

Spring 5-12-2011

Lessons From Gilead: Producing a Student-Directed Musical at Western Kentucky University

Stephen G. Tabor

Western Kentucky University, stephen.tabor721@topper.wku.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/stu_hon_theses



Part of the [Theatre and Performance Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Tabor, Stephen G., "Lessons From Gilead: Producing a Student-Directed Musical at Western Kentucky University" (2011). *Honors College Capstone Experience/Thesis Projects*. Paper 300.
http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/stu_hon_theses/300

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by TopSCHOLAR®. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors College Capstone Experience/Thesis Projects by an authorized administrator of TopSCHOLAR®. For more information, please contact topscholar@wku.edu.

LESSONS FROM GILEAD: PRODUCING A STUDENT-DIRECTED MUSICAL AT
WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

A Capstone Experience/Thesis Project

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree Bachelor of Fine Arts with

Honors College Graduate Distinction at Western Kentucky University

By

Stephen G. Tabor

* * * * *

Western Kentucky University
2011

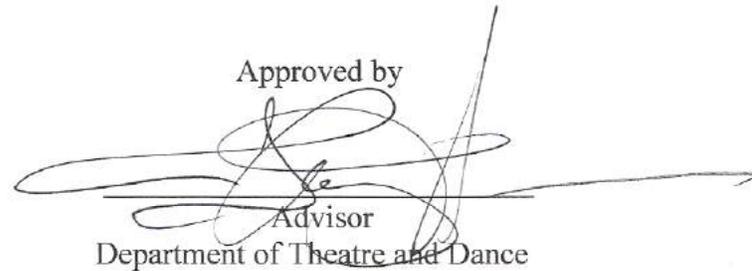
CE/T Committee:

Professor Tracey Moore, Advisor

Professor David Young, Ph.D.

Ms. Ami Carter

Approved by

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Advisor

Department of Theatre and Dance

Copyright by
Stephen G. Tabor
2011

ABSTRACT

In recent years there has been a surge of interest in directing musical theatre in the Department of Theatre and Dance at Western Kentucky University. Western's theatre department offers three directing classes and three musical theatre classes, but no class that teaches how to direct musical theatre. The Musical Theatre History and Repertoire class, however, provides students with the opportunity to present half-hour summaries of musicals, in order to experience the process of succinctly telling a story with scenes and songs. It is because of this class that I and many other students have taken an interest in the art of directing musical theatre. Unfortunately, as I mentioned, there is not a class that is able to focus on this particular craft, and while the professors are more than happy to assist students in their directing endeavors, there is little precedent for student-directed musicals at WKU. Therefore, with the intention to direct *The Spitfire Grill* as a part of the 2011 Advanced Performing Arts Studio Series, I decided that I would document my directing process, noting the challenges I encountered in preparation, the rehearsal process, and performance, and including the solutions I found to overcome them. It is my belief that the student directing musical theatre at Western Kentucky University will encounter problems similar to mine, and so it is my hope that he or she will be able to learn from my experience.

Keywords: Musical Theatre, Student Directing, Guidebook, *The Spitfire Grill*

Dedicated to my family, mentors, friends,
and future student directors of musical theatre.

Thank you, and good luck!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project is the culmination of five years of study in the Department of Theatre and Dance, and therefore, it is because of many professors, peers, and friends that it was possible. I would firstly like to thank my mother for always pushing me to excel, and for supporting me throughout my entire project and thesis experience. I also wish to acknowledge my friend and stage manager, Lusie Cuskey, without whom I could not have sanely completed my work.

So many teachers are responsible for the knowledge and experiences I now have, from Dr. Bill Leonard, who gave me my first opportunity to assistant direct, to Scott Stroot and Dr. Andy Grapko who instructed and guided me through my early years of directing. I would like to thank my department head and second reader, Dr. David Young, who has nurtured my desire to learn all I can about the dramatic arts in my time at Western. I appreciate his confidence in me to direct a musical and for constantly encouraging me (and pushing me) to write this thesis. His spontaneous pep talks and granola bars will be missed.

I wish to extend my immense gratitude toward the WKU Honors College for their grand financial support of this project. Theatre is a tough cookie to fund, and so I appreciate their support via the Honors Development Grant, which paid for my musicians, score rentals, and rehearsal accompanist.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank my primary advisor, professor, mentor, and friend, Tracey Moore, who not only first gave me a copy of *The Spitfire Grill* but

continued to see me through with the project and thesis until the very end. Her classroom teachings and office discussions were crucial to making me the artist I am today, and without her, I do not believe this work would have been possible. Thank you, and thank all of you. May this thesis reflect everything each of you has given to me.

VITA

September 5, 1988Born – Bowling Green, Kentucky

2006.....Greenwood High School, Bowling Green,
Kentucky

2007.....Performer at Public Theatre of Kentucky

2008.....Performer at Shenandoah Summer Music
Theatre, Virginia

2009.....Administrative Assistant to the Producing
Artistic Director of Arundel Barn
Playhouse, Maine

2010.....Dance in Culture Study Abroad in
Civitavecchia, Italy

2010.....Performer at The Round Barn Theatre,
Indiana

2011.....Graduate of Western Kentucky University

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Music Theatre and Directing

Minor Field: Dance

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Abstract.....	ii
Dedication.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Vita.....	v
List of Figures.....	viii
Introduction.....	1
Preparation.....	3
Chapter 1 Dramaturgical Analysis.....	3
Chapter 2 Financial Backing.....	9
Chapter 3 Collaboration.....	14
Chapter 4 Casting.....	20
Process.....	28
Chapter 5 Teaching the Music.....	28
Chapter 6 Blocking the Scenes.....	34
Chapter 7 Coaching the Actors.....	42
Performance.....	48
Chapter 8 Peer, Professor, and Performer Evaluations.....	48
Chapter 9 Self-Evaluation.....	53
Conclusion.....	57

Appendix.....	60
Maps of Gilead	61
Timeline of <i>The Spitfire Grill</i>	62
Proposal for the 2011 Studio Series	63
Production Calendar for <i>The Spitfire Grill</i>	67
Assistance with Royalites.....	68
Honors Augmentation Contract.....	70
Honors Development Grant Application.....	72
Honors Development Grant Letter	74
Honors Development Grant – CE/T Excellence Grant Application	75
Honors Development Grant – CE/T Excellence Grant Letter	77
List of Classes at WKU That Prepared Me to Direct <i>The Spitfire Grill</i>	78
Audition Notice for <i>Maggie the Pirate</i> and <i>The Spitfire Grill</i>	79
Audition Form for <i>The Spitfire Grill</i>	80
Callback Sheet for <i>The Spitfire Grill</i>	83
Cast List for <i>The Spitfire Grill</i>	84
Blocking Excerpt from <i>The Spitfire Grill</i>	85
Actor Evaluation of Directing #1	86
Actor Evaluation of Directing #2	87
Actor Evaluation of Directing #3	88
Personal Reflection of My Thesis	89
Bibliography	91

LIST OF FIGURES

<u>Figure</u>	<u>Page</u>
1.1 Itemized Budget Sheet for the Honors Development Grant Application.....	11
1.2 Itemized Budget Sheet for the CE/T Excellence Grant	12
2.1 One Actor on the Ground Plan of <i>The Spitfire Grill</i>	37
2.2 Two Actors on the Ground Plan of <i>The Spitfire Grill</i>	39
2.3 Eight Actors on the Ground Plan of <i>The Spitfire Grill</i>	40

INTRODUCTION

“I’ve circled on the map a place to start again, in the town of Gilead...”

~ Percy Talbott, *The Spitfire Grill*

I first read *The Spitfire Grill* three years ago after hearing a fellow student perform a song from the show. I was immediately taken in by its sincere story of hope and forgiveness. We humans carry a lot of baggage throughout our lives, and many of us have messy pasts spattered with regret and contempt. Yet, we press onward with the hope that things can get better, that there are people who love us through our mistakes, and that the dark closing of one day will provide a bright morning of second chances the next. This was a story that I wanted to share with the campus of Western Kentucky University and the community of Bowling Green.

As a double major in Music Theatre and Directing, I believed myself quite capable of directing this musical; however, it is unorthodox for students to direct full-length musicals at WKU. The only precedent in my time had been a student who directed a one-act musical with minimal production elements, and was quite successful. Unfortunately, he graduated, leaving behind no record of how he was able to get his show approved by the department, acquire additional funds for production, manage music and choreography, coach student actors, and so on.

I, therefore, decided I would direct this musical I had been longing to share and document my process from pre-production to finish, so that I might leave behind a sort of guide for future musical theatre directing students. Because my intention was to create a

record of my experiences and observations of the directing process, my project more closely resembles an ethnographic study (the community, in this case, being the WKU Theatre & Dance Department) than the conventional scholastic research paper normally submitted for an Honors CE/T. The research, therefore, comes from the application of five years of study in WKU's Theatre and Dance Department, with references to that education (and specific classes and writings) cited throughout the work. It is my firm belief that directing students should not limit themselves to the sort of methodical approach I developed as I encountered my problems. Rather, directing a show is about the journey, and it is my hope that students will be able to find their own way to Opening Night, using my experiences as a resource, even if just for the encouragement to know that directing a musical at Western Kentucky University is possible.

CHAPTER 1

PREPARATION: DRAMATURGICAL ANALYSIS

“It’s important to understand the totality of the life of the play and its inspiration. It is the best of all possible worlds when I give myself the time to understand that.”

~ Lloyd Richards, *The Director’s Voice*

I believe that preparation is one-third of directing. It is essential that a director know as much as he can about the work he is staging so that the factual and concrete truths of the play are firmly grounded when he, his designers, and his cast begin to explore the “what if”¹ of the show. Traditionally this involves a heavy amount of dramaturgical work², and fortunately for me, I had three years to prepare it. My first task was to trace the show back to its roots, which included researching the authors and production history of the show. Therefore, I researched the lives and careers of author and composer James Valcq and author and lyricist Fred Alley, as well as their

¹ Theatre relies heavily on the idea of *what if*, which is the English translation of a concept originated by Constantin Stanislavski. Constantin Stanislavski was a Russian actor and director whose technique was brought to the US where it was translated and codified in the writings and teaching of Lee Strasberg, Stella Adler, Bobby Lewis, and through the efforts of the Actors Studio in New York. Stanislavski Technique is generally accepted as the basis of good American acting technique and is the training offered at nearly every American university. *What if* is a reference to the infinite possibilities offered by the imagination: *What if* the actors wear tribal masks? *What if* we design a set in black and white? *What if* my character is pregnant? By keeping in mind this idea of *what if*, artists are able to maintain a (necessary) constant flow from the fountain of imagination. Robert Cohen, whose series of books on acting technique seeks to simplify Stanislavski Technique, puts it this way: “Imagination can be practiced, perhaps even taught, but it is an intrinsic aspect of every committed artist in the theatre” (163).

² *Dramaturgy* is a type of literary research that, in many professional theatres in other countries, is done by the literary manager or resident dramaturg. However, in America many directors prefer or are required to serve as their own dramaturgs, which involves examining the play for its historical context, analyzing the characters, and breaking script apart into smaller, workable sections for rehearsal.

collaborative history. While reading their biographies on *The Spitfire Grill* website I learned that both had been born and raised in Wisconsin, which is where the play takes place. I also looked into the Lortel Archives of *The Internet Off-Broadway Database* to examine the musical's history. I discovered that Playwrights Horizon produced the Off-Broadway production in 2001 – the same company that also originally produced *Violet* and *Once On This Island*, which were two musicals produced at WKU within the past three years. This was inspirational in a way because I knew how successful *Violet* and *Once On This Island* had been at Western, and so directing *The Spitfire Grill*, another Playwrights Horizon production, seemed like a smart move.

This kind of research can be tedious and easily taken for granted, but the trivial, seemingly insignificant facts can really add up to give the director a better perspective of the show he is mounting. For example, by recognizing that the musical *Violet* had also been produced by Playwrights Horizon, I was reminded of our own production at Western, of which I was fortunate to be a part. I noticed that the same folksy music style of *Violet* was also present in *The Spitfire Grill* and that they both relied on a similar orchestra, including mandolin, guitar, and keyboard. Another commonality is the way both shows take the musical theatre archetypal structure and reconfigure it to tell the story of a young girl who is not innocent but rather has a messy and complicated past and is looking for a new start. These worldly qualities found in such a young character are what make Percy in *Spitfire* and Violet in *Violet* nontraditional leading lady types. Both *Violet* and *The Spitfire Grill* are also shows in which the acting of the song supersedes the singing in order to more effectively tell the story; unlike, for example, Andrew Lloyd Webber's *The Phantom of the Opera* in which the singing can be more important than the

acting. Drawing these parallels between *Violet* and *Spitfire* gave me an insight that better prepared me to handle the singing and storytelling styles of my show.

After researching the show's history, my next step was to analyze the script itself and break it apart so that I could then synthesize the vision I wanted to create. This kind of research can also be grueling, but it is even more important to a director than the author/production history research. Research for this included examining the given circumstances of the play, such as the time and location in which the action takes place; recognizing the passage of time and change in location as they occur; creating a French scene guide³, which would establish every time a character enters or exits the scene; interpreting the language of the play, so as to understand the culture and class of the characters; analyzing each individual character and the relationship he or she has with the other characters; and much more. This information becomes *crucial* to a director so that when he is preparing his concept presentation⁴, he will be able to synthesize his findings to accurately reflect the world of the play and the people that live in that world. To have proper perspective on *The Spitfire Grill*, I went so far as to use context clues to actually locate the town of Gilead in Wisconsin, as if it were to really exist⁵. Having a location that could literally be labeled on a map was important to me because it made Gilead that much more of a real place, and since the town of Gilead plays such a large role in the

³ The term *French scene* refers to the convention used in many French neoclassical plays in which the playwrights would believe a scene finished when a character entered or exited the stage. Breaking up a play with this format allows a director to see the production as chunks and is useful when drawing up rehearsal schedules (Thomas 131).

⁴ A *concept presentation* is when a director presents his artistic vision for the show to the designers, stage manager, production manager, and sometimes artistic director, before any designs or rehearsals have begun. This helps put the entire production team on the same page.

⁵ Maps of Gilead seen in Appendix.

telling of the story, I felt it necessary to really define the location for myself, my designers, and my actors.

One of the significant themes I observed in *The Spitfire Grill* as I did my dramaturgical analysis was how history and time greatly affect each of the characters, the town, and ultimately, the climax of the play. As a result, I found it beneficial to construct a timeline⁶, which would serve, again, as a visual to help layer the history of Gilead and aid in setting the circumstances for where the characters are at the start of the play. I also took each character and broke him/her down into basic descriptors such as gender, age, personality, and in particular, vocal type because I knew that this establishing this data now would prove to be invaluable later at auditions⁷.

Other information I gleaned in my analysis included the amount of time (and seasons) over which the play takes place, the language style of the people of Gilead versus that of Percy, and the dramatic structure of the plot. Each of these would prove useful later on: my costume designer would benefit from knowing the seasons, my actors from knowing whether they were working with a dialect and if so, what kind, and I from knowing how to break up the show into workable chunks in order to set a production calendar⁸. Without a doubt, however, the largest benefit of doing my dramaturgical analysis was that I able to synthesize my research into a proposal for the 2011 Studio

⁶ Timeline seen in Appendix.

⁷ This type of work is called a *character breakdown*, or sometimes just *breakdown* for short. For professional auditions, sometimes this breakdown will be posted or published in order to attract the right performers to the auditions.

⁸ A production calendar is a schedule that “indicat[es] the start date for rehearsal, technical rehearsals, and performance dates for the show” (Ionazzi 35). It allows everyone involved with the production to see the grand scope of the rehearsal process. Production Calendar for *The Spitfire Grill* seen in Appendix.

Series⁹, whereupon the faculty could view my findings and assess whether I would be capable of directing *The Spitfire Grill* as part of the student-directed season.

My original proposal of *The Spitfire Grill* was “conditionally approved” by the theatre faculty because it branched outside the usual margins for studio show (Stroot, E-mail 9). There are certain parameters set by the Theatre and Dance Department to create a structured learning environment for the student director. Such restrictions include selecting a script that is a one-act play or whose runtime¹⁰ is not over an hour and whose cast size is less than ten actors; establishing a directing vision for the script, with minimal technical aspects¹¹; accepting the Gordon Wilson Lab Theatre as the performance space for the production; operating on a budget of \$100; and operating rehearsals within the weekday hours of 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Given that my show was a two-act play requiring music and heavy production elements, I was outside these parameters. However, the faculty agreed to fully approve my show if I agreed to “scale back my vision for lighting and scenery” and reduce runtime of the show to no more than ninety minutes (Stroot, E-mail 17). I agreed to these terms, noting to adjust my vision for lighting and scenery when meeting with my designers. More important was the matter of cutting the script and music to meet the runtime demands.

Dr. David Young, Head of the Department of Theatre and Dance, approximates the runtime for his musicals by simply allotting about a minute and a half of runtime per page. Applying this formula to the seventy-two-page script of *The Spitfire Grill*, the full

⁹ 2011 Studio Series Proposal seen in Appendix.

¹⁰ *Runtime* refers to how long one performance of the show will be. This may or may not include the length of the intermission.

