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The Conclusion

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THE CONCLUSION

by

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College of Arts and Sciences

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DEDICATION

To the one who has given so much and has never asked for anything in return. With endless gratitude. “ !”

ABSTRACT

The Conclusion is a final exploration of discoveries I have made in the process of designing three different stories in three different forms. This thesis examines all creative and analytical processes I have gone through as a designer in theatre. It also highlights the collaborative process, its importance, and at the end, speaks about the final product, its sustainability and influence. The design works included in this thesis are: costume design for *The Threepenny Opera* by Bertolt Brecht directed by Steven Pearson in Fall 2015, scenic design for *The Tempest*, by William Shakespeare, directed by Robert Richmond in Spring 2016, scenic design for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, by William Shakespeare, directed by Robert Richmond in Fall 2016. These shows were presented in two different theatre venues at the University of South Carolina.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE THREEPENNY OPERA

The performance was opened on October 2nd, 2015 in Longstreet Theatre- one of the University of South Carolina's theatre venues. The production and the design team included director Steven Pearson, Head of the MFA Acting program, scenic designer Tamara Joksimovic, costume designer Neda Spalajkovic, and lighting designer Chris Patterson.

1.1 BEYOND THE PLAY

Brecht's *The Threepenny Opera*, is an adaptation of Beggar's Opera, which was written in a very satirical way in 1728 by John Gay who was referring to the actual figures of the English society. In Brecht's version this topic becomes a satirical illustration of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's thesis which is claiming that property is theft. Brecht is presenting the world of criminals, beggars and prostitutes as a normal world, without any negative classification, but yet affirming ethics as a characters justification and motivation for certain actions. Brecht's epic theatre is a scientific theatre. He examines characters, situations, relationships in order to criticize, awake and address the true perception of the actualities. One of the ways he does that is with deflection and alienation or "Verfremdungseffekt". He had the tendency to set things in historical distance, as another way of alienation.

Looking back on the things that have happened, or recollecting things from the past, awakes a need to be more critical and objective. One common misbelief is that Bertolt Brecht's theatre is similar to musical theatre, but Brecht's songs are usually there, like his cardboard signs, to indicate the time, space, and the problem; those songs are there to mock, reflect and point out. They are not meant to entertain; but rather have a purpose to shock, disturb and alert.

1.2 THE PLOT AND BRIEF ANALYSIS

Macheath, or Mac the Knife, marries Polly Peachum in spite of father Peachum's opposition. Peachum is a king of London's underground beggars and Mac's biggest opponent, and Mr. Peachum wants to put Macheath in a prison and have him hanged. However, Tiger Brown, the policeman, is not only Mac's great friend from the army, but he is also on his payroll, so Mac's arrest, needless to say, is impossible. However, Tiger Brown, asks Macheath to leave London, during the queen's coronation, but Mac ignores him. Instead, he goes to his secret place- the brothel where he finally gets arrested. With Lucy Tiger Brown's daughter's help, he escapes from the prison but, before long, he gets arrested again. Nevertheless, at the last moment the queen's envoy shows up, not only frees Mac not only freedom, but grants him a house and ten thousand pounds pension per year as well. Brecht is convincing us that this world of criminals, with the business world of capitalistic society and their morals, is logical and correct. Every meaningful sequence of *The Threepenny Opera* concludes with logically certain statement- that the world is poor, that man is ruthless, and that the core of every relationship between people is based on criminality. Brecht is clearly applying "Verfremdungseffekt". If he actually presented the world of capitalists, the audience already familiar with it, would not be affected by it. By

perceiving this world as the world of criminals, he alienates the universe of capitalists and financiers. Brecht has revealed their mechanisms and their morals, and ultimately stimulated the audience's awareness of the need to change it. *The Threepenny Opera* is not significant because it has the power to convince the audience that "property is theft" - its significance is in the complete opposite.

This strange and creative, humorous and bizarre play on the one hand supports absolute amorality, but in the next moment it reveals Brecht's empathy for the poor (who are in this opera presented as villains). It looks like that the goal of this play is to evoke compassion and understanding for the global human condition, but on the other it pleads for brutality and it explains how compassion is redundant, impossible and stupid in this world. So therefore, going from the one viewpoint to another, *The Threepenny Opera* shows that any solution is impossible.

