churchill

SEPT. 18-21, 2019
7:30 P.M.
ANDREAS THEATRE

MSUTheatre.com

507-389-6661

A member of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System. Minnesota State University, Mankato is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity University. Individuals with a disability who need a reasonable accommodation to participate in this event, please contact the Department of Theatre & Dance at 507-389-3861 (T), 507-389-3974 (TTY). This document is available in alternative format to individuals with disabilities by calling the Department of Theatre & Dance at the above numbers.
2019-2020 MAINSTAGE SEASON

Arsenic & Old Lace
Oct. 10-13 & 18-20, 2019

Shakespeare in Love
Oct. 31-Nov. 2 & Nov. 7-10, 2019

A Doll's House
Jan. 30-Feb. 2 & Feb. 5-9, 2020

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time
Feb. 20-22 & Feb. 27-Mar. 1, 2020

Mamma Mia!
April 9-11 & 16-19, 2020

2019-2020 STUDIO SEASON

Cloud 9
Sept. 18-21, 2019

Nocturne
Nov. 22-24, 2019

A Doll's House, Part 2
Mar. 21, 26, 28, 2020

Going to See the Elephant
March 20, 27, 29, 2020

Black Comedy
April 24-25, 2020

2019-2020 DANCE CONCERTS

Fall Dance Concert
Dec. 6 & 7, 2019

Spring Dance Concert
May 1 & 2, 2020

THEATRE & DANCE FACULTY AND STAFF

Scott Anderson
Costumer

Matthew Caron
Managing Director

Corrie Eggeman
Public Relations Director

George Grubb
Technical Director; Sound Design

Heather L. Hamilton
Acting and Directing

Paul J. Hustoles
Chair; Acting and Directing

Julie Kerr-Berry
Director of Dance

David McCaul
Costume Design

John David Paul
Scene Design

Steven Smith
Lighting Design

Daniel Stark
Dance Technique and Composition

Nick Wayne
Musical Director
I like to read. It takes me a long time to get through some of the things I read, while others take me no time at all. Then I read things that make me stop and think, really think about the message that they are trying to convey. Caryl Churchill’s Cloud 9 became all of them combined. I sped through it the first time, then I took my time to learn more about it. I wanted to figure out what Churchill wanted me to take away from the script. It seemed so serious in tone and yet incredibly humorous. The question became how do I honor the script?

It turns out that if you take a step back and let the words speak for themselves, you honor the playwright and their intentions. Churchill’s play first premiered in 1979. She wrote it as a means to express that there is a need for people to be open about themselves, even in the face of adversity. Through the development of the script with the Joint Stock Theatre Company, she decided to set the play in Victorian colonial times to highlight the oppressive societal standards on sexuality, race, and family responsibilities. Act two provides its own commentary on people’s independence.

The journey to personal well-being can be long and difficult. The play follows one family over time. As they encounter new personal obstacles, they discover more about themselves. In a particularly revealing moment, Betty, perhaps the play’s main protagonist, states, “I felt triumphant because I was a separate person.” Learning how to express herself and feel at home in her body is exactly what Churchill wants for her audiences. Of course, all of this sounds serious. It certainly is, but it’s also important to understand when to laugh at the absurdity of it all. Sit back, relax, laugh and feel better knowing that there is only one you and that you can be anything you want to be.

- Seth M. Honerman

CAST
Clive Cathy...................... Trevor Belt
Betty Edward.......... Ryan Christopherson
Edward/Betty............... Megan Fischer
Maud Victoria............ Lindsey Oetken
Ellen/Mrs. Saunders Lim..... Lydia Prior
Harry Martin.................. Zac Gaulke
Joshua Gerry................. Braden Joseph

SETTING
ACT I:
British Colonial Africa, Victorian Era

ACT II:
London, 1979

Original Music by
Sum Verdick

PRODUCTION STAFF
Seth M. Honerman
Director

Ethan Hayes
Production Stage Manager

Emma Catherine Murphy
Scenic Design

Dena Schefsky
Costume Design

Ryan Redman
Lighting Design

Kyle W. Jensen
Sound Design

Jason Waggans
Technical Director

Aria Smith
Assistant Stage Manager

Jerry Hines
Light Board Operator

Aurora Severson
Sound Board Operator

Paul J. Hustoles
Steven Smith
Faculty Advisors

Cloud 9 is presented through special arrangements with Samuel French
550 Park Avenue South
Fifth Floor
New York City, NY 10003

SIX
The Director is an Associate Member of STAGE DIRECTORS AND CHOREographers SOCIETY a national theatrical labor union.

MINNESOTA STATE
Alliance for the Arts Mainstreet Mankato
A member of Minnesota State
Clive (Trevor Belt), a British Colonist patriarch presides over his family (Braden Joseph, Lindsey Oetken, Lydia Prior, Megan Fisher and Ryan Christopherson in Africa. (Photograph by Corrie Eggimann).
Clive (Trevor Belt) breaks from Victorian morality as he engages in sexual exploits with Mrs. Saunders (Lydia Prior).
(Photograph by Corrie Eggiman).
Joshua (Braden Joseph) pulls a gun on Clive (Trevor Belt) at a disastrous wedding for Harry Bagley (Zac Gaulke) and Ellen (Lydia Prior). Betty (Ryan Christopherson) and Maud (Lindsey Oetken) observe Clive and the couple respectively, while Edward (Megan Fisher) looks to see if anyone else will notice.

(Photograph by Corrie Eggimann).
Cathy (Trevor Belt) tries on Betty’s (Megan Fisher) earrings, much to the chagrin of her mother Lin (Lydia Prior). (Photograph by Victoria Finger).
Victoria (Lindsey Oetken) embraces her bisexuality with Lin (Lydia Prior) while bemoaning her husband Martin.
(Photograph by Victoria Finger).
Victoria (Lindsey Oetken, Lin (Lydia Prior) and Edward (Ryan Christopherson) bring Martin (Zac Gaulke) into their orgy.
(Photograph by Corrie Eggimann).
Betty (Megan Fisher) recalls the moment she felt “there is somebody there.”
(Photograph by Corrie Eggimann).
APPENDIX E

STANDARD BRITISH DIALECT STUDY GUIDE

CLOUD 9

A DIALECTS STUDY GUIDE

A Brief Introduction:

The British have many variations on the standard dialect, much like Americans. The most common stage dialect is the Standard Upper-Class Received Pronunciation (RP). This dialect hails from the Oxford and Cambridge elite. Along with the standard is the London variation. Not to be confused with the Cockney dialect, known to more lower-class British folk, the London dialect blends the two, to give a more relaxed sound to the voice.

Notes for Phonemic Substitution:

- Drop final “R” and “R” before another consonant.
- The schwa will substitute for many sounds, particularly dropped “R.”
- Terminal “R” is sounded when preceding an open vowel.
- Note the use of father “A.”
- Make use of “hand” “A.”
- “O” is often subbed with an “aw” sound.
- Terminal “Y” is often substituted with “eh.”
- Drop the vowel before “RY.”
- Add the liquid “J.”
- Pronounce the “I” in “either” and “neither.”
- “Been” is pronounced like “BEAN.”
- “Again” is pronounced as “aGAIN.”


“An Interview with Michael Kahn.” *YouTube,* uploaded by Studio Theatre, 12 Oct. 2016, www.youtube.com/watch?v=-O02eTwAUYs