¹¹ The department wants to ensure that a director will not ask for extremities for his production, like seven spotlights or thirty-two showgirl costumes with feather boas or a three-story house with a swimming pool.

production would run approximately one hour and forty-eight minutes. *Spitfire* is also a two-act play, and so I intended to include a ten-minute intermission. This meant I needed to cut anywhere between twenty to thirty minutes of script – a delicate process.

“Cutting dialogue, especially with authors whose pens run away with them, is, on occasion, necessary,” says John Miles-Brown in his book *Directing Drama*. “It must, however, be done with great care to maintain the completeness of the action and the fullness of character” (38-39). I, therefore, reread the script for songs and verses that could be cut without taking away from the story and managed to cut five songs and over six verses. The only song I struggled with cutting was a piece called “Diggin’ Stone” sung by the character Caleb. The song reveals much about Caleb’s past and gives the audience insight as to why he is who he is, and so my fear in cutting it was that Caleb’s character would lose depth and become flat and two-dimensional. I was worried that the audience would only perceive him as a stereotypical aggressive workingman and fail to sympathize with his real and human problems. Still, the song needed to be cut, and so I resolved that I would work closely with the actor playing Caleb to ensure that we would still present a well-rounded and believable character. Finally, after also trimming a few scenes, I had secured an approximate runtime of one hour and twenty-five minutes for my production of *The Spitfire Grill*.

I submitted my changes in script and vision to the faculty and on November 17, 2010, I received the following e-mail from Professor Scott Stroot: “Hi Stephen. Your revised S11 Advanced Performing Arts Studio proposal to direct a simplified adaptation of *The Spitfire Grill* has been approved...Congratulations.” My production of *The Spitfire Grill* had the green light to go!

CHAPTER 2

PREPARATION:

FINANCIAL BACKING

“Front money or seed money is hard to raise in the theater. Unless you're sitting on some giant corporate development fund, getting people to pay for early readings, workshops, etc. is hard, but that's the money that is oh so necessary.”
~ Ken Davenport, *The Producer's Perspective*

The question that always seems to come up, whether in the professional world of performing arts, community theatre, or the campus of Western Kentucky University is, of course, “Who will pay for it?” The Department of Theatre and Dance at Western produces shows that are entirely financially self-sufficient; that is to say that the department receives no budget from the university to assist them in mounting their productions, and therefore, the budget for the shows must come from the ticket sales of the previous season (Tutino). Student-directed productions typically have their royalties¹ covered by the department and are allotted a \$100 budget to be used for any technical needs such as costuming, props, and other things. However, unlike a straight play, a musical requires additional funds to pay for the higher royalty costs², score rentals,

¹ *Royalties* refer to the fees a theatre company pays for permission to produce a play. The theatre company may be charged per performance, a flat-rate, or even a percentage based on the ticket gross income.

² As an example of the cost difference between a straight play and a musical, it cost \$35 a performance to produce my first straight play, *When God Comes for Breakfast, You Don't Burn the Toast*. To produce *The Spitfire Grill* it cost \$75 a performance. At WKU it is the student's responsibility to collaborate with the Office Assistant for the Department of Theatre and Dance to estimate and acquire royalties for his show. Assistance with Royalties can be seen in Appendix.

librettos³, a rehearsal accompanist (if needed), and instrumentalists for technical rehearsals and performances. The costs, unfortunately, exceed the usual budget, and so it became my responsibility to obtain additional funding for the show in order to satisfy its needs.

The first the step I took towards achieving this goal was creating an itemized list of music needs and cutting it down to the essentials. I knew that we could not afford a music director for the show, and I did not feel comfortable collaborating with another theatre student, so I resolved to serve as both the stage director and the music director. While I felt this would be a daunting challenge, I also felt I was ready to embrace something of this nature, and, of course, it would save a significant deal of money. Continuing my quest to minimizing musical expenses, I examined a perusal score of *The Spitfire Grill* to determine which instruments in the orchestration were extraneous. The full orchestra for the show, according to the website of *Samuel French, Inc.*, consists of piano, cello, violin, accordion, and guitar/mandolin. Financial burden aside, I knew the idea of acquiring and fitting five instrumentalists into my performance space in the Gordon Wilson Lab Theatre was ludicrous, and so for a time I briefly considered cutting the orchestration down to two keyboards, which would double for the other instruments when needed, and a live guitar.

My music budget, at this point, boiled down to paying for two keyboardists and a guitar player, which could amount to anywhere from \$650 to \$850, so I sought financial assistance where it has proven faithful in the past. The WKU Honors College has always been highly supportive of student endeavors, and I hoped that this time would be no

³ A *libretto* refers to the book form of a musical or operetta, which contains all of the dialogue for the show and also includes the song lyrics in verse form.

different. I desired a Development Grant from the college, which would allow me the extra money I needed to mount my show. In order to do this, however, I needed to show the educational merit of what I was doing. I, therefore, devised an augmentation contract for the directing practicum, PERF 400: Advanced Performing Arts Studio, in which students directing for the Studio Series enroll to receive credit⁴. This qualified me to apply for an Honors Grant to assist me with my musical production⁵. After thoroughly examining my music budget, I had determined that I could cut one keyboard and thus, accomplish my music needs on approximately \$500:

Itemized List of Expenses:	Cost:
Recording Accompanist	\$100
Performance Accompanist	\$200
Guitar Player	\$200
Total Expense of Project:	\$500
Total Requested Funds:	\$500

Figure 1.1
Itemized Budget Sheet for the Honors Development Grant Application

A few weeks after submitting my grant application, I was both pleased and disappointed to receive a letter from the Honors College granting me \$225⁶. This was very generous of the college and was incredibly advantageous to my cause; however, I promised the faculty in my proposal that I would procure \$500, and I was determined to follow through on my intent. I sought to beseech the Honors College once more for financial assistance,

⁴ Honors Augmentation Contract is seen in Appendix.

⁵ Honors Development Grant Application is seen in Appendix.

⁶ Honors Grant Reception Letter is seen in Appendix.

and this time I decided I would pull from my potential thesis fund. I applied for a CE/T Excellence Grant⁷ with a request for \$650:

Itemized List of Expenses:	Cost:
Rehearsal Accompanist	\$300 (15 hrs at \$20 per hr.)
Vocal Scores	\$45 (5 scores at \$9 a piece)
Piano/Conductor Score Rental Fee	\$55
Guitar Score	\$200
Licensing Fee	\$300
Total Expense of Project:	\$900
Total Requested Funds:	\$600

Figure 1.2
Itemized Budget Sheet for the Honors Development Grant – CE/T Excellence Grant Application

What I had learned from my experience with my previous application is to include the total budget one anticipates for his project, regardless of whether the grant organization is paying for all of the items. In doing this, the organization may see the vision for the project and funds required and recognize what percentage they are contributing to that effort. This proved to be a more successful approach, for I received \$300 for my second grant, and this, in total, amounted to \$525, courtesy of the Honors College: \$25 more than I had promised the faculty.

Ultimately, I was able to acquire the necessary funds to finance the music portion of my student production⁸. In the professional world it does not typically fall to the

⁷ CE/T Excellence Grant see in Appendix.

⁸ The Honors College is an excellent source of funding for Honors students. However, the student director who is not affiliated with the Honors College can still seek funding elsewhere, such as the Student Government Association. Theatre students have been known to obtain funding from the Office of Diversity and even the Department of African American Studies. I would encourage the student to examine his show to see if there is any particular college, department, or organization it could have a strong

director to acquire funds in order to produces a show; rather, that is the responsibility of the producer (hence the name). However, it is not uncommon for a dedicated and freelance director who has no producer to raise money and find the necessary financial means in order to make his production a reality, and in an academic setting such as the one at WKU, it is this latter type of initiative that is necessary in order to produce a student-directed musical at Western Kentucky University.

connection to and seek out financial support from that sponsor. Finally, WKU's website lists many opportunities for grants and funding on campus, in the community, and in the region.

CHAPTER 3

PREPARATION:

COLLABORATION

“The play is a locked universe and each director finds her own key to it, and then leads the other contributing artists – designer, composers, actors – to find their own keys, harmonious with her own.”

~ Zelda Fichandler, *The Director's Voice*

More important than anything in a director's production, besides his vision, are those who will help him fulfill his vision. There is often a misconception among young directors (and even some actors) that a director is a dictator, delegating his designers and actors to fulfill his every wish and manifest his perfect vision. It is my belief, and has been my personal experience, that this is *false*. Theatre is a collaboration of artists to bring a playwright's work to life. The designers set the stage, the actors fill it, and the director ensures that it all supports the work of the playwright and unifies to accomplish his own vision. Martin Esslin goes so far as to call theatre “the most social of all artforms” and reminds us that “the playwright, the actors, the designer, the costume-maker, the provider of props, the lighting engineer all contribute” (33). Therefore, I knew I would need to assemble the strongest team I could to accomplish the challenge that lay before me. And for me, that assembly begins with the most important and thus far unmentioned member of a production team: the stage manager.

I casually define a stage manager as the backbone of a production. Daniel Ionazzi, however, gives the following definition of a stage manager in *The Stage Management Handbook*:

A stage manager is a leader, who is self-motivated and even-tempered, with the ability to anticipate and adapt to constantly changing conditions. Stage managers are dedicated to and responsible for every aspect of their productions without losing their sense of humor. They provide an efficient and organized work environment while remaining empathetic to the people and the process. And finally...stage management is art. A stage manager is as creative as any other member of the production (11).

The instant I learned my proposal to direct *The Spitfire Grill* had been approved I knew without a doubt the person I wanted to be the backbone of my production. Lusie Cuskey is not only my best friend but also a fellow Honors student majoring in Performing Arts in the Theatre and Dance Department at Western Kentucky University. I would like to note here that whenever there is a crossover between a personal and professional relationship there is always the risk of one or both of those relationships suffering. However, I knew Cuskey to have an incredible work ethic, excellent experience with the production process, and an eagerness to learn more about musical theatre. Additionally, because she is my friend, I knew that she had an acquired sense of how my mind works and understood my preference for organization enough to keep me and the production on track. Ultimately, because I was taking on such a large project, I wanted to know that the person managing my production would be thorough to a "T," and thus, I invited Cuskey to embark with me on the road to mounting *The Spitfire Grill*, and she agreed.

While it was a privilege and relief to select Cuskey as my stage manager, in the professional world directors are rarely given the luxury of selecting their production

team. In preparing its students for the professional world and striving for practical education, the Department of Theatre and Dance assigns designers to a director's production at Western Kentucky University. In past productions I've directed, working with inexperienced designers was as much of a challenge as working with the actors. Fortunately, I was blessed to have wonderful and gifted designers who were also excited about producing this show: Anne Essex as Scenic Designer/Properties Head; BJ Hunstad as Costume Designer; Zoe Pettit as Lighting Designer.

In collaborating with my designers, we were able to meet as early as January – two and a half months before performances – to discuss my concept for *The Spitfire Grill* and explore the design possibilities. This is why it was so important for me to have done my dramaturgical homework ahead of time, so that I could frame the parameters of our production before letting my team loose to design at their leisure. For example, while discussing costumes with Hunstad, he asked what time period was the setting for our show, and I was able to respond, based on my work, that the show takes place in the early '90s, and ideally, 1995. To supplement this, I also reflected that, owing to the rural location of Gilead, the fashions of the town would not be up-to-date, so while the time period may be early '90s, the clothing may well reflect late '80s, and because of the economic status of the town, the clothes would have some wear and tear on them. This kind of information was crucial to Hunstad's decision to rely heavily on denim pants and thick khakis, both of which have a durable quality about them, and blouses and shirts with mild distress¹.

¹ *Distress* refers to a practice in costuming (*distressing*) in which the clothing is purposely frayed, painted, or even sanded to look old and worn (Franzini 18).

As a director, it is important to maintain a constant communication with designers because their work influences the director, the actors, and each other. As an example, the ground plan, which is a bird's-eye view of the set, denoting measurements of furniture, ingress/egress, and overall stage spacing, is essential to a director so that he knows how to stage the scenes, and is usually provided to the director long before rehearsals begin. My scenic designer, Essex, and I, however, collaborated for two months after our initial meeting in January before finalizing a ground plan because we were constantly trying to modify it to accommodate the various locations needed throughout the play. Essex's initial ground plan² did not give the actors much playing space, creating complications for blocking³. I reflected this to her, as well as why I felt some of her entrance locations were less effective than other options the Lab Theatre offered. It is important to justify one's reasoning behind disliking a designer's work because it is equally as personal to them as a director's blocking and actor work is for a show. Offering suggestions is acceptable, as the ultimate purpose of any design element is to serve the show the director envisions, but it is wise to remember that the director is not designing. So, I politely suggested some alternative ingress possibilities to Essex that I felt would better serve the production.

Essex accepted some of my ideas, and after a few more drafts, we finally had an acceptable ground plan that would give the actors a bigger playing area, allow for more effective ingress/egress, and define the locations of the set more clearly. I mentioned that designers affect everyone, and so with the new ground plan, my blocking had to be

² Original Ground Plan for *The Spitfire Grill* seen in Appendix.

³ *Blocking* refers to the actors' movements on stage as dictated by the director. This is sometimes called *staging* (Patterson 83).

adjusted, the actors now had more stage to cover, and my lighting designer had to adjust her lighting plot to accommodate the rearranged set, which included lighting the real doors to the Lab Theatre – a difficult feat to accomplish. Fortunately, because we were all in constant communication, we did not have to deal with any surprises.

The student director at Western Kentucky University will have to contend with the numerous other projects the Department of Theatre and Dance produces during a semester; his production – even a musical – does not take precedence over other shows. This is where a larger form of collaboration and cooperation comes into play⁴. For instance, my performance slot for *The Spitfire Grill* was originally scheduled for April 4 and 5; however, the mainstage production⁵ of *A Taste of Honey* was scheduled to open April 14, giving the technical staff a turnaround time⁶ of ten days to construct the elaborate set required for the show. Upon realizing this, the department chose to move my performance dates back a week to March 29 and 30. Not only did this shorten my rehearsal period by a week, but it placed my production precisely a week after the student production of *Endgame* and only two days after the staged reading⁷ of *Maggie the Pirate*. Now my technical rehearsals would lose a day due to the performance of *Maggie the*

⁴ Every student-directed studio show has weekly production meetings, in which the student designers and director meet to discuss the progress of the show while the faculty advisors oversee the meeting to answer any questions and make sure the students are on track for the production. Normally at 8:00 a.m., students tend to loathe these meetings, but they are a terrific method of communication for the director and designers, and they prepare the student director for production meetings held in the professional world.

⁵ *Mainstage* productions are plays, musicals, and dance concerts directed by Theatre and Dance Department faculty.

⁶ *Turnaround time* refers to the amount of time that a theatre has to close one show – removing all set, costumes, and props – and open another, which includes bringing in a fully or partially built set, costumes, props, and reconfiguring the lighting of the space to accommodate the new production. In some professional theatres, this may be as brief as one or two days, but at Western Kentucky University, more than a week is average.

⁷ *Staged reading* refers to a type of production where a theatrical work is rehearsed in a short amount of time and then presented to an audience, but with the actors holding their scripts in hand. These are usually for plays that are still being developed. WKU's Theatre and Dance Department annually produces a musical staged reading, which rehearses for two weeks after its spring break and then performs with script and music in hand.

Pirate, but more daunting was the turnaround time *my* production team now faced, with lighting being affected the most. As a result, my designers and I had to collaborate with the designers of *Endgame* in order to make the transition as smooth as possible, which included the lighting designers discussing what lighting equipment could be shared and which instruments would have to be moved.

Theatre is all about the collaborative efforts of the director, designers, and actors to create a piece of dramatic art for an audience. My experience reflects how at Western Kentucky University, even the most frustrating challenges of production elements can be overcome through communication, sensitivity, and collaboration.

CHAPTER 4

PREPARTION

CASTING

“Casting is the major decision that a director makes. If you cast correctly, you have done about eighty percent of your work. This is why casting is so delicate.”
~ William Ball, *A Sense of Direction*

For me, casting is truly the most exhilarating and, at the same time, terrifying part of the production process. Casting the right actors can setup the rehearsal process to be a glorious dream, and likewise, casting the wrong actor – even one – can create a director’s worst nightmare. Frankly, I knew that casting *The Spitfire Grill* would be tough. I equated this to *Violet* again in that my actors needed to be strong singers, but the acting still had to remain on the forefront to tell the story, and, of course, the vocals for the show are quite demanding. I needed an actress who could appear young while also having worldly wisdom about her because the character Percy is young and yet has experienced many hardships, such as spending time in prison. This same actress needed to be able to belt¹ a ‘D’, which is an octave above middle C². I also needed a tenor with a rustic air

¹ A style of singing where the actress is “essentially singing in [her] chest voice (the speech register) but carrying the notes up higher than normal speaking range” (Moore 12).

² *Middle C*, sometimes called *C4*, refers to the C note that is in the middle of a piano. It can be found “the first ledger line below the treble staff and the first above the bass staff” (“Middle C”). This note is often used to reference vocal ranges for singers; for example, women are sometimes asked to belt the ‘D’ that is one octave above middle C.

about him that could handle the folksy melismatic³ style of the show, and I needed a student who could put on the weight of a seventy-year-old woman's burdens and carry out her mezzo-chesty lullabies. And, on top of that criteria, I had to refrain from using any actors potentially involved with any overlapping productions, such as *Endgame*, *Maggie the Pirate*, and *A Taste of Honey*. With *A Taste of Honey* already cast and *Endgame* likely relying on straight actors, I approached Professor Tracey Moore, director of the musical staged reading *Maggie the Pirate*, to suggest holding our auditions together in order to save money by hiring only one accompanist between us for auditions, and more importantly so that we could confer with one another before casting.