1.3 HISTORICAL DISTANCE

The director Steven Pearson, thought that the Brechtian idea of historical distance was inspiring, so he imagined the whole play placed in the time right before Queen Victoria's coronation, which took place in London on 28th of June 1838. This period of time in costume history was called the Romantic Era, from 1815-1840 (Figure 1.3). It had certain flamboyant qualities which were not suitable for our presentation of the roughness of the world the play. Since the decades later had a sort of plainness, it was agreed to move to the Victorian fashion period, from 1840-1900, (Figure 1.4) The simplicity and modesty was transposed into something that was not distracting, and it allowed directing and acting to tell the story in a more accurate way.



Figure 1.1 Artist unknown, “Public Promenade Dress 1830-1840”, Medium hand-colored engraving, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne



Figure 1.2 George Cruikshank for The Comic Almanack published by Henry Tilt of Fleet St. "APRIL 1838, Street Market on Low Sunday"

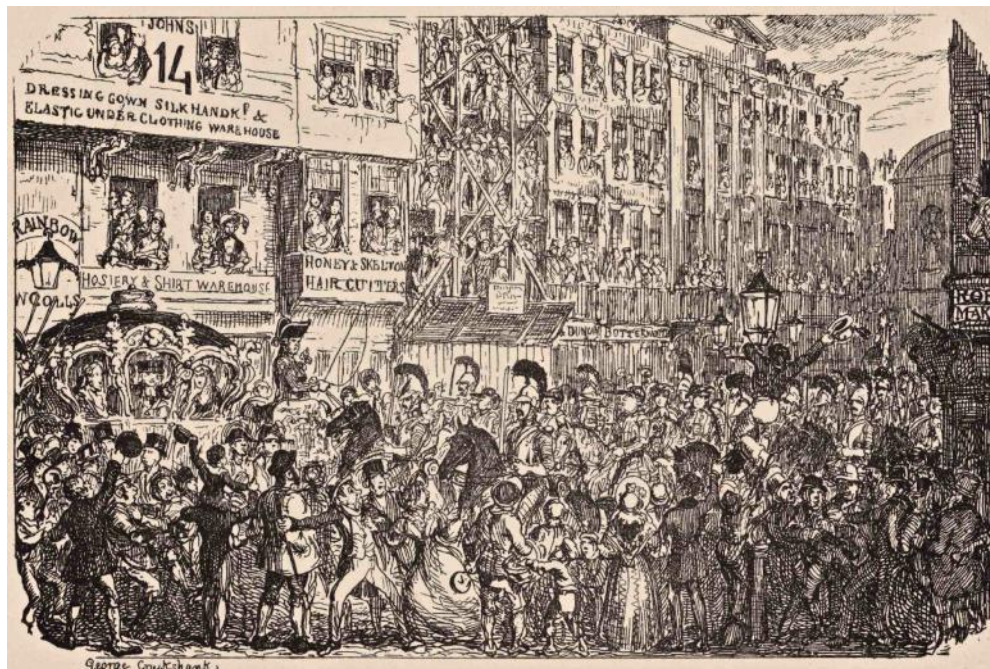


Figure 1.3 George Cruikshank for The Comic Almanack published by Henry Tilt of Fleet St. "JUNE 1838, the Coronation of Queen Victoria"



Figure 1.4 Unknown Artist, “19th century photography of Victorian women”

The director encouraged the design team to alter and create unique impressions of the period; to use the textures, colors and the overall feel of the style, so the costumes would not be a full representations of the specific period. The idea was to provide a sense of it, with crucial details, which allowed the audience to fill in the rest. The director suggested a connection for the style of our production (in terms of acting and atmosphere), with the 1931 German movie of *The Threepenny Opera* (*Die 3 Groschen Oper*, germ.) directed by G.W. Pabst. This movie made me think about audience’s perception of the historical

distance. The monochromatic spectrum of the old photography and the beginning of cinematography, automatically reminded me of alienation. As soon as we look at the old photos we are more objective and therefore more dissociative. This increases our objectivity, makes better judge something, since it happened long time ago, and it does not affect us now in any personal manner.