On Monday, January 31, 2011, approximately fifty students showed up outside the Gordon Wilson Hall Lab Theatre between 5:00 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. to audition for *The Spitfire Grill* and *Maggie the Pirate*. The students, having been informed through audition notice⁴ and departmental e-mails, presented 32-bar cuts of musical theatre songs for Professor Moore and me. I knew exactly what I wanted and needed for each of the characters I was casting, but for the first few auditions I was on edge because I couldn't stay focused on one particular aspect of the performer (height, vocal timbre, personality, etc.). However, I soon developed a process: When a performer came on stage to audition, the first thing I did was check her audition form⁵ to see if she was willing to accept a role, and if so, did her availability conflict with my rehearsal period. If there were no or few conflicts, I proceeded to take in the performer's appearance, including height, hair color, wardrobe, and presence.

³ *Melismatic* (also known as riffing) "is a style of singing in which the melody is vocally ornamented with ad-libbing notes and vocal runs or flourishes" (Moore 7).

⁴ Audition Notice for *Maggie the Pirate* and *The Spitfire Grill* can be seen in Appendix.

⁵ *The Spitfire Grill* Audition Form can be seen in Appendix.

While appearance can be changed for a production, one's initial look is always something taken into consideration because visuals can leave a lasting impression. For example, one girl who auditioned came on stage wearing a white blouse tucked into black slacks with a belt and footed with some chic, low-heel boots. Immediately the image evoked in my mind was *pirate*. I barely gave her second thought for my show – not because the girl did anything wrong, but because she was giving off the vibe of *pirate*, and unfortunately, in Gilead there are no pirates. However, for a show entitled *Maggie the Pirate*, that outfit may have been sending just the right signal.

In the case that a performer *did* catch my eye as a possibility for my show, I then listened to the actual audition to hear if she fit any of the character I had in mind for her. Sometimes I would know right away if the voice was wrong for my show, whether because it was a light voice and I needed a stronger voice to handle the folksy style, or if the actor was occasionally off pitch during her piece and I feared that could be a hindrance while teaching music. Other times the performer would do quite well, and so I would request for some scales to be sung in order to check the actor's vocal range and quality (for example, belting). Because I am less familiar with women's voices and I needed some very specific vocal ranges and qualities for my female characters, I more frequently requested scales from female auditionees⁶. Then, after hearing the singer's range, I might circle one or more of the letters at the bottom of their audition form, which represented each character I was casting ("P" for Percy, "H" for Hannah, "N" for Ensemble, and so forth).

⁶ The student who directs a musical may have much or little experience with listening to vocal ranges. It is important to identify the vocal requirements for each character so that the director can determine if an actor is capable of performing the role. Typically, the director would be assisted with this by the music director. However, if the show has no music director and the student director is uncomfortable with this aspect of casting, asking a theatre professor or even a music professor to assist him is encouraged.

Some of the students had very lovely auditions, but because of schedule conflicts they were unusable. As a performer myself, I am well-acquainted with the process of auditioning, and like many actors, I often labor under the pretense that the casting directors are judging me and looking for mistakes. Joanna Merlin, however, in her book *Auditioning* states that, “You [the actor] are the key to their power. Every director has high hopes that the next actor who walks through the door – YOU – will be the one for the part. Far from eagerly anticipating the actor’s abject failure, the auditors’ fondest hope is that you will give a superb audition so they can cast the role and go home” (7). And, from the directing end of the audition table I can say that is only too true.

At the end of the night, Professor Moore and I sorted through our prospective choices to construct a list of callbacks⁷, comparing with one another along the way as a means of foreseeing any conflict we might have over casting. For the most part we had very different roles to fill and thus needed very different actors, and so as we parted ways, I had my handful of actors to call back, and I desperately hoped the cast I desired was among them.

I held my callbacks the following evening but separate from Professor Moore. Callbacks for the director of a musical can be overwhelming. They are a chance to hear more from the actors that most piqued his interest, as well as an opportunity to read them for the part for which they are being considered. Marshall Mason, like many directors, appreciates callbacks for “the opportunity to look at the chemistry, the interaction of pairs or groups of characters” (62). I was looking to do all of the above, which is why I had to

⁷ The *callback list* refers to a list of actors with whom the director desires a second interview. These are sometimes less formal than the initial audition and may include learning music or reading scenes from the show (Moore 233-234).

construct a tightly organized callback schedule that could efficiently accommodate time to teach callback music and allow for pairings between various characters without every actor waiting around for three hours: I do not want my time wasted by actor and I do not want to waste actors' time.

Not surprisingly, callbacks for actors can be just as overwhelming, and students in an academic setting are not exempt. It is, therefore, important for a director to create a warm and comfortable atmosphere for the actors. William Ball goes so far as to call it one of the "humane responsibilities of a director" (38). I agree with Ball and also believe that a director will not get the most out of his actor unless he has striven to make the actor feel the least intimidated by the callback. For my own callbacks, I grouped my actors by character and scheduled a session with each character group; for example, the "Shelbys" were called at 8:00, the "Calebs" at 8:45, and so forth. When each group entered, I made it clear that they should relax and enjoy themselves. They had all made it this far and they were all learning the callback material at the same time, together. I requested that they not view the callbacks as a competition, but rather as a chance to show me what they could personally do with the material. This not only seemed to open many of them up, but also seemed to diminish competitive feelings among the actors.

I spent four and half hours teaching music, watching scenes, giving notes, and then doing it all over again. Primarily what I was looking for with each caste of character was a willingness on the part of the actors to experiment and play, as well as their willingness to adjust based on my instructions. Darlent Kaplan says it best when she reflects to actors in *The Actor's Encyclopedia of Casting Directors*, that "people are going to hire you for what you, specifically, bring to the role. You have to know who

you are so you can infuse yourself into the character” (218). Likewise, I wasn’t concerned with whether the actors could sing or read exactly as *my* vision of the characters would; I mostly just wanted to see what *they* had to bring to the characters. From time to time I might give a music correction, asking this “Shelby” for a little less vibrato or generally requesting that “Effy” to add a little sneer and give some bite to the words. With the music, I was able to gather who was capable of learning music well, who had the range or timbre needed for the character, and other data that would ultimately affect casting.

The scene readings were useful for seeing what kind of chemistry various actors had when put together. By pairing the actors, I was able to see how the actors interpreted their characters and also how that interpretation was affected when dealing with another character. Most often I found that the actors would play the scenes very safely, giving me a general idea about the character, but in fact so generalized that every scene seemed to be a reenactment of the last. The “Shelbys,” for example, all seemed to play the same timid, nervous character, rather than, perhaps, a girl who is trying to make a friend, but can’t seem to find the words. This is not surprising with young actors, but it does make casting more difficult (and certainly less interesting). Every so often an actor would surprise me by making a bold choice, which may not have been what I envisioned for the character, but a simple suggestion like, “Try imagining her as if Karen from *Will & Grace* were playing her” or, “Imagine it’s the worst day you’ve ever had” would suffice to push the actor in the right direction.

For the most part I was able to silently choose my cast from each group of characters, and so I could release each group together as I finished with them. This

allowed everyone to leave on equal terms, rather than being subjected to the “weeding out” or “elimination” process that is more typical in professional theatre. Again, it is important, particularly in educational theatre, to be sensitive to the work of the actors who came to bear their souls at the auditions or callbacks in hopes of getting the role.

Unfortunately, the two girls I had called back for Percy were still being used at 10:30 p.m. because I simply could not decide between them. One of the girls had a strong voice but weak acting; the other had strong acting and a decent voice. It is a terrifying thing to choose the lead for a cast. In the end, I chose the actor I had worked with before in other shows, owing to her incredible work ethic and reliability and because I believed that her acting could carry the show. I met with Lusie immediately after the callbacks to confer with me. I’ve stated and restated the importance of collaboration in a theatrical production; I always check in with my stage manager after auditions and callbacks to ask if there was anyone who was particularly impolite or displayed a dramatic attitude while waiting for auditions or callbacks. I would rather have a less talented actor than a diva who will not be an effective collaborator.

The next day I met with Professor Moore to compare cast lists. We briefly discussed actors, much like coaches trading players for teams, and found we had only a minor overlap. At Western Kentucky University (and likely any academic setting), a student director may find comparing his cast list with a professor’s very intimidating. There is sometimes the subconscious belief that because the professor is the student’s teacher, he knows what he is doing, and so any opinions on casting that may be reflected to the student are true. In this way, it can be very easy for a student to be pressured into giving up an actor he desperately wants because the professor can make a good argument

for why he should have the actor for his cast more. It is important to remember that while both inside and outside the classroom the professor is a teacher, when two directors are discussing casting and wanting the same actors, they are colleagues – both striving to pick effective teammates with which to mount their productions. I would encourage the student director to always listen to the professor; he has many years of experience, and while his motive as a director may still be to acquire the cast he wants, he is still a teacher by nature and his opinion is worth considering. However, ultimately the decision to cast the student's show lies with the student. If he feels he has a legitimate reason for wanting a particular actor and truly wants him, he should likewise make a strong case to the professor for having him, which may require he and the professor to discuss many options. Compromise is the key. I've worked on many productions where the another director and I agreed to share an actor, which can be trying on rehearsals, but if the actor is that important to the director, than it is worth it.

Fortunately for me, Professor Moore and I only had a small conflict of interest with our casting preferences, mostly regarding men, for much like the real world, there were few auditionees, and therefore, few options. In the end, however, we were able to compromise, largely due to a generous gesture by Professor Moore, which just goes to show the student director that the professors are there to support the student production, not hinder it. With my casting set, it was time to begin rehearsals.

CHAPTER 5

PROCESS:

TEACHING THE MUSIC

“The song, the lyrics, the music, the accompaniment – all have to come from the character.”

~ Tracey Moore, Music Theatre Workshop

My first experience with teaching music to a cast occurred in my junior year of college when I decided to direct a thirty-minute presentation comprised of scenes and songs from *Hello, Dolly!* for a class project. Sadly, I was utterly beside myself trying to teach the tight four-part harmonies of the title song “Hello, Dolly!” My saving grace was that I had inadvertently cast a demure freshman girl with proficient piano skills and a fifth-year musical theatre senior who was skilled with teaching music; the pair gracefully stepped up to the plate to ensure the success of our project, and I humbly stepped aside to focus on the needs of the staging. In the end the presentation was delightful, but the incident remains an embarrassing and haunting memory. Therefore, it only stands to reason that I was secretly filled with dread at the thought of being unable to teach and direct the music for my cast of *The Spitfire Grill*. But what my rationale could not take into account was the two years of music experience I had gained since that first project, including a semester of basic piano, a music theory class, two semesters of Music Theatre Workshop, the acquisition of my own keyboard, and the innumerable songs I had learned

for voice lessons and other classes¹, which I had mostly taught to myself. And, of course, the fact that I successfully directed the small music selections in my children's show, *Peter n' the Wolf* is not one that should not be overlooked. Undoubtedly, I was adequately prepared to teach the music for a show I had been absorbing for three years.

I would like to take the time to reflect to the student wishing to direct musical theatre at Western that I was adequately prepared to teach music because of skills I brought to WKU and skills I learned during my time at WKU. For example, I entered college with the ability to read music, understand key changes, and use music vocabulary. To assist that skill set, I took a music theory class which taught me how to build musical chords and at the same time, I enrolled in a piano class, which reinforced the material I was learning in my theory class. As I mentioned, I was also fortunate to have many voice classes, which was useful for familiarizing myself with the human voice and applying artistry to vocal music. I would encourage any student aspiring to direct a musical to do the same, even if he has no intention of directing the music. However, to the student who does choose to direct the music for his show, I encourage him to examine himself to make sure he feels absolutely comfortable doing so. I accepted the challenge of teaching music for my show because I believed I was qualified to do so.

A student-directed rehearsal process at Western Kentucky University usually runs anywhere between three to four weeks. Owing to my moderate confidence as a music director, I decided to schedule five weeks, devoting one week entirely to teaching the music to my cast². My reason for doing this was so that I could teach music at my own

¹ List of Classes at WKU That Prepared Me to Direct *The Spitfire Grill* can be seen in Appendix.

² Per Dr. Young, it is usually a good idea for a director to schedule an hour of rehearsal time for every minute of runtime; for example, a ninety-minute show would require ninety hours of rehearsal.

pace and allow for my own mistakes, as well as my actors'. Almost every musical production I have worked with has begun its rehearsal process by teach the music first. I chose to do the same for my production because it is my belief that if the music is under the feet of the actors, it makes the staging process much easier and gives the performers a confident platform on which to stand.

I made sure to I give myself enough time to meet with each singing character individually so as to give them the attention they needed and also not overwhelm myself with too many people in the room. I found this to be an effective method of teaching the music because I could spend as much time as we needed during the nightly three-hour sessions. I thought it was an excellent means of giving the actors the repetition they desired to learn their solos and parts, as well as ingraining in my fingers the various melodies of the music and the supporting chords that accompany them. Additionally, I thought it was a wonderful bonding opportunity so I could get to know my cast and also reemphasize that we are learning and are producing this show together.

As I became more comfortable with my cast and the music, I started to call more of them collectively to rehearsal in order to layer their harmonies; I wanted hammer out any wrong notes or fix any parts that didn't blend well, again, with the intention being to get the music learned now so that it would not hinder the staging later. By the end of our seventh music rehearsal, I had taught every song and cleaned a good majority of them.

One might raise the question of why I didn't simply let each cast member have a copy of the original cast recording by which they could learn their music and I could fix anything wrong afterward. This, after all, is sometimes the practice relied on by the student directing a revue for Musical Theatre History and Rep. However, in her book

Acting the Song, Professor Moore writes that learning a song from a cast recording can actually do more harm than good. She believes that the person may learn the song incorrectly and will ultimately be imitating the singer on the album, rather than allowing the person to develop her own interpretation of the song (53). I agree with this and would further add that it could be potentially dangerous for someone to attempt to imitate a singer without knowing how to properly handle the notes with her own voice. An example would be how Garrett Long approaches the climax of “Shine” on the original cast recording of *The Spitfire Grill*; Long’s use of mix and belt are specific to her as a singer, and it could be harmful to the voice my actress playing Percy were she to try and match Long’s vocals precisely.

I forbade my cast from listening to the Off-Broadway recording. In addition to the aforementioned reasons, my largest motive for this decision was that I wanted our production of *The Spitfire Grill* to be unique, with each actor bringing his or her own interpretation to the songs, for that is what makes theatre so special: it is alive, in the present, and different with each performance. I didn’t want the actors on the CD; I wanted the ones I had cast, and so we learned the music sans original recording. I still believe a cast recording can be of use, but only after the actors have learned the music their own way. After the music was taught, I noticed my actors were still struggling with the style of the show – its rustic, folksy, and borderline-country style. Only then did I play a CD of the show for my cast, and in that way they were able to gain better insight to the style of the show without being so influenced by the voices singing.

Now then, as ambitious as I was to music direct my show, I was still rational enough to know that I would not be able to play piano and music direct and stage direct at

the same time. This is why I included in my budget room for a recording accompanist. My intentions were to hire an accompanist record the accompaniment for every song in the script, including transitional music, so that I could have a rehearsal CD that would enable me to have consistent tempos and also free my mind to focus on staging. A CD of computerized piano playing was an effective tool when I directed *Peter n' the Wolf*, and so believed a similar rehearsal CD could be useful for *Spitfire*. I employed the piano skills of a dear friend named Vicky Siegrist, who agreed to record a CD for me for \$50. Though not remarkable with the music, Siegrist was capable of playing the songs at a consistent, slower tempo, which I would then be able to speed up via technology and burn to CDs for myself and the cast.

To my surprise and delight, Siegrist approached me at the end of our final recording session and asked if I would be interested in having her play at rehearsals; she was looking to volunteer her spare time with a production. I eagerly accepted her offer, and so, Siegrist joined our production team, adding immense relief to my burdened mind. The need for the CDs was virtually eliminated, and I must confess that with a musical like *The Spitfire Grill* that contains many songs interwoven with dialogue and vamps³, a CD can become an ineffective and frustrating rehearsal tool; I would discourage them for such a show.

The lesson to be learned from all of this is that music is a complicated factor to add to a play. It takes a great deal of time, requires a detailed knowledge of music terms,

³ A *vamp* refers to a section of music that is marked to be repeated until given a specific cue. Because vamping is usually done beneath dialogue, the cue is often a line or an action, which then allows the orchestra to continue through the rest of the piece. Vamps are frequently inserted when there is dialogue or action that will take an undetermined amount of time.

and overall takes patience. If help is offered or available or can be purchased, the student directing a musical at WKU would be wise to accept it.

CHAPTER 6

PROCESS:

BLOCKING THE SCENES

“I am most deeply attracted to the concept of directing as sculpture in motion. The changing physical relationships of the actors within an environment, the pattern of movement and the visual beauty of that, have become more and more important to me.”