My idea was to recreate the feel of the old photography spectrum, together with transposed period costumes, in order to reach out to the world of objectivity and distance. That affected lighting and set of course; we aspired to unify our Brechtian universe with the goal of telling the story of the world without social prosperity.

1.4 THE WORLD OF CONTRAST

All of the characters are presented as certain marginal types of the society. Prostitutes, beggars, mafia, and government/politicians/financiers created a clear picture of a distorted society that is placed in some sort of reverse hierarchy.

The Threepenny Opera has such distinction between each character, everything is very clear and transparent. Because of that it was logical to create that perception in the visual world of the play. Since we aspired to create the monochromatic world of the old photos, a distinction with contrast between characters was absolutely necessary. Since each color has its own value, and that is, by itself, some sort of hierarchy, I decided to play around with values of grays, and to establish shades of marginalization, and classification.

Giving each character a higher or lower color value was the same as giving them higher or lower placement in society. The challenging part was to decide what color should belong to what social status.

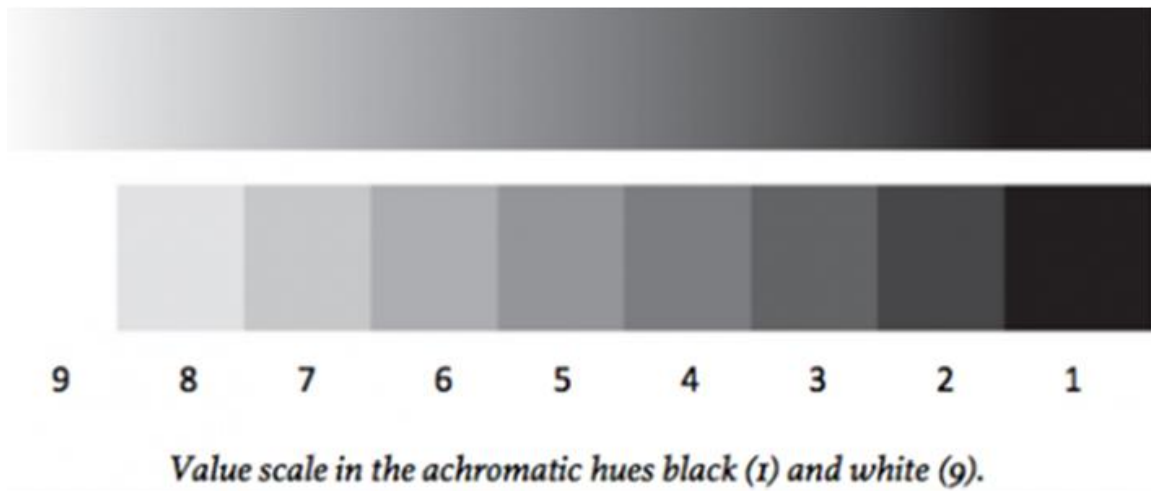


Figure 1.5 Value scale scheme

1.5 ROUGHNESS OF THE WORLD OF THE PLAY

The atmosphere of the world of the play was presented first in the space with dark shades of gray, with metal structure, and stains of rust. Lighting was almost expressionistic, with sharp angles and in certain places down lit. Costumes introduced textures in different fabrics, materials, layers and a pattern print that had significant meaning. In some measure, each character had a certain number of stripes on them, whether those were vertical or horizontal stripes. This symbolic element emphasized their captivity within the immorality, greed and corruption.

Other symbolic marks that I have used for certain characters, included adding black shoe polish on the fingertips of Mr. and Mrs. Peachum, to accentuate their dirty work, as well as white powdered fingertips for Jenny, to underline her need to make herself as clean and innocent as possible. The only element that had color in itself was the handkerchief that Mac the knife carried. It was in a desaturated burgundy, an idea to symbolize the dried blood of his past victims. Each one of his lovers, Jenny, Lucy and Polly, had a version of

his handkerchief, but the intensity of burgundy varied, depending on the level of trust he had in his lovers. For example, Polly's was the palest.



Figure 1.6 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Dyed samples of Jenny’s, Lucy’s and Polly’s handkerchief”.*The Threepenny Opera*. University of South Carolina.2015

1.6 BRECHT’S CHARACTERS ON THE VALUE SCALE

Macheath is distinct from everyone else in the play. Beggars, prostitutes, mafia, and the police –they all had interest in material things. Mac is a visually appealing gentlemen in whose presence everyone feels awestruck. We presented him as an absolute contrast to everything else. So with his presence we saw a clear difference between him and the others. He is like a mirage in that filthy society. Everything about him is ‘surreal’. He is conspicuous and poised, unlike the “poverty” in the world that surrounds him. That is why he is attracting naïve and simpleminded Polly and shrewd Lucy, as well as guileful Jenny.

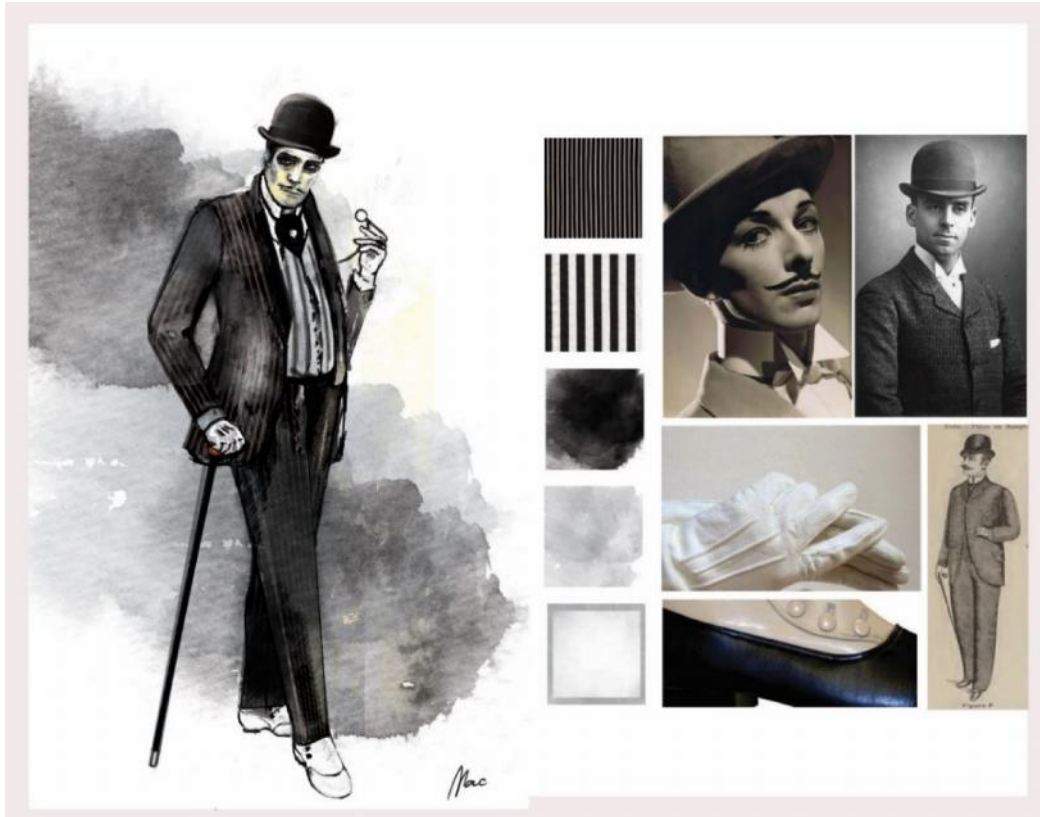


Figure 1.7 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Rendering of Mac the Knife and the research board”.
The Threepenny Opera. University of South Carolina.2015.

Therefore, my idea was to present Mac as somebody who doesn’t belong to any mold: he is not a gentlemen, nor a thief. Materials that I related to his character were silver, glass and satin, clean black and white colors.



Figure 1.8 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Mac the Knife, final rendering”. *The Threepenny Opera*. University of South Carolina.2015.

Mrs. Peachum is the most complex character in the play. She has features of a strong woman, who openly knows what she wants and who stands firmly behind the false moral. I related her with the prostitutes, and she also has echoes of Macheath's slickness. Her silhouette was similar to the silhouette of the prostitutes, which tells us maybe something about her past?! Her color was black and gray.