~ Marshall Mason, *Creating Life on Stage*

Upon read Miles-Brown’s *Directing Drama*, the reader will find one recurring question in each of the director interviews: Should a director pre-block his production or work organically in the rehearsal process? This is a question I’ve faced with every production I’ve directed. In the past I would usually compromise between the two styles by lightly pre-blocking and then adjusting as needed in rehearsal. Because I knew I had such a short rehearsal process with *Spitfire*, I resolved to pre-block more than usual – we just couldn’t afford the amount of time I usually prefer to spend creating movement together. When pre-blocking I typically begin with a miniaturized ground plan that’s been copied onto the back of my working script¹ and place the first letter of every character onstage at the time in its own circle where they start that scene. I then draw the path that each character will take for that page of the scene and finish each with a period, which tells me where the characters will start on the next page. In doing this I am able to

¹ A *working script* is a director’s promptbook that will be utilized for the rehearsal process and will be subject to changes in blocking, as well as inserts or cuts from the original script.

sketch out a moving picture of how the scene will play, effectively blocking the whole show before I ever get an actor onstage². However, as any director can attest, getting into the actual performance space will catapult him into a whole new chapter of problems.

It is rare at WKU for a production to have the opportunity to get into its performing space before technical rehearsals, but my cast and I were fortunate enough to rehearse in the Lab Theatre to block our show. The director and cast of *Endgame* were generous to my show and agreed to let us rehearse in the Lab, as their show required considerably less blocking. I am grateful for this because I quickly discovered that this experience would be far different from my previous shows blocked for the Lab.

I predicted that songs in general would be a challenge to block in this space. Songs that are supplemented with choreography are easier to manipulate for blocking because the dancing allows a clear reason for moving. However, it is my belief that *The Spitfire Grill* does not lend itself to dancing. Moore discusses in *Acting the Song*, something called the Musical Theatre Hierarchy. This idea holds the belief that in musical theatre characters speak with dialogue, but when the circumstances or characters' emotions are intensified, speaking is not sufficient, and so they sing. When singing can no longer suffice, the characters dance (2). The music in *The Spitfire Grill* does not contain dance breaks, but does allot for action to happen between the singing. The songs, therefore, became the only parts of the show I was unable to comfortably pre-block because they lend themselves to a style of blocking called musical staging³. So, the process I developed for blocking songs with three or fewer characters was to allow the

² Blocking Excerpt from *The Spitfire Grill* can be in Appendix.

³ Musical staging is used in lieu of choreography when a song does not contain dancing. It allows the characters to move about with an energy equal to that of the song, but without breaking into dance.

actors to run the song, letting their instincts lead them where they felt they should go⁴. Usually the actors would timidly doubt their instincts the first couple of times running the song. I knew that in working with young actors, I could not give them the complete freedom to block their own numbers; they needed structure to feel comfortable within the world of the play. However, as the director, I did not want to impose actions that would feel unnatural to the actors; otherwise, the blocking would read false to the audience. No, I stated that this and all productions are collaboration among director, designers, and actors. My actors and I developed a process where I would allow them to move as they please for their songs. From that movement, I would reflect back actions that worked well, supporting the story they were telling. By doing this give-and-take, back-and-forth, we were able to block the songs in a way that made the actors feel comfortable, look organic, and be consistent.

A technical problem I encountered while blocking in the Lab Theatre was sightlines⁵. Naturally, every director must deal with the issue of sightlines, no matter what space he works in. However, as I mentioned in my passage on collaboration, the Gordon Wilson Lab Theatre is a unique playing space. A former professor of mine, Dr. Andrea Grapko, coined the term “Franken-Thrust” in reference to how frustrating the challenges of working in the Lab Theatre can be, and every time I work in that space I find that term only too true. The biggest trap my actors and I constantly fell into was

⁴ Songs involving more than three characters, typically ensemble numbers, I knew would be too busy and crowded to allow each actor to make his own decisions about blocking, and so I did choose to pre-block those numbers as a way of preventing chaotic rehearsals.

⁵ A *sightline* refers to the view an audience member has of the stage. These can sometimes be obstructed by actors, set pieces, and even other audience members.

being too far downstage⁶. Typically in a thrust setting⁷, the further upstage an actor is, the more likely he is to be seen by the entire audience. As he starts to come downstage, his shoulders and back begin to cut off the stage left and right audiences from seeing him properly. Consider the following figure:

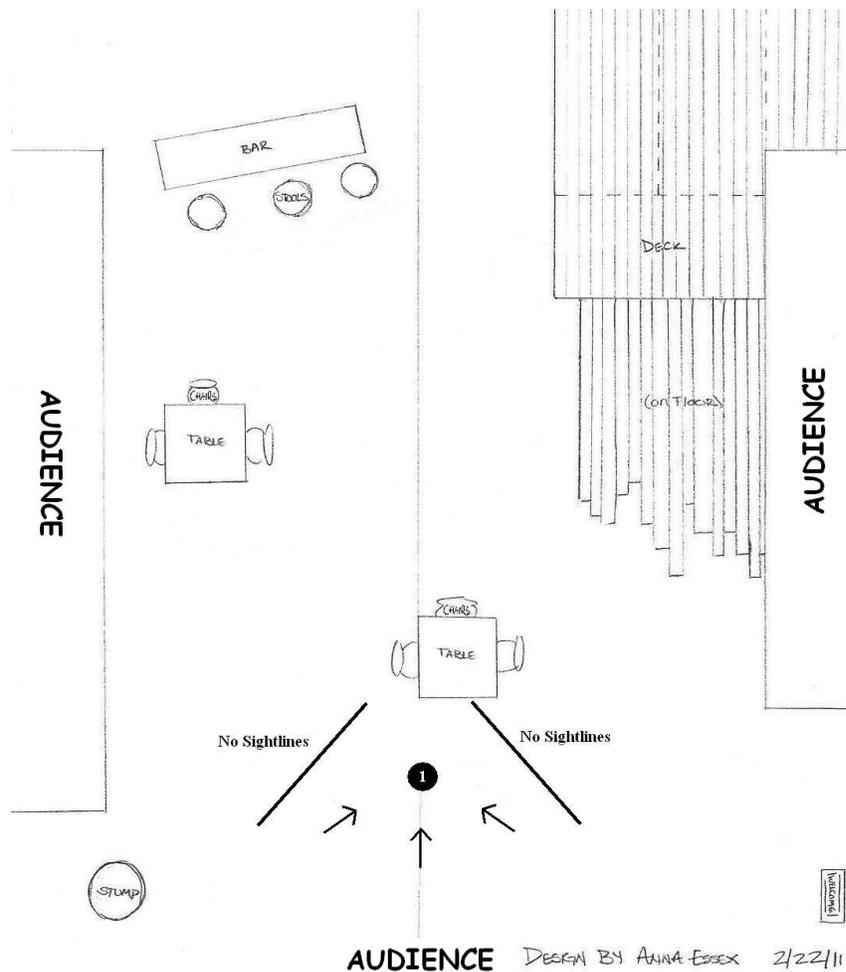


Figure 2.1
One Actor on the Ground Plan of *The Spitfire Grill*

⁶ *Downstage* refers to a specific stage direction. Stage directions are used in theatre to determine the location of something or someone onstage. Basic stage directions include *downstage*, the area of stage closest to the audience; *upstage*, the area furthest from the audience; *stage right*, the actor's right; and *stage left*, the actor's left (Ionazzi 81).

⁷ *Thrust*, or a *thrust stage*, refers to a type of stage that is pushed (or "thrust") very forward into the audience and has the audience members sitting around it on three sides (Welker 151). The Gordon Wilson Lab Theatre is this type of stage.

The circle with a “1” in the middle represents an actor that has come too far downstage in the Lab Theatre. The arrows show us the parts of the audience that have a clear view of the actor, whether he is speaking or singing. We can see that it is primarily the downstage audience who has a good sightline. The audience on stage right and left in the boxes would not be able to see anything on the actor’s face and would not hear him as well since all his sound is traveling forward: this situation creates poor sightlines for two-thirds of the audience.

This was the main challenge I dealt with while staging solos for my show. An actor travels forward by instinct, but then becomes trapped downstage, having difficulty getting back upstage because in doing so, he then presents his back to the downstage audience and his facial expressions and voice are sent directly upstage. This problem became most evident while staging the number “Shine,” which is Percy’s big song where she experiences an enormous self-realization. I could not have such a crucial change missed by two-thirds of the audience, so the actress playing Percy and I discussed the effective power of acting without traveling. I blocked her just upstage of center-center and explained to her how being grounded can allow an actor to fight for his goal without having to literally move toward it. Once she felt comfortable with this concept we reintroduced the ability to move forward, granting her permission so long as she had a spatial awareness, so as to not deny any audience the treat of her song.

Another tool I employed to assist actors who occasionally needed to cross downstage was teaching them how to angle themselves to face upstage. By doing this, actors who found themselves trapped downstage could present themselves upstage at an angle that would open their bodies to all three sides of the audience and prevent their

facial expressions and voices from being lost completely upstage. Angles are essential to a director regardless of the stage or space he is working in, but I believe that when working in a thrust setting (and in particular a “Franken-Thrust”), angles become a director’s gold. The following figure shows how by simply adding another person to the stage, angles significantly enhance the visibility of the scene for everyone:

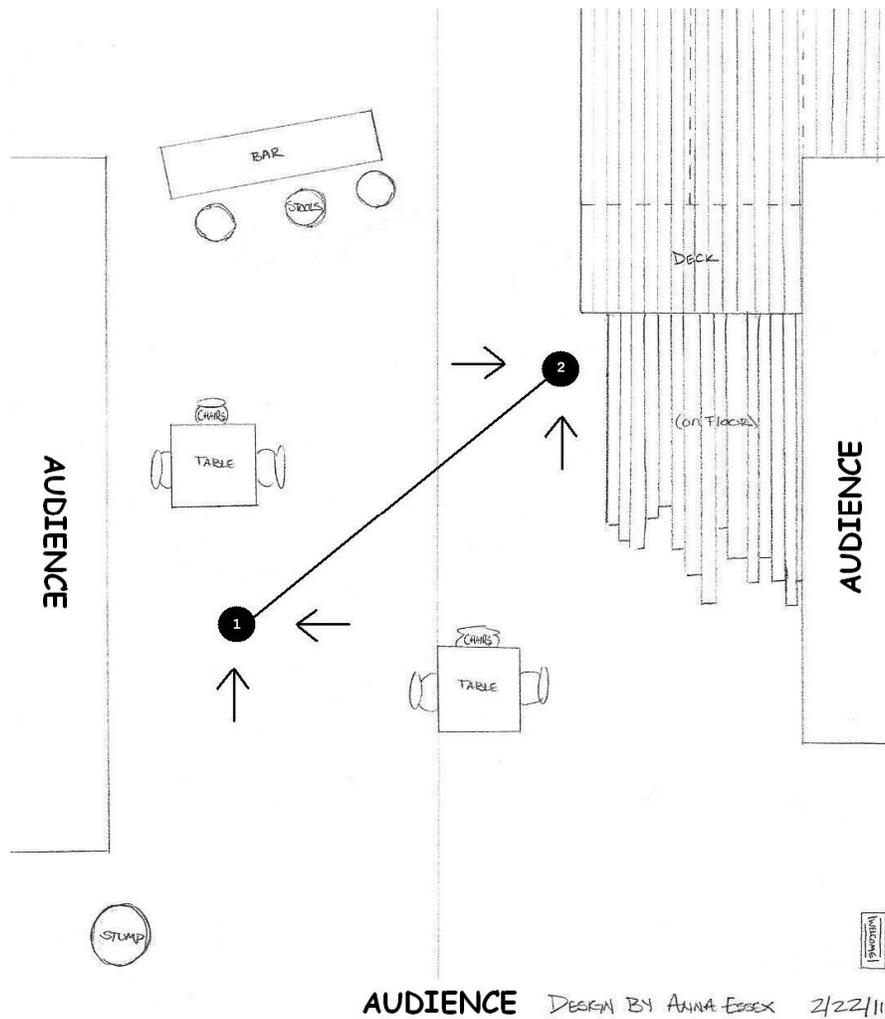


Figure 2.2
Two Actors on the Ground Plan of *The Spitfire Grill*

Notice how Circle 1 is facing upstage left, but in spite of this both the downstage and stage left audiences get a clear view of whatever he might be saying or reacting to; likewise, what the stage right audience loses with Circle 1 they gain in being able to observe Circle 2. And, of course, actors rarely stay rooted for an entire scene, and so in keeping the actors moving, the picture seen by the audience – regardless of perspective – is constantly adjusting to give the audience a clear sightline for storytelling. Over the years, I have realized there is a sort of theory to directing with angles in a thrust in that the more actors on stage, the more possibilities that can be made to create an interesting and perception-friendly staging.

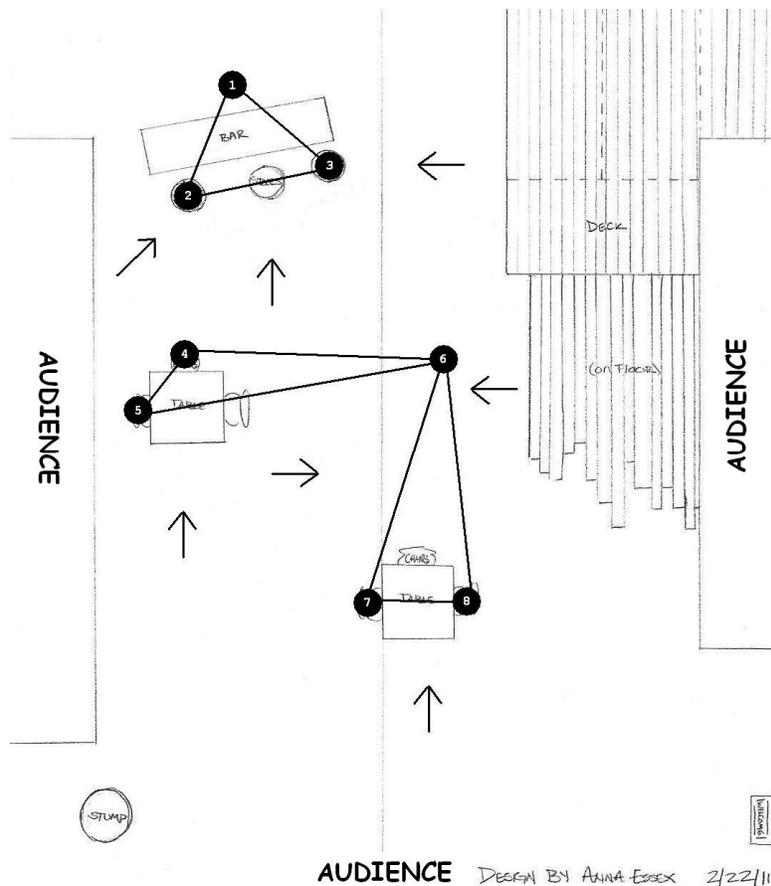


Figure 2.3
Eight Actors on the Ground Plan of *The Spitfire Grill*

Working in the Lab Theatre, as with any space, simply requires an understanding of how to best block one's actors so as to provide the audience with the best opportunity possible to see and hear the story being told. Many of my actors struggled with what I came to call a "proscenium complex" – that is, some of them were so conditioned to perform in a proscenium setting⁸ that it was an active challenge for them to face directions that presented a poor angle to the downstage audience. One of the ways I worked to fix this right from the start was to have cast members who weren't onstage at the time sit in the side audiences. This helped me in two ways. One, the actors onstage were forced to perform to all three sides of the audience, giving them the experience of adjusting themselves to create good sightlines. Two, the cast members in the audience were able to be my eyes in places I couldn't see; I couldn't be in every seat all the time. In doing this, they were able to reflect back to me specific scenes where they could not see well, and I could make blocking adjustments accordingly.

Adjusting blocking brings us back to the original point made at the beginning of this chapter, in that while pre-blocking is helpful, particularly when time is of the essence, it cannot replace the collaborative relationship between the actor and director. Frankly, any student who will be directing in the dreaded "Franken-Thrust" would be wise to keep his blocking flexible. I think James Roose-Evans said it best in his interview with John Miles-Brown: "When I was a young director I used to block very tightly and impose that on actors, but that was only because I was insecure. I think that with maturity one learns to be quite open and not possessive about one's ideas" (qtd. 150).

⁸ *Proscenium*, or a *proscenium stage*, refers to a type of stage that is a raised platform where the actors perform and are "framed" so that the audience watches them as though they were a movie (Welker 148). This is what the term *fourth wall* references, as the actors and audience seem to literally be divided by an invisible wall. Proscenium stages are one of the most common types of stage used in theatre; the Russell Miller Theatre in the Ivan Wilson Fine Arts Center at WKU is an example.

CHAPTER 7

PROCESS:

COACHING THE ACTORS

“You’ve got to be able to communicate with the actor. It seems to me that you can have all the things I talked about, such as psychological alertness and the ability to analyze a situation and still not be able to direct because you lack the manner, the aptitude, God knows what it is, to win the sympathy and the ear of the actor.”

~ Clifford Williams, *Directing Drama*

I have never directed for professional theatre, but I have worked as an actor for a number of professional theatres. It has been my experience in the professional world that the actors are hired because they know the craft of theatre; in rehearsals the director may coach them and the actors may learn and grow along the way, but they are still professional actors who know their craft. In educational theatre, such as that at WKU, it is important to remember that students are here to learn and are not yet expected to be masters of their craft. My experience has reminded me with every show that I am not just working with actors, but rather actors who are students. I say this to let the student director know that in the process of mounting his production, he may not only play the role of an acting coach, but an acting teacher as well. It is, therefore, essential to have a strong background in the fundamentals of acting, as well as a firm understanding.

My preparation for this included taking every acting course offered by the theatre department, from Stage Combat to Playing Shakespeare to Children's Theatre¹.

When I've worked with student actors on previous productions, I found myself encountering some of the same elementary acting problems: What do I want in this scene? Who or what is keeping me from getting it? How am I going to try and get what I want? What will happen if I get it?² Sometimes this came as a surprise to me, and yet every acting professor in the Department of Theatre and Dance has reminded me at some point that no matter how advanced an actor may be, it all still comes back to what he wants from the other figure in the scene. In actuality, it should come as *no* surprise to me that my actors, who may currently be enrolled in an Acting I or Acting II class, are just beginning to understand these vital principles of acting. My show, or another student director's show, as the case may be, then becomes a practicum through which the student actors are able to apply these lessons they are learning in their classes. And in doing so, the student director becomes a confederate teacher.

I mentioned before that the character of Caleb of was potentially in danger of being two-dimensional, owing to his short temper and because I had cut his song, which had offered insight into this nature. I found that I was not alone in my perceptions of Caleb; I read a review on *nyctheatre.com* about the Wake Up Marconi! theatre company's production of *The Spitfire Grill*. Theatre critic J. Jordan reflects that she was "a little troubled by Caleb's character in that she didn't understand what he really wanted." She astutely observes that "the writing tells us that Caleb wants the best for the

¹ Again, see List of Classes at WKU That Prepared Me to Direct *The Spitfire Grill* in Appendix.

² These types of acting questions are rooted in Robert Cohen's acronym GOTE: Goal, Other, Tactics, Expectation. They challenge the actor to decide a goal (or want) for the scene, identify the other person in the scene and how they can help or hinder the goal, examine what possible tactics will help the actor's character obtain that goal, and what expectations he has upon achieving the goal (61-65).

town and its people as well as his wife, but all his actions say otherwise.” She closes the paragraph with the shocking revelation that the actor playing Caleb admitted to not fully understanding the dichotomy of his character either.

Because I was aware of this pitfall before rehearsals started, and because I now knew the effects it could have on a production, I was determined to circumvent this problem for my production. Nevertheless, working with the actor to balance Caleb became a constant struggle. Caleb could not come off as merely an irate, abusive husband, but neither could he come off as passive and unenergetic. The trick to defining Caleb was to understand his motives. Caleb is a hardened man because he has worked incredibly hard to keep Gilead alive, in vain. Percy’s arrival to Gilead and the transformation she induces becomes a threat to Caleb and everything he has worked to maintain.

It became a challenge to communicate this mentality to my actor. His work in rehearsals would lend him to either extremity of what I was hoping to avoid with Caleb; that is, he was perceived as having either unprovoked anger or apathy. One scene that was particularly difficult involved Caleb receiving some upsetting news from his aunt, but containing until it becomes too much to handle. To assist my actor, I devised an exercise in which he would enter the scene and play it out as normal until he received the news, then calmly and without reaction simply acknowledge it and exit. He did so. I then instructed him to begin the scene again, as normal, but this time when he received the news, he was to react without inhibition or filter, with permission to swear, hit things, and scream (so long as his scene partner was not harmed). This time upon receiving the news, the actor unleashed not only his own feelings of aggravation, but script-based

feelings of Caleb's, as well, such as his frustration with his wife, his fears about Percy, and his love for the Grill and Gilead. Despite this delightful explosion, I still had him do the scene one more time. This final time, he was to have all the thoughts and feelings of the previous run of the scene, but he was to fight to contain them so that he would *seem* as calm as the first run. The result was spectacular: I had a Caleb who, upon receiving the news was immediately perceived as feeling threatened, upset, and irate, but who was also fighting to not lash out at his aunt and to take in stride the news received.

In addition to coaching the straight scenes, I needed to coach the songs. Most of my coaching for *The Spitfire Grill* was rooted in the lessons I learned in my three years of taking Professor Moore's Music Theatre Workshop. Professor Moore's class focuses on teaching the integration of acting with singing. This proved incredibly useful when it came to coaching my actors in this musical. Often I feel that with musical productions at WKU the acting takes a backseat in lieu of the singing. This is a mistake. I resolved long ago that were I given the opportunity to direct a musical, I would make valiant efforts to make sure that my actors understood how to play their character throughout the entire production, including the songs. And such were my intentions with *Spitfire*.

Once my actors had learned their songs (and learned them well), I scheduled time within my rehearsal schedule on an individual basis to work the acting of a character's song. Just like with a monologue or scene, the lines, or in this case lyrics and notes, needed to be memorized well in order to advance to layering the acting. One of my best experiences with coaching a song for this show was when I worked "When Hope Goes" with my actress playing Shelby. This actress had a remarkable work ethic and was the first of my cast I felt was really ready to work with her character's song.

“When Hope Goes” is a difficult song to act. Much like a narrative monologue, the song tells the story of past events, which threatens to make it a passive piece of music. The following is an excerpt from the libretto:

When hope goes, sidewalks crack,
Whitewash fades.
Music stops, empty streets,
No parades.

When hope goes, fences sag,
Flagpoles rust.
Paint peels, broken wheels
Gather dust.
When hoped goes,
Hearts close

Eight years old
With a flag in my hand.
Step for step
With the big marching band.

Everyone in town
Walking up that hill,
Waiting for the bus,
We are waiting still (28-20).

Naturally, to counter this, we needed to make the song present and active. I started at the moment before the song begins. In the scene before the song, Percy and Shelby are discussing Hannah’s son, Eli; *he*, therefore, had to be the springboard for the song. I asked my Shelby to think of a time in her life when she had had a crush on someone but the relationship had not flowered. She did and told me the boy’s name. I then had her sing the song, thinking about that boy and non-relationship. This immediately evoked a

joy she had not previously had as Shelby, but it also brought forth feelings of bitterness, as the relationship had not happened³.

The song was in a more interesting place, but now the actress needed to sing the song through Shelby's eyes and at the same time, avoid ending so embittered. To assist this, I encouraged her to see the song as a discovery – a realization she had not previously had. My hope was to take the narrative song and make it relevant to the present. By approaching the song with this added mentality, the actress was able to take the lyrics reflecting on the decaying state of the town and use them to recognize what the circumstances of Gilead were and why its citizens were so hardened. This brought life to the song and rather than distracting the audience with a memory would instead propel the story further.

The student directing a musical must always remember that it is about the story. Working with young actors, this can sometimes be forgotten or overlooked. Coaching them is necessary to make sure their characters are telling the story as clearly as possible. Remember, as referenced in the chapter of "Casting" that a director has certain humane responsibilities, and this includes coaching with care and tact. Respect the sensitivity of actors. However, all in all, coaching is an effective tool for directing a musical.

³ This type of acting coaching is promoted by Professor Moore in Music Theatre Workshop and is grounded in the acting methods of Constantine Stanislavski. His book *An Actor Prepares* addresses this particular type of work in a section called "Emotion Memory," which encourages actors to rely on their own life experiences to relate to the circumstances of their characters (177-208).

CHAPTER 8

PERFORMANCE:

PEER, PROFESSOR, AND PERFORMER EVALUATIONS

“A director attending the opening night performance is more than a little like Tom Sawyer witnessing his own funeral. Her creative life with the play has ended, yet her presence at the ritual is mandatory. There’s nothing more she can do, except passively watch others assess the effects of her existence.”

~ Marshall Mason, *Creating Life on Stage*

The curtain, or blackout, as it were, rose and fell on my actors on both Monday, March 28 and Tuesday, March 29. The turnout for both nights was satisfactory, though small, if I may say so, but then the audiences for all of the studio shows had been surprisingly small this year. They laughed at the jokes, they applauded the music, and when the bows were said and done, the audience, actors, and myself congregated in the lobby outside the theatre with the expected remarks of “Good job!” and “It was a great show” and “That was a really nice story.” What was not openly said were the criticisms, but social graces and theatre etiquette have taught us to displace those comments until later.

“Later” was when I met with the three other directors enrolled in PERF: 400 on Wednesday night, March 30 to critique my show. Over pizza and beverages I accepted the blunt criticism of my mutually young directing peers. Responses varied among the three, from the director of Becket’s *Endgame* who, in the same way that I could not fully grasp his show, could not grasp mine because it was a musical, to another director in my

class who enjoyed himself immensely. Criticism of one's artistic work is one of the hardest things to receive, and yet the true artist embraces the comments knowing that his experience and the reflection of others will only make him a greater artist. Many of the comments I received were concerns about blocking. One was bothered because the seat he chose near my bar did not have enough action take place near him; another reflected that *too much* action had been blocked in the upstage right corner by the bar. These kinds of comments I took with a grain of salt. Each of us directors experienced difficulty staging our shows in the Lab Theatre, and unfortunately, there is no perfect seat in the audience from which to see everything all the time. So, I accepted these comments for what they were worth and let the rest of them just slide off me.

Other comments I took more to heart. Energy, or lack thereof, was a criticism that was unanimously made, by myself, as well. My peers believed that many in my cast just did not have the energy to drive the scenes and songs throughout the play. I completely agree with this assertion, for I believe that lack of proper energy can kill a scene, and by extension, the play. Energy is what keeps the story moving and what every character feeds off of. Like some weird form of communism, every actor contributes to the energy of the show and as a result every actor receives a share. But it only takes one actor to throw off the balance of that system, and more than one can be deadly.

From these comments I can say with hindsight that I do not believe I paid enough attention to the overall energy of my show during rehearsals. This all goes back to one of the primary acting questions I mentioned earlier: What do I (the character) want? This "want" then becomes a driving force throughout the play, as each scene either moves the character closer to or further from his want. The "want" is the source of energy the

character contributes to the play. Therefore, I made a note to myself to work more closely with my actors in the future to ensure they had a clear and established want for the play and also to be more aware of energy and how it used, so that in future productions, I do not let a similar mistake happen.

I also discussed my show with Professor Moore the week following the close of my production. I respect her opinion and she respects mine, so we mutually critiqued each other's show: she, my *Spitfire*; I, her *Maggie the Pirate*. In discussing both shows we came to an agreement that we had each miscast certain leads for our productions. Of course, these were not intentional mistakes; casting is sometimes a risk one takes with gut-feeling, and sometimes it pays off, and other times, it falls short of what was expected. Regardless, I confessed to her that with every show I had directed at WKU I had held a secret, aching fear that I would one day cast the wrong actors for my show. And now, having done that, I can say that that fear has been fulfilled, and there's nothing more to come of it but to learn from it. Professor Moore also commented on the technical flaws of my set, which I had also noted for myself. But in having someone else make the comment, and particularly a professor, I was able to confirm that my ability to evaluate myself is accurate and not as biased as it could be.

The final source of criticism I sought out was from my own performers. While peers and professors may have seen the final product, my performers were with me throughout the entire rehearsal process and were, therefore, among the most credible assessors of my directing work. Actor evaluation plays a large role in the directing classes at WKU, which is incredibly useful to the growing director. However, once a director begins directing for the Children's Theatre Series or the Studio Series, this

practice of seeking feedback from one's cast is less emphasized if not neglected entirely.

Still, it is my belief that a director should always be growing, and so I differed from other student directors in the Studio Series by giving each actor in my cast an evaluation form¹ used in the Directing I class and requesting that they fill it out anonymously and as a favor to me. From the evaluations I received, there was a large consensus that I knew the story of *The Spitfire Grill* and its dramatic content “inside and out,” as one actor would put it. This was reassuring, as I had put so much work into preparing for the show, striving to understand its themes and dramatic action. Additionally, I was complimented on my acting coaching, particularly from the actor playing Caleb, who was grateful for my work with him and the character. The majority of my cast perceived me as approachable and optimistic, in spite of some trying technical issues we experienced throughout the rehearsal process.

The constructive criticism was, naturally, harder to accept. One of my actors felt that I had not organized the rehearsal schedule as well as I should have, nor worked the show at an appropriate pace throughout the rehearsal process. This was also mentioned by another performer who felt like actors in the show were called unnecessarily to rehearsal some times. One actor, to my surprise, reflected that I did not take the time to get to know my cast very well, which seemed to contradict the feelings of the majority. However, I was glad to receive feedback from my actors because I knew it would only make me a better director for my next production.

I encourage the student director, even if he is not directing a musical, to seek out the criticism of his peers, professors, and, if possible, performers. It is important to

¹ Actor Evaluation #1, Actor Evaluation #2, and Actor Evaluation #3 can all be seen in Appendix.

remember that they saw the production as audience members, and if the goal of a director is to effectively tell a story to the audience, who better to ask that one's classmates and educators? The work has been done and nothing can be changed now, so there is no harm can be done but to a director's pride. I encourage the student director to relish the safe criticism of an academic setting before he has to face the blunt and cruel criticism of the professional world.

CHAPTER 9

PERFORMANCE:

SELF-EVALUATION

“There’s a flicker of light, there’s an ember of heat, there’s a diamond of hope in this good heart of mine.”

~ Percy Talbott, *The Spitfire Grill*

Dr. Grapko always encouraged my Directing II class to close every production with a self-evaluation, believing that no promptbook was complete without one. I agree with this because it caps the production with a reflection of where the director feels he stands at that point of his artistic growth, and, of course, it becomes invaluable to refer to later in his career. I’ve included my self-evaluation of *The Spitfire Grill* on the next page:

Stephen G. Tabor

30 March 2011

Self-Evaluation of *The Spitfire Grill*

Upon evaluating the final product of my efforts to produce *The Spitfire Grill*, I am able to reflect on not only the performance quality, but also the rehearsal process and the quality of my work in mounting this musical. I would like to firstly applaud my efforts to fulfill the roles of both stage director and music director. I foresaw this as a daunting task, and I was correct, but it was not unmanageable. I thought I was successful both in teaching and maintaining the musical integrity of the score, as well as applying some artistry with the music to make it our own for the show. My cast excelled at learning their music early on, allowing me the opportunity to work on the acting with them. In the process, I learned a great deal about how composers use the music within a show to suggest mood, thread a theme throughout the show, and amplify characterization for the various characters. Additionally, I learned that as savvy as I am with music terminology, there is still much for me to learn if I am to be working with musicians in the future; *hemiola* and *attacca* being two terms I learned along the way. The role of music director was a lot to bear in tandem with stage director, and while it is not the ideal situation, I have proven that I am at least capable of doing so.

As a stage director, I believed I fulfilled my duties as best as I possibly could in the “Franken-Thrust” setting of our Lab Theatre. I believe my blocking was suitable to tell the story within the space, while still creating aesthetically-pleasing sightlines for my audience. I’ll admit that unfortunately not every scene was ideal for every side of the audience, but I clung to the notion that because of the space, no audience member would

have a perfect show – each side would have to give and take a little throughout the story. And, at times it was like pulling teeth, but I feel I did the best I could with a show originally conceived for proscenium. I thought I was effective at stripping the show down to its basics to tell the story, which was my primary concern, regardless of props and set pieces. This included dealing with obstacles such as cutting the script for time and minimizing the set changes while still attempting to maintain structural integrity for smooth storytelling. I felt I effectively staged my show well.

The largest self-criticism I have references the famous saying that 80% of a director's work comes from casting. I found this to be only too true, with disheartening results. I believe I did not cast an actress who was ready to handle the role of Percy. This is unfortunate, as I was limited with my options anyway; Percy is such a specific look, vocal type, and disposition. I was thought I had chosen the actress who would best find Percy, take direction, and bring a grand sense of self to the character, but I was disappointed in that my actress – I've realized in hindsight – was passive and obedient, taking instruction along the way, but not really developing sincere sense of self and vulnerability. There were other casting faults of mine, but some were unavoidable given the ever-present shortage of male actors in the collegiate setting. Of course, once the casting is set, it then becomes the responsibility of the director to coach the actors through their trials. In this regard, I felt I did well. I felt I exhibited distinguished acting coaching, despite struggling with the balance of acting the songs and acting the scenes. I was grateful for my training from Music Theatre Workshop because it was very helpful while working with the actors on their individual songs. However, I found that I am still

inexperienced in that I was able to recognize problems at times, but unable to communicate to the actors how to fix them.

In conclusion, I am pleased to have had the opportunity to direct *The Spitfire Grill*. It did not turn out to be the dream production I wished, but I accept it as a very large stepping stone on my way to being a director, and something from which I learned immensely.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION

In *The Spitfire Grill*, Shelby sings of the tragedy that can befall a town and a person “when hope goes.” I am graduating Western Kentucky University after five long years of work in the Department of Theatre and Dance. I reference this song in the show not because I believe my graduating means that hope is leaving the theatre department. Rather, I use the allusion to send a message to every future student-director of musical theatre at WKU: do not give up hope. It is possible for a student to direct a musical at Western Kentucky University. There are hardships, yes; it took me three years to finally direct my dream. But it is possible.

It is, therefore, *my* hope that future directors will refer to this as a guidebook to see the problems I encountered in my attempts to stage my dream. There may be objections to the department’s ability to do a show. Doing a director’s homework – basic dramaturgical analysis – can reveal to a director if the show is indeed possible, and if not, how it might be adapted to work in an academic setting. Money will always be an issue, especially in the real world. Being aware of the financial opportunities offered by various organizations throughout Western’s campus can lighten, if not eliminate that concern. The Honors College, for example, is always willing to help out a project.

Preparing the right team to assist the production is crucial, be that designers or casting. Both of them are needed to create an exceptional show.

Along the way will be many challenges – most openly, the music. This is not a straight play. Scott Miller rightly observes in *Deconstructing Harold Hill* that the “practical concerns” of a musical will take precious time away from the equally important dramatic concerns of the show, that is the scenes, the acting, the arc of the story (xii). If a music director is unavailable, it falls to the director to make the efforts to teach and direct the music. Unless an amendment is made that opens up Russell Miller Theatre for use to students, the musical will be staged in the GWH Lab Theatre – the “Franken-Thrust” – and there will be challenges in blocking and getting actors to feel comfortable in a thrust setting. Smartly utilizing angles will be helpful for overcoming this obstacle. As with any show, straight play or musical, coaching the actors will be daunting. Students can be young actors, but remembering that WKU is an educational environment – a place for learning, even and especially for the director – will aid the student director in helping them find their characters to the fullest extent, and allowing them the opportunity to integrate acting and singing will give them a remarkable learning experience, as well as significantly better the director’s show.

Finally, and as with any craft, it is important for the student director to remember that the performance is a time to both enjoy one’s work and observe how it could be bettered. Criticism can be hurtful, but equally edifying and overall will be useful for the director’s next production. And, of course, being honest with oneself is crucial if the student director is to learn from his experience, and therefore, a self-evaluation should be encouraged, in order that the student might strive for the next plateau of his artistry. I

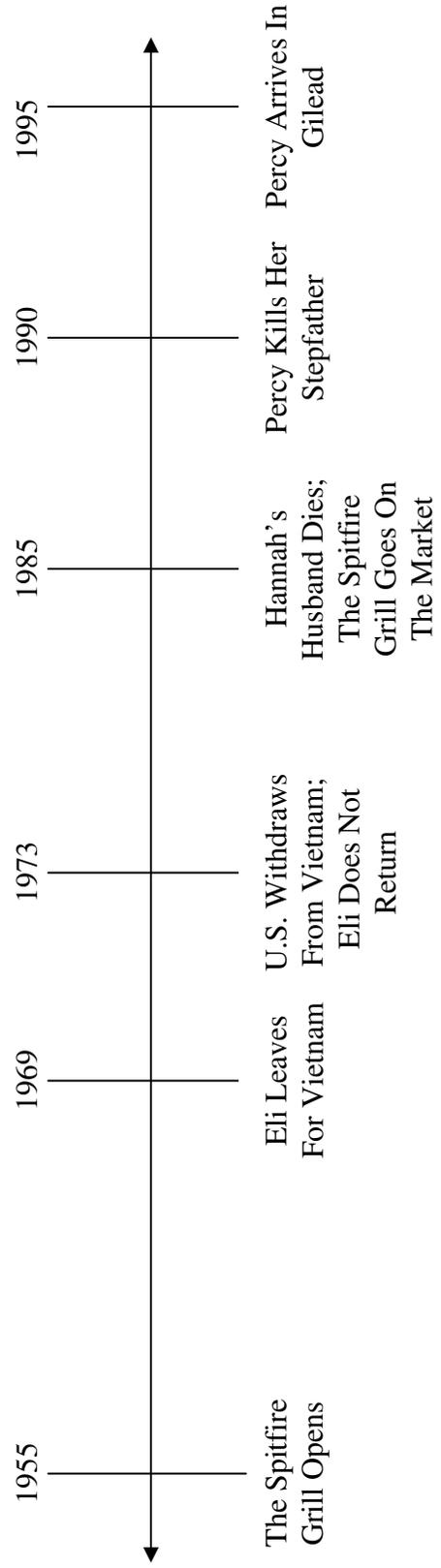
hope my experience has been useful, and I wish every future student director the best of luck in his or her endeavors to produce a musical at Western Kentucky University.

APPENDIX

Gilead, Wisconsin



The Spitfire Grill
Timeline



Spring 2011 Directing Proposal

The Spitfire Grill

Stephen G. Tabor, ©2010

1. *The Spitfire Grill*

Music by James Valcq and Lyrics by Fred Alley

Published by Samuel French, ©2001

Royalty Fee: \$150 for a two-performance production

\$100 rental for piano/conductor score

\$100 deposit for score

2. Estimated Running Time: 2 hours, with one 10-minute intermission

3. Cast of Characters:

Name	Age	Sex	Vocal	Brief Description
Percy Talbott	21	F	Folksy belter to “D”; head voice	New waitress at the Grill; on parole
Hannah Ferguson	Early 70s	F	Mezzo with strong chest voice	Owner of the Spitfire Grill
Shelby Thorpe	Mid-30s	F	Soprano with belt up to “D”	Caleb’s demure wife
Caleb Thorpe	Early 40s	M	Baritone, up to a “G”	Shelby’s hard husband
Sheriff Joe Sutter	20s	M	Tenor, up to a “G”, opt. “A”	Sheriff of Gilead; Percy’s parole officer
Effy Krayneck	50s	F	Mezzo, carries close harmony	Local gossip gal and postwoman of Gilead
The Visitor	Mid-40s	M	None	Mysterious stranger who appears every night

Total Number of Characters: 7*

*While the script calls for only 7 characters, I would like to add 3 additional characters (gender to be determined later), who serve as various townspeople, adding vocal support to the cast and creating a better sense of “town” for Gilead. This would ultimately bring my cast number to **10**.

4. *The Spitfire Grill* is a story of hope. Percy, who has just been released from prison, arrives in the decaying town of Gilead looking for a fresh start. Hannah, a bitter old woman and owner of the Spitfire Grill, reluctantly gives Percy a job; the townspeople are even less willing to accept Percy into their community. When Hannah breaks her leg, however, Percy and a meek, local woman – Shelby – manage the Grill. As a friendship kindles between the two women, they also devise a plan to help Hannah sell the Grill: an essay contest. Percy begins to soften the hardened hearts of the people of Gilead, including Hannah, and her contest instills hope in them when essays begin pouring in from people longing to come to Gilead. The town is filled with life again economically and socially, and Percy finds her new home as the owner of the Grill.

Spring 2011 Directing Proposal

The Spitfire Grill

Stephen G. Tabor, ©2010

5. This play is about hope, about having and believing in a real, active, living hope! I believe in this story because it shows what one person with hope can do; hope is contagious, and it has the power to *change* things – change people! I think hope is something that all the design elements can rally around, because they can all reflect dead hope, growing hope, and living, vibrant hope, which I believe is the journey of each of the townspeople of Gilead, *and* Gilead itself. I want my audience to leave feeling inspired – if not on fire – from the power hope displays throughout this play. I think this show proves that even the tiniest ember of hope is worthwhile. If we can change even one audience member’s perspective for the positive, even if just for the evening, then the play has done its job. Above other works, I feel this play is most appropriate for the times. The world is a hard place right now, and hope is just the thing people need to persevere through the recession, war, and other problems unique to each person but familiar to all of us. This show – the music in particular – fills me with a fiery hope, and I want to share that with other people.

6. *Spitfire* takes place in the early ‘90s, and I have chosen for my production to have the play take place in 1995. There are four specific locations I require for my production, two of which can be suggestive: a prison cell and a kitchen. The other two locations are the inside of the Grill itself and the back porch of the Grill. I believe a unit-set is most appropriate for our Lab Theatre limitations and for my vision – this would primarily be the inside of the Grill, with minor changes made to suggest the other locations. Since the set needs to adapt to needs of our various locations, it need not be elaborate. The set should evoke a feeling of deterioration: the Grill is dying (not in a grotesque way), but its health is declining. And yet, the set should contain potential energy, so that at any moment, if someone believed in it, it could become well again. And it does during “Come Alive Again”.

I don’t believe this is a costume-heavy show. There are seven characters and three ensemble members, but as Gilead is a stagnant place, I see no need to have multiple costumes, the exception being the ensemble who would double as townspeople. Also, the play takes place over nine months; it would be ludicrous to have that many costumes. However, perhaps the idea of giving the characters different costumes as each one experiences the power of hope can be played with – costumes similar to what they wore prior to the change but that reflect the transformation. The costumes should be appropriate to the period, but Gilead is the kind of town that will not be up-to-date with the latest fashions. The people lead simple, but hardworking lives. I believe most of the costumes could be pulled. There would probably be some added accessories – i.e. an apron, mittens, a robe – to suggest various circumstances.

Spring 2011 Directing Proposal

The Spitfire Grill

Stephen G. Tabor, ©2010

Props are numerous in this show. However, to compliment the set, I think many of the props suggested by the playwright's notes can be eliminated. Also, most of the props are common and would likely be in storage; if not, they would not be difficult to obtain. The most challenging aspect of props would be the numerous letters and mailbags used in "Shoot the Moon".

Finally, lighting is *crucial* to this show; I cannot stress that enough, and unfortunately, this could be the largest challenge of working in the Lab Theatre space. Lighting should be one of the biggest things to help us see the change in the Grill as it comes back to life. Lighting is also necessary to paint the palette of colors Percy and Shelby see in "Colors of Paradise". Since the set may seem non-specific at times, lighting will be needed to complete the environment, including time of day. Lastly, the most spectacular lighting effect should take place during "Shine". We should feel the colors erupting from Percy, like a visual manifestation of everything that's been trapped in her since the play began.

7. Crew Positions:

- Stage Manager
- Scenic Designer
- Costume Designer
- Lighting Designer
- Prop Designer/Master
- Wardrobe/Make-Up Head
- Lightboard Operator
- House Manager
 - Ushers (3)
- Run-Crew (2)
- Prop Head (can be a Run-Crew person if 3 are used)
- Musicians
 - Pianist

8. I think teaching music will be a challenge. I know music, I can play well enough, and I know what I *want* from this music, but I recognize that this music is more difficult than *Peter n' the Wolf*. However, I have spent two and a half years analyzing this show, and with that knowledge and Winter Break to practice, I feel like I could adequately teach music and accompany where needed in rehearsal. I am also concerned about where to place the piano for the show, although I feel like it would be very interesting to incorporate it as part of the set. I really like the idea of the music in the show coming from the characters and the Grill itself. (A note: This is not a dancing show. I do not need a choreographer; any dancing will be minimal and much closer to blocking than choreography.)

Spring 2011 Directing Proposal

The Spitfire Grill

Stephen G. Tabor, ©2010

9. I have the option to augment the directing class through the Honors College. I can justify the augmentation because a musical adds an extra layer for a director to contend with. Should my course be augmented, I could receive money (up to \$500) to offset the cost of my production. My intentions for this money would be to cover the piano score and rental deposit, and also, to pay an accompanist for a recording of the show to be used in rehearsals, in which case he/she would not be needed until the performances (\$100 fee + \$100 deposit + \$300 accompanist fee = \$500). I would finally like to remind the faculty that I have now successfully directed a one-act straight play and a children's musical. I have had Directing 1 and 2, Group Piano, nine semesters of Private Voice, and three semesters of Musical Theatre Workshop. I feel prepared to take on this next challenge.

THE SPITFIRE GRILL

Stephen G. Tabor, Director
Lusie Cuskey, Stage Manager

PRODUCTION CALENDAR

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
13	14 Design Meeting 8:30 a.m.	15	16	17	18	19
Facing East Tech	Facing East	Facing East	Read-Through 5:00-8:00	Music Rehearsal 5:00-8:00	Midwest	Midwest
20	21 None	22	23	24	25	26
Midwest	Block I.2-3 5:00-8:00	Block I.4-6 5:00-8:00	Block I.7-8 5:00-8:00	Block I.1 and 9 5:00-8:00	Run Act I 5:30-8:00	
27	28 Production Meeting 8:40 a.m. Block III 5:00-7:30	1	2	3	4	5
		Block II.2-3 5:00-7:30	Block II.4 and 6 5:00-7:30	Block II.5 and 7 5:00-7:30	Run Act II 5:30-7:30	
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
		SPRING		BREAK		
13	14 Production Meeting 8:40 a.m. Clean I.1-4 5:00-7:30	15	16	17	18	19
Music Review 7:00-9:00 OffBook		Clean I.5-9 5:00-7:30	Clean III.3 5:00-7:30	Clean II.4-7 5:00-7:30	Full Run 5:30-7:30 No Line Call	TBA
20	21 Production Meeting 8:40 a.m. Run-Through 5:00-8:00 Endgame	22	23	24	25	26
TBA		Run-Through 5:00-8:00 Endgame	Tech	Tech	No Rehearsal Maggie the Pirate	Band Rehearsal @ 10:00 Dress Rehearsal @ 1:00
27	28	29	30		29	30
Final Dress @ 1:00	Performance @ 8:00	Performance @ 5:00 [STRIKE]				

Assistance with Royalties

At Western Kentucky University it is the responsibility of the student director to determine the royalties for his show. Because these estimates are typically required when he submits his proposal to the faculty, he must be capable of acquiring the figures on his own. This process is sometimes taught in Directing I, but in the case that the prospective student has not learned this or has forgotten how, the following instructions are adequate to assist him:

1. *Determine the owner of the rights to the show.* With straight plays this can sometimes be difficult. Fortunately, musicals are mostly owned by the same nine or so companies. The publishing company can be found on the copyright page of the script, but the following link is a Show Rights Index and is useful for quickly determining who owns the rights to a musical:

<http://www.musicals101.com/alphinde.htm>.
2. *Contact the publishing company to determine the royalty costs for producing the show at WKU.* Sometimes the website of the publishing company will display the fee for the performance a show. Other times, it is necessary to e-mail or call the company to ascertain such information. This may require having certain information on hand that is specific to the WKU production, such as how many seats the theatre has, the number of performances, and the cost of admission. As an example, for *The Spitfire Grill* I called Samuel French, Inc. and informed them

that our school was seeking to produce a show in a theatre that seats 135 people and would run for two performances, charging \$5 per patron.

3. *Submit the information to the faculty.* Or, if the student's directing proposal has been approved, the student should submit the information to the Office Associate for the Department of Theatre and Dance. She then can arrange for a contract to be drawn up between the department and the publishing company.
4. *Maintain communication with the office associate.* Questions about score rentals and librettos may arise, so the student should be sure to stay in contact with the office associate to answer these questions until the final contract is signed and submitted.
5. *Secure a copy of the final contract for records.* Not only will this serve as documentation to receive reimbursement from any outside financial source, but it should also be a part of the student's final promptbook.

Honors Augmentation Contract Application

Student Name:	Stephen G. Tabor
WKU Student #:	██████████
WKU Email:	██
Mobile Phone #:	██████████
Course Number and Title:	PERF 400 – Advanced Performing Arts Studio
Course Instructor:	Tom Coash
Term enrolled in course:	Spring 2011
This course is part of which of your majors or minors?	BFA: Performing Arts – Directing
Number of Credit Hours for course:	3

What additional opportunities and responsibilities will you have that are not part of the standard course which will create for you an “Honors experience”? Please read for the HAC Directions for specific examples of potential projects. Please **specifically** describe the scope, nature, and benefits of your proposed project below:

By augmenting PERF 400, I will take advantage of my double major in Musical Theatre and Directing by staging the musical *The Spitfire Grill*. This hour and a half show extends beyond the usual assignment of staging a thirty-minute production. *Spitfire* will challenge my musical directing skills, as well as my normal stage-directing abilities. Additionally, my production will consist of at least seven performers – twice that of the projects students typically direct. To assist me with this task, I will be reading *Deconstructing Harold Hill* by Scott Miller, which will give me greater insight to the art of developing the characters in musical theatre and aid me in coaching my own actors.

How will your performance in these additional areas be assessed? Will they be part of your course grade, or will they only count for Honors Credit? Please read the HAC Directions for suggestions as to how HACs can be incorporated into a student’s course grade.

My performance with this project will be assessed in the way the other students in the class are evaluated, including but not limited to rehearsal visits from the professor to make sure I am handling the material effectively, attendance by the professor and class at a performance of *The Spitfire Grill*, and a critique session following the close of the production, consisting of reflections and constructive criticism from my peers and professor.

Will the Augmentation be supported with additional resources, such as regular meetings with the instructor, access to additional equipment, facilities, or supplies, or travel? If so, please explain.

To aid me with this project, I will have access to a piano for any and all rehearsals. I am being given funding to cover the expense of royalties for the musical, as they are higher than straight plays (due to scores and such), and, of course, I will be able to meet with my professor should I have any questions or problems. I will, however, be applying for a Development Grant from the Honors College to assist me in paying for the accompanist and guitarist for the performances of

my show.

Signature Page

Student Approval

In order to receive Honors credit for the course identified in the attached proposal, I agree to complete the Honors-specific component proposed in addition to the standard workload for the course. I understand that Honors credit will be assigned for the course only after the Honors-specific components have been successfully completed and the instructor has notified the Honors College of this fact.

Signature: 
Printed Name: Stephen G. Tabor
Date: 1-24-11

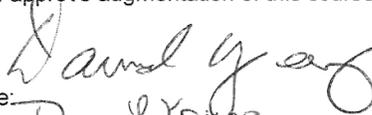
Course Instructor Approval

I have participated in the development of the attached contract and feel the Honors-specific components proposed are both valuable to the student and of sufficient scholarly rigor to warrant assignment of Honors credit for the course identified. I agree to provide additional educational opportunities to the student as described above. I will inform the Honors College in writing at the end of the semester as to whether the student has successfully completed the Honors-augmented portion of the course.

Signature: 
Printed Name: THOMAS R. COASH
Date: 1/24/11

Departmental Approval

I have reviewed the attached proposal and feel the Honors-specific components proposed are both valuable and sufficiently rigorous to warrant assignment of Honors credit. On behalf of the department, I approve augmentation of this course for Honors credit.

Signature: 
Printed Name: David Young
Date: 1/24/11



Honors Development Grant Application

Office use only		
Date:	Total Hrs:	Approval?
GPA:	GS?	Amount:
H. Cr.:	Warning?	Notified on:

Before completing this form, fully read the HDG Directions. Please **type** and fully provide the information requested below:

Name:	Stephen G. Tabor
Student #:	[REDACTED]
Mobile Phone #:	[REDACTED]
WKU Email:	[REDACTED]
Local mailing address:	[REDACTED]

<p>Please <i>briefly</i> describe the activity and any pertinent dates (such as travel)</p> <p>I will be directing the musical <i>The Spitfire Grill</i> as part of the WKU 2011 Studio Series – the class, for which, I have a Augmentation Contract because musicals tend to require more effort than straight plays. The rehearsal process begins February 7, 2011 and continues, culminating in two performances: March 28 and 29 at 8:00 p.m.</p>
<p>Do you wish to be considered for a CE/T Excellence Grant (maximum award of \$1,500). Note: you must have an approved CE/T Proposal on file. If so, please describe the extra steps you will take (such as attempting journal publication, conference presentation, etc.) due to the additional funding potentially to be provided.</p> <p>No.</p>
<p>For tangible items (like equipment): Please provide two to three quotes for each item. List the quoted prices and providers below. Tangible items remain the property of the Honors College.</p> <p>N/A</p>

BUDGET SHEET

Itemized List of Expenses:	Cost:
Recording Accompanist	\$100
Performance Accompanist	\$200
Guitar Player	\$200
Total Expense of Project:	\$500
Total Requested Funds:	\$500

You are encouraged to seek other sources of funding, such as from your department, college, etc. Please list the sources and amounts of alternative funding you have sought:

The Department of Theatre & Dance will pay for the royalties of my production but does not have funds to provide me with an accompanist.

Below, please provide a typed, double-spaced narrative of approximately 250 words describing how you would use the requested funds, focusing on how these funds will enrich your academic experience. If you are attending a conference, please discuss our role. If you are conducting research, please describe this research.

I would like to hire an accompanist to record the music so that I may use CDs during our rehearsal process rather than pay for a live accompanist. Furthermore, I would then need to hire an accompanist and guitar player for the dress rehearsal and two performances of my show.

Letter of Support

The Project Advisor listed above must submit a letter of support for your HDG proposal. The Project Advisor can find and submit the HDG Letter of Support directly to the Honors College from the Honors College's website, at www.wku.edu/honors. The Project Advisor can address any questions or problems to Stephanie.hammons@wku.edu. HDG applications will not be evaluated if the Letter of Support is not submitted by the HDG deadline. It is the student's responsibility to notify the Project Advisor of the Letter of Support form online, the directions, and the deadline. Be sure to ask your Project Advisor for a letter several weeks before the HDG deadline. The Letter of Support will be used in evaluating the strength of your HDG application

The Project Advisor will be asked to state that he or she is overseeing your project and has knowledge of the associated financial costs. The letter should also speak to the quality and importance of this project in enriching your academic experience, as well as his or her academic experience with you. Your HDG application will not be considered without a Project Advisor recommendation submitted by the deadline.

Final Submission

By completing this document and emailing it as an attachment to honors@wku.edu you are declaring the veracity of the financial information reported above and understand the terms, rules, and conditions of the grant you are applying for. If the Honors College chooses to award funds to financially support the project proposed in this grant application, the Honors College does not assume any legal liability or responsibility for your actions or this project. Please make sure you check with your Project Advisor to educate yourself on all legal liability and risk issues connected to your participation in this project, under the auspices of your Project Advisor's employer.



A LEADING AMERICAN UNIVERSITY WITH INTERNATIONAL REACH
UNIVERSITY HONORS COLLEGE

March 3, 2011

Stephen Tabor
[REDACTED]

Dear Stephen,

Congratulations! I am pleased to inform you that the Honors Development Board approved your Honors Development Grant (HDG) Application for up to \$225. Please carefully read the following instructions for receiving your grant.

Students have requested more than double the amount of funds available in the HDG budget, making the funding selection process more competitive and difficult than ever. In order to substantially support the maximum number of deserving students, no student received full funding. Your level of funding was determined by a committee of Honors faculty, staff, and students, based on the criteria stated in the HDG directions, particularly your essay's ability to specifically explain the academic benefit of your project.

Honors will only pay or reimburse for actual expenses up to the amount awarded in this letter, and only for the expenses you listed in your application. Expenses paid by another source cannot be claimed. Your funding may be through:

1) Reimbursement (all travel):

You will need to submit original itemized receipts showing the amounts paid. If you are submitting receipts for airline travel, you may submit the e-mail receipt you received as long as it contains your name, dates of travel and the amount paid. Please note that copies of cleared checks, checking account statement and credit card statements are **not** acceptable proofs of payment.

2) Payment on an unpaid invoice:

If you would like the Honors College to pay directly on an unpaid invoice, you must provide the original invoice and contact information for the organization. The invoice must be for the expenses you listed in your application.

3) Supplies through a Department:

If you are purchasing specific supplies for a CE/T research project, you should ask your department to purchase the supplies for you and ask them to contact Stephanie Hammons in the Honors College about reimbursement.

Please note: you must submit all receipts within 30 days of purchase. After the 30-day deadline, funds will not be issued. After submitting your receipts, the Honors College will prepare the correct documents and submit them to the Controller's office for processing. Sometimes, the document will require your signature before it can be submitted. Please be sure to check your WKU e-mail. We will notify you if a form requires your signature and provide instructions for submitting it. Accounts Payable will issue a check approximately 2-3 weeks from the date all documentation has been received.

If you have any questions, please contact Stephanie Hammons in the Honors College at stephanie.hammons@wku.edu

Sincerely,



Clay Motley, Ph.D.
Assistant Director of Academics

P.S. The Honors College and private donors make significant financial commitments to support student opportunities such as the one described in your HDG application. As you consider the role this grant will play in your future success, please consider making a gift to the Honors College to enable future students to have similar opportunities. If you have any questions about giving to the Honors College, please contact Amanda Lich at amanda.lich@wku.edu

The Spirit Makes the Master

University Honors College | Western Kentucky University | 1906 College Heights Blvd. #31082 | Bowling Green, KY 42101-1082
phone: 270.745.2081 | fax: 270.745.3568 | email: honors@wku.edu | web: www.wku.edu/honors

Equal Education and Employment Opportunities • Printing paid from state funds, NRS 57.375 • Hearing Impaired Only: 270.745.5389



Honors Development Grant Application

Office use only		
Date:	Total Hrs:	Approval?
GPA:	GS?	Amount:
H. Cr.:	Warning?	Notified on:

Before completing this form, fully read the HDG Directions. Please **type** and fully provide the information requested below:

Name:	Stephen G. Tabor
Student #:	[REDACTED]
Mobile Phone #:	[REDACTED]
WKU Email:	[REDACTED]
Local mailing address:	[REDACTED]

<p>Please <i>briefly</i> describe the activity and any pertinent dates (such as travel)</p> <p>I will be directing the musical <i>The Spitfire Grill</i> as research for my thesis, <i>The Challenges of Staging the Spitfire Grill in a Thrust Setting</i>. I need money to pay for the rental of the scores and a rehearsal accompanist. The performances will be March 28 and 29 at 8:00 p.m.</p>
<p>Do you wish to be considered for a CE/T Excellence Grant (maximum award of \$1,500). Note: you must have an approved CE/T Proposal on file. If so, please describe the extra steps you will take (such as attempting journal publication, conference presentation, etc.) due to the additional funding potentially to be provided.</p> <p>Yes. I will be presenting my thesis at the 41st Annual WKU Student Research Conference, and I aspire to have my thesis (or part of it) published in the quarterly <i>Southeastern Theatre Conference</i> journal.</p>
<p>For tangible items (like equipment): Please provide two to three quotes for each item. List the quoted prices and providers below. Tangible items remain the property of the Honors College.</p> <p>N/A</p>

BUDGET SHEET

Itemized List of Expenses:	Cost:
Rehearsal Accompanist	\$300 (15 hrs at \$20 per hr.)
Vocal Scores	\$45 (5 scores at \$9 a piece)
Piano/Conductor Score Rental Fee	\$55
Guitar Score	\$200
Licensing Fee	\$300
Total Expense of Project:	\$900
Total Requested Funds:	\$600

You are encouraged to seek other sources of funding, such as from your department, college, etc. Please list the sources and amounts of alternative funding you have sought:

The Department of Theatre & Dance is able pay for the royalties of my production, but the usual allotment of a \$100 budget will be devoted to set construction, costumes, and lighting needs.

Below, please provide a typed, double-spaced narrative of approximately 250 words describing how you would use the requested funds, focusing on how these funds will enrich your academic experience. If you are attending a conference, please discuss our role. If you are conducting research, please describe this research.

This money would be used to secure most of the musical requirements for my show, *The Spitfire Grill*. This production is the cornerstone of my thesis because I am examining the challenges of producing a proscenium-conceived musical in a thrust setting, specifically that of the Gordon Wilson Lab Theatre. By following-through with this production, I will be able to identify many of the pitfalls that occur with this kind of transition, and it is my hope that my findings will prove to be beneficial to future student directors who not only wish to produce musicals in the Lab Theatre space, but straight plays, as well. Documentation can be provided for the potential cost of these resources, by means of the Samuel French, Inc. website or through the Theatre and Dance Department.

Letter of Support

The Project Advisor listed above must submit a letter of support for your HDG proposal. The Project Advisor can find and submit the HDG Letter of Support directly to the Honors College from the Honors College's website, at www.wku.edu/honors. The Project Advisor can address any questions or problems to Stephanie.hammons@wku.edu. HDG applications will not be evaluated if the Letter of Support is not submitted by the HDG deadline. It is the student's responsibility to notify the Project Advisor of the Letter of Support form online, the directions, and the deadline. Be sure to ask your Project Advisor for a letter several weeks before the HDG deadline. The Letter of Support will be used in evaluating the strength of your HDG application

The Project Advisor will be asked to state that he or she is overseeing your project and has knowledge of the associated financial costs. The letter should also speak to the quality and importance of this project in enriching your academic experience, as well as his or her academic experience with you. Your HDG application will not be considered without a Project Advisor recommendation submitted by the deadline.

Final Submission

By completing this document and emailing it as an attachment to honors@wku.edu you are declaring the veracity of the financial information reported above and understand the terms, rules, and conditions of the grant you are applying for. If the Honors College chooses to award funds to financially support the project proposed in this grant application, the Honors College does not assume any legal liability or responsibility for your actions or this project. Please make

sure you check with your Project Advisor to educate yourself on all legal liability and risk issues connected to your participation in this project, under the auspices of your Project Advisor's employer.



A LEADING AMERICAN UNIVERSITY WITH INTERNATIONAL REACH
UNIVERSITY HONORS COLLEGE

April 28, 2011

Stephen Tabor
[REDACTED]

Dear Stephen,

Congratulations! I am pleased to inform you that the Honors Development Board approved your Honors Development Grant (HDG) Application for up to **\$300.00**. Please carefully read the following instructions for receiving your grant.

Students have requested more than double the amount of funds available in the HDG budget, making the funding selection process more competitive and difficult than ever. In order to substantially support the maximum number of deserving students, no student received full funding. Your level of funding was determined by a committee of Honors faculty, staff, and students, based on the criteria stated in the HDG directions, particularly your essay's ability to specifically explain the academic benefit of your project.

Honors will only pay or reimburse for actual expenses up to the amount awarded in this letter, and only for the expenses you listed in your application. Expenses paid by another source cannot be claimed. Your funding may be through:

1) Reimbursement (all travel):

You will need to submit original itemized receipts showing the amounts paid. If you are submitting receipts for airline travel, you may submit the e-mail receipt you received as long as it contains your name, dates of travel and the amount paid. Please note that copies of cleared checks, checking account statement and credit card statements are **not** acceptable proofs of payment.

2) Payment on an unpaid invoice:

If you would like the Honors College to pay directly on an unpaid invoice, you must provide the original invoice and contact information for the organization. The invoice must be for the expenses you listed in your application.

3) Supplies through a Department:

If you are purchasing specific supplies for a CE/T research project, you should ask your department to purchase the supplies for you and ask them to contact Stephanie Hammons in the Honors College about reimbursement.

Please note: you must submit all receipts within 30 days of purchase. After the 30-day deadline, funds will not be issued. After submitting your receipts, the Honors College will prepare the correct documents and submit them to the Controller's office for processing. Sometimes, the document will require your signature before it can be submitted. Please be sure to check your WKU e-mail. We will notify you if a form requires your signature and provide instructions for submitting it. Accounts Payable will issue a check approximately 2-3 weeks from the date all documentation has been received.

If you have any questions, please contact Stephanie Hammons in the Honors College at stephanie.hammons@wku.edu

Sincerely,


Clay Motley, Ph.D.
Assistant Director of Academics

P.S. The Honors College and private donors make significant financial commitments to support student opportunities such as the one described in your HDG application. As you consider the role this grant will play in your future success, please consider making a gift to the Honors College to enable future students to have similar opportunities. If you have any questions about giving to the Honors College, please contact Amanda Lich at amanda.lich@wku.edu

The Spirit Makes the Master

University Honors College | Western Kentucky University | 1906 College Heights Blvd. #31082 | Bowling Green, KY 42101-1082
phone: 270.745.2081 | fax: 270.745.3568 | email: honors@wku.edu | web: www.wku.edu/honors

Equal Education and Employment Opportunities • Printing paid from state funds, KRS 57.375 • Hearing Impaired Only: 270.745.5389

List of Classes at WKU That Prepared Me to Direct *The Spitfire Grill*

THEA 101: Acting I	MUS 100: Music Theory I
THEA 252: Fundamentals of Theatre	MUS 160: Group Piano
THEA 141: Stage Makeup	MUS 162: Group Voice
PERF 205: Voice & Movement for the Stage	THEA 385: Applied Vocal Styles
THEA 203: Acting Audition Workshop	MUS 350: Applied Music-Voice
THEA 431: Musical Theatre History & Repertoire	THEA 306: Musical Theatre Ensemble
THEA 300: Acting II	PERF 120-321: Rehearsal & Production I-VI
THEA 371: Directing I	THEA 392: Production of Theatre for Children
DANC 310: Choreography I	PERF 400: Advanced Performing Arts Studio
THEA 219: Design I	
THEA 241: Costume Technology	
THEA 250: Stage Electrics	
THEA 424: Sound Design	
THEA 301: Acting III	
THEA 410: Playing Shakespeare	
THEA 391: Children's Theatre and Creative Dramatics	
THEA 312: Stage Management	
THEA 380: Directing II	
THEA 307: Music Theatre Workshop I	
THEA 407: Music Theatre Workshop II	

AUDITIONS!

Maggie the Pirate
&

THE SPITFIRE GRILL

Monday, Jan. 31 from 5-9

GWH Lab Theatre.

Callbacks will held on Feb. 1.

An accompanist will be provided. Please prepare a short song or 32-bar cut (no monologue needed). Per Professor Moore:

"Audition songs should show the best part of your voice, and be a combination of strong acting and singing. Be prepared to vocalize, if asked. No Jason Robert Brown, no Disney."

If you are interested but are unable to attend the auditions, please contact Professor Moore or Stephen G. Tabor. A breakdown for both shows is listed below. Hope to see you there!

- Sterling S. Franklin
SM, *Maggie the Pirate*

Maggie/Spitfire # _____

Maggie the Pirate: March 25; *The Spitfire Grill*: March 28-29
Directed by Tracey Moore; Directed by Stephen G. Tabor
Audition Information Form

Contact Information

- Name (as you would like it to appear in program)

- Local Address:

- Cell/Other phone number: _____

- E-Mail: _____

- Year in school: _____

- Are you currently on academic or department probation? _____

Commitments

- Are you currently involved in any other theatre productions (**including Dance Company**)?
If so, what is the show and what is your job?

- Do you have other previous commitments (weddings, auditions, etc.) between now and **March 30**?
If so, what and when?

- If you have a job outside of school, approximately how many hours a week do you work?
Do you know your schedule?

- Are you taking any night or weekend classes (other than Rehearsal and Production)?
If so, what class(es) and when?

Maggie/Spitfire # _____

Maggie the Pirate: March 25; *The Spitfire Grill*: March 28-29

Directed by Tracey Moore; Directed by Stephen G. Tabor

Audition Information Form

Additional Information

- Would you accept a role if cast? _____
- Would you accept a small ensemble role? _____
- Have you read the script for *The Spitfire Grill*? _____
- Do you sing? If so, what's your vocal range? _____
- Please circle your ability to read music (1= Poor, 5=Excellent)

1 2 3 4 5

- Do you have any other special skills (gymnastics, stage-combat, musical instruments, etc.)?

- Are you willing to change your appearance?

- Would you be able to return from Spring Break for rehearsal on Sunday, March 13?

- Please list any relevant theatre experience or up to five shows/roles:

Rehearsals for *The Spitfire Grill* will begin Monday, February 7 and will continue through the close of the show on Tuesday, March 29, usually rehearsing in the evening from 5:00 to 8:00, and will include some Saturdays and Sundays.

Rehearsals for *Maggie the Pirate* will begin Sunday, March 13 and will continue through its performance on Friday, March 25, rehearsing in the evening from 6:00 to 10:30, and will include some Saturdays and Sundays.

These rehearsal times and dates are subject to change.

I have read and understand the rehearsal times and performance dates, and I understand that no conflicts other than those listed above will be accepted during for the run of this production.

X _____

Date ____ / ____ / ____

Maggie/Spitfire

Maggie the Pirate: March 25; *The Spitfire Grill*: March 28-29

Directed by Tracey Moore; Directed by Stephen G. Tabor

Audition Information Form

Additional Questions for *The Spitfire Grill*

Define “hope”:

Why, above every other person auditioning, should you be cast?
That is, what unique aspect can you bring to this production?

Director’s Notes (Please do not write in this space):

P H S J C E V

Rm 312
Tues, Feb.

The Spitfire Grill:
Callbacks

Thank you all for auditioning! Please keep an open mind about these callbacks; as the saying goes, just because you aren't called back doesn't mean you aren't being considered. Please contact Lusie Cuskey (502.657.8352) with any conflicts.

7:30 – 8:15

Shelby Brown
Kaitlyn Fouts
Morgan Howard

8:00 – 8:45

Holly Berger
LaDarra Starkey
Jillian Weinzapfel
Abby Helton
Natalie Hoffman
Molly Kays
Kaitlyn Webb

8:45 – 9:30

Tyler Brown
Josh Stinson
Ian Meyer

Jon Meyer

9:30 – 10:00

Mal Ward
Mariah Wolitski
Vicky Siegrist
April Johns
J. Morgan Schaffo

**THE SPITFIRE GRILL
CAST LIST**

IN THE TOWN OF GILEAD...

PERCY TALBOT KAITLYN FOUTS

HANNAH FERGUSON LADARRA STARKEY

SHELBY THORPE..... HOLLY BERGER

JOE SUTTER JONATHAN MEYER

EFFY KRAYNECK J. MORGAN SHAFFO

CALEB THORPE..... TYLER BROWN

THE VISITOR JUSTIN AYER

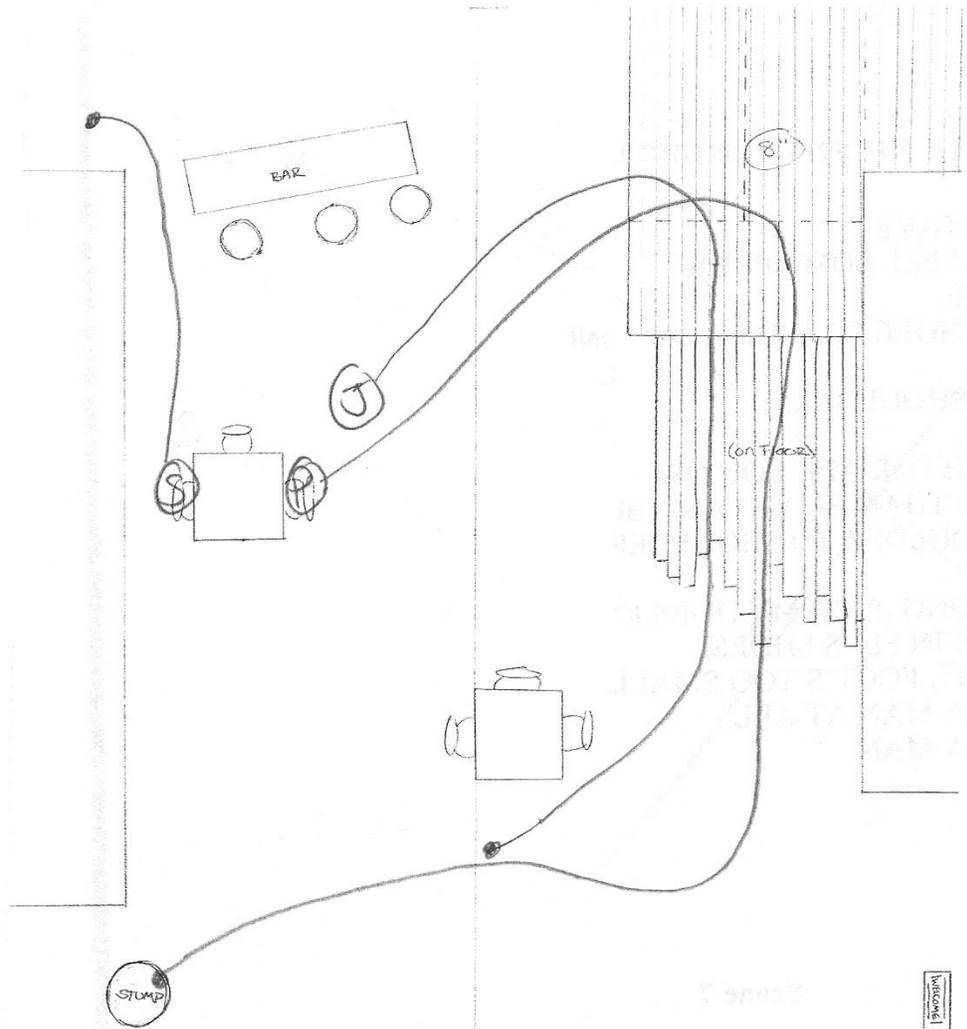
ENSEMBLE BLAKE COX

KFR KELLI RALSTON

NB NIC BAYNUM

THANK YOU TO ALL WHO AUDITIONED AND ALSO TO THOSE WHO CAME TO CALLBACKS. WITH EVERY CAST LIST A DIRECTOR WILL SAY HOW HARD IT IS TO MAKE THE TOUGH DECISIONS – AND IT WILL ALWAYS BE TOO TRUE. I WAS AMAZED AT THE FRESH TALENT I SAW BEFORE ME, AND I ENCOURAGE EACH OF YOU TO CONTINUE AUDITIONING FOR PRODUCTIONS.

TO THOSE CAST, PLEASE INITIAL TO ACCEPT YOUR ROLE. LUSIE AND I WILL BE IN TOUCH TO SCHEDULE MUSIC REHEARSALS NEXT WEEK. THANK YOU!



u

DESIGN BY ANNA EBBEX 2/22/11



- 2 (S) S
- 3 FSD; (S) e UR
- 4 (S) (P) x D
- 24 (P) x B
- 33 (P) S [S], F D
- 35 (P) F (S)

Director's Evaluation Form: Cast

Director: Stephen Tabar

Please rank your director on the following items using this 10 point scale:

- 10= Absolutely NAILED everything about this; could NOT have been more perfect.
- 1= A squirming embarrassment that was obviously not adequately prepared.

9 Detailed, intimate knowledge of the scene's dramatic action, moods and rhythms.

Commentary

Very knowledgeable of characters' motivations, knew what he wanted to ~~bring~~ come out of actors

9 Leadership (ability to inspire confidence and collaborative spirit etc.)

Commentary

very helpful tips & notes;
Exercises & warm up were very efficient

8 Organization (Preparedness, efficiency etc.)

Commentary

Good about getting schedules out early
Always good about releasing those who weren't needed anymore from rehearsal

7 Interpersonal "people" skills

Commentary

Nice, but could take more time to get to know whole cast better

9 How would you rate the overall effectiveness of this director? Would you like to work with them again?

Commentary

My best directing experience since I've been at Wku. Very organized, & always on

142 POINT TOTAL

top of things; knows how to bring out the best in an actor; would love to work w/ him again! 😊

1

THEA 371: Directing Practicum
Director's Evaluation Form: Cast

Director: Stephen Tabor

Please rank your director on the following items using this 10 point scale:

- 10= Absolutely NAILED everything about this; could NOT have been more perfect.
- 1= A squirming embarrassment that was obviously not adequately prepared.

10 Detailed, intimate knowledge of the scene's dramatic action, moods and rhythms.

Commentary You knew the show inside and out.

10 Leadership (ability to inspire confidence and collaborative spirit etc.)

Commentary I did respect your ability to work with everyone and their schedules. I felt like you were always prepared and ready to have rehearsal. I didn't know how you were going to handle the ensemble parts that took so long to finally nail, but you trusted ~~to~~ your performers and it worked out. The only thing I would note is try to make your notes shorter.

Organization (Preparedness, efficiency etc.)

Commentary You were prepared all the time, but I disagreed with the repetition of scenes during the end of the run. It may be beliefs between you & I, but I feel strength in acting comes from rest & analysis. Instead, we pounded scenes over & over until the intention suited the scene.

10 Interpersonal "people" skills

Commentary You are a phenomenal "people" person and I feel like you could walk into a room ~~full~~ full of lions and they would love you! You are hilarious & I love your ambition for directing.

9 How would you rate the overall effectiveness of this director? Would you like to work with them again?

Commentary I thank you for helping me with Caleb (and I hope it was how you interpreted him). I would love to work with you again. You allow your actors to voice their own opinions.

46 POINT TOTAL

Director's Evaluation Form: Cast

Director: Stephen G. Tabor

Please rank your director on the following items using this 10 point scale:

- 10= Absolutely **NAILED** everything about this; could NOT have been more perfect.
- 1= A squirming embarrassment that was obviously not adequately prepared.

10 Detailed, intimate knowledge of the scene's dramatic action, moods and rhythms.

Commentary I thought he really knew the story forwards & backwards. He was very good at getting the actors to bring the emotions to the scenes naturally.

6 Leadership (ability to inspire confidence and collaborative spirit etc.)

Commentary The warm ups really helped us to grow closer and trust one another. However, it took ^{me} a while to actually get to know everyone because we ~~did~~ were not ^{all} together often until the end.

6 Organization (Preparedness, efficiency etc.)

Commentary Overall good job, but there were times people were called and they did not need to be. I did not experience this though. Also, this was not Stephen's fault, but some of the technical aspects were extremely late. (set & props)

9 Interpersonal "people" skills

Commentary He was very encouraging. Especially in my case. As a freshman, he was very patient with me.

9 How would you rate the overall effectiveness of this director? Would you like to work with them again?

Commentary

I am so glad I got to work with him before he graduated!
I would definitely work with him again.

44

POINT TOTAL

Personal Reflection of My Thesis

This thesis was a very delicate process for me because I so desperately wanted to leave behind a helpful and easily accessible guide for future students wishing to direct musical theatre at Western Kentucky University. Unfortunately, the hindsight a director has when his show closes can take months before it is fully realized, and so even now I reflect on things I wish I could have included in my project or researched for my thesis.

One element I wish I had addressed in my thesis was the amount of time directing a musical requires. I mentioned that my production calendar would need to factor in approximately 90 hours of rehearsal time, but this did not include spontaneous work sessions with the actors (often working on music with them outside of rehearsal at their request), design and production meetings, and most of all, the time invested into researching the show for my dramaturgical analysis. While my total number of hours for this process from preproduction to closing night cannot be accurately determined, I could safely say that I invested over 200 hours in my production of *The Spitfire Grill*. That is the minimum amount of time a student needs to be willing to commit to his musical project.

Another element I wish I had had the foresight to investigate further before I began my rehearsal process is collaboration with a music student. Mainstage musicals directed at Western Kentucky University rely on collaboration between the Music Department and the Theatre and Dance Department. I had hoped for a similar relationship with a music student for my show, if possible, but not having a strong familiarity with many music students, I was unsure how to go about instigating collaborative one. I did approach one young pianist about working with my show, but his

commitments to other classes prevented him helping. It is my hope that in the future a relationship may be formed with the Music Department so that a theatre student and a music student might collaborate to direct a musical for class credit, which would eliminate the need to pay for a music director and would also remove the burden of directing music from the theatre student.

Finally, an important element I failed to mention in my thesis is the subject of publicity. WKU theatre productions are assigned students to serve as publicity head and publicity crew. However, there is no formal training in the Theatre Department to prepare students for this type of work, and so most often the work of publicity falls to the director. This is a flaw in the educational system, for at professional theatres, a director would not be responsible for publicity. However, much like my note in “Financial Backing” about the director serving as a producer, a director needs an audience to which he can present his work, so ultimately, he must be aware of how much initiative has been taken to publicize his show. The student director should be aware that unless this flaw at WKU is corrected, he will likely be in charge of managing promotional flyers, setting up newspaper and radio interviews, developing and editing the program, and much more.

In conclusion, I could never say enough in my thesis to create a perfect manual for students to use to direct musical at Western Kentucky University. More than anything, I would encourage them to read as much as they can from other directing books (those mentioned in my bibliography) and seek the mentoring of their theatre professors. As I implied in my introduction, this thesis was never intended to be a precise recipe book for cooking up the perfect musical, but it is my hope that future students directing musical theatre at WKU will use this thesis as a map to guide them along the way.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ball, William. A Sense of Direction: Some Observations on the Art of Directing.
Hollywood: Quite Specific Media Group Ltd., 1984.
- Cohen, Robert. Acting One. 5th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008.
- Davenport, Ken. "How much should I pay for an option?" The Producer's Perspective.
26 Aug. 2008. 18 Apr. 2011.
<http://www.theproducersperspective.com/my_weblog/2008/08/how-much-should.html>.
- Esslin, Martin. An Anatomy of Drama. New York: Hill and Wang, 1976.
- Fichandler, Zelda. Interview. Arthur Bartow. The Director's Voice: Twenty-One Interviews. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1988.
- Franzini, Laura Mae, "A Deeper Look Into the World of Costuming" (2007). Honors College Capstone Experience/Thesis Projects. Paper 122.
<http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/stu_hon_theses/122>.
- Jordan, J. Rev. of The Spitfire Grill, dir. Robert Francis Perillo. Nyctheatre.com. 4
Sept. 2008. 30 April 2011.
<<http://www.nyctheatre.com/showpage.aspx?s=spit7325>>.
- "Prairie de Chien." Map. Google. Google Maps. 25 Nov. 2010
<<http://maps.google.com/maps?ct=reset>>.
- Ionazzi, Daniel A. The Stage Management Handbook. Cincinnati: Betterway Books,
1992.

- Kondanzian, Karen. Eddie Shapiro. The Actor's Encyclopedia of Casting Directors: Conversations with Over 100 Casting Directors on How to Get the Job. Los Angeles: Lone Eagle, 1999.
- Mason, Marshall. Creating Life on Stage. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2007.
- Mason, Marshall. Interview. Arthur Bartow. The Director's Voice: Twenty-One Interviews. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1988.
- Merlin, Joanna. Auditioning. New York: Vintage Books, 2001.
- "Middle C." The New Harvard Dictionary of Music. 1986.
- Miles-Brown, John. Directing Drama
- Miller, Scott. Deconstructing Harold Hill: An Insider's Guide to Musical Theatre. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2000.
- Moore, Tracey. Allison Bergman. Acting the Song: Performance Skills for the Musical Theatre. New York: Allworth Press, 2008.
- Moore, Tracey. Music Theatre Workshop I. Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, KY. 22 Feb. 2008.
- Off-Broadway Cast Recording. The Spitfire Grill. Playwrights Horizon, 2001.
- Patterson, Jim. Stage Directing: First Experiences. Boston: Pearson, 2004.
- Perry, George. The Complete Phantom of the Opera. New York: Henry Holt, 1988.
- Richards, Lloyd. Interview. Arthur Bartow. The Director's Voice: Twenty-One Interviews. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1988.
- Stanislavski, Constantin. An Actor Prepares. Trans. Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood. New York: Routledge, 1964.
- Samuel French, Inc. Samuel French. 2009. 18 Nov. 2010 <www.samuel french.com>.

- Silver, Fred. Auditioning for the Musical Theatre. New York: New Market Press, 1985.
- Stroot, Scott. "Director's Dramaturgical Analysis." Worksheet. 2007.
- Stroot, Scott. "S11 APAS Proposal." E-mail to Stephen G. Tabor. 9 Nov. 2010.
- Stroot, Scott. "RE: Your S11 APAS Proposal." E-mail to Stephen G. Tabor. 17 Nov. 2010.
- The Internet Off-Broadway Database. Lortel Archives. 2002. Lucille Lortel Foundation. 20 Nov. 2010.
<http://www.lortel.org/lla_archive/index.cfm?search_by=show&title=The%20Spitfire%20Grill>.
- The Spitfire Grill: A Musical. PageMason. 20 Nov. 2010. <www.thespitfiregrill.com>.
- Thomas, James. Script Analysis for Actors, Directors, and Designers. 3rd ed. Burlington: Elsevier, 2005.
- Tutino, Tom. Design I. Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, KY. 14 Oct. 2009.
- Valcq, James. Fred Alley. The Spitfire Grill. New York: Samuel French, Inc., 2001.
- Welker, David. Theatre Direction: The Basic Techniques. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1971.
- Williams, Clifford. Interview. Directing Drama. John Miles-Brown. London: Peter Owen, 1980.
- Young, David. Children's Theatre/Creative Drama. Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, KY. 20 Mar. 2009.