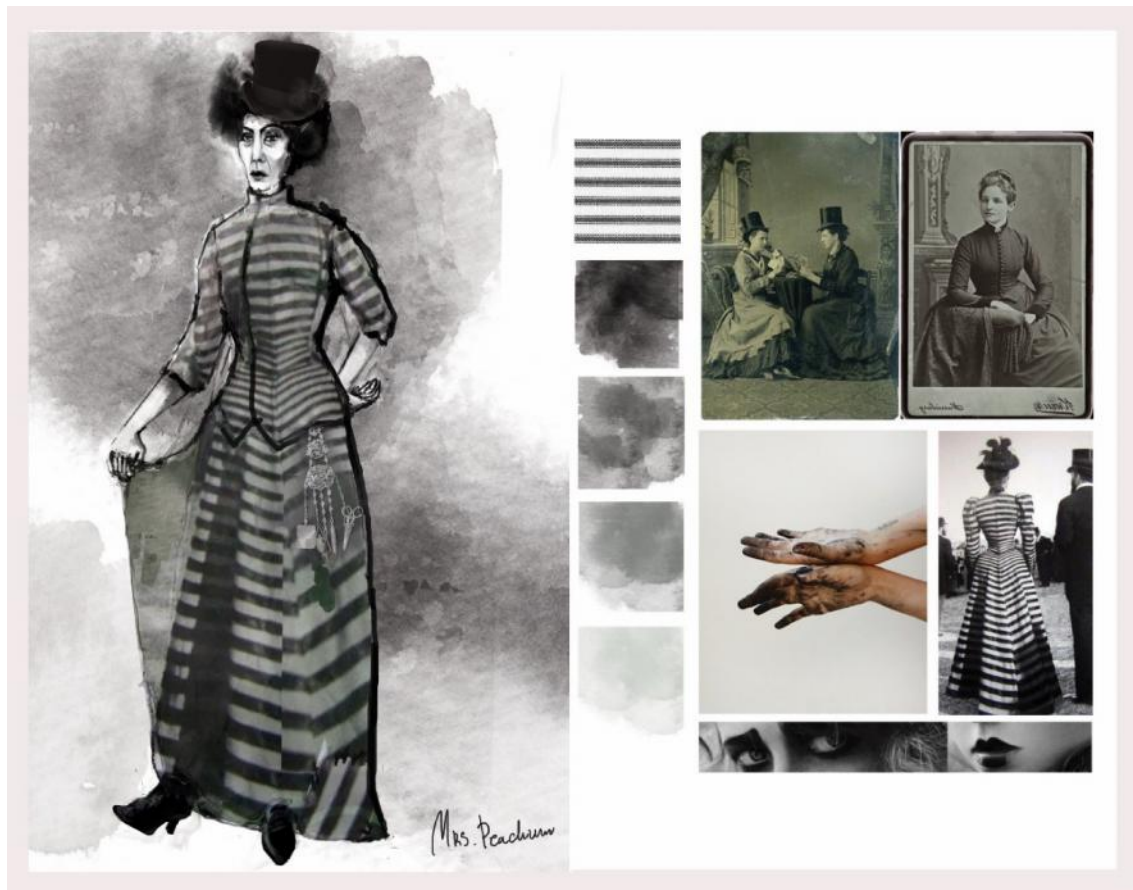


Figure 1.9 Spalajkovic, Neda, "Rendering of Mrs. Peachum and the research board".
The Threepenny Opera. University of South Carolina. 2015.



Figure 1.10 Spalajkovic, Neda, "Mrs. Peachum, final rendering". *The Threepenny Opera*. University of South Carolina. 2015.

Mr. Peachum is Mac the Knife's exact opposite. He has a lot of money, but he presents himself as a wretch, and he wants to get, in the name of false morals, as much money as he can. I decided that Mr. Peachum should present the other extreme, and that his pretense should be very clear- Mac should be portrayed as a gentlemen, and Mr. Peachum as a humble and a simple man. (Jonathan Peachum has the same type of suit as Mac, but his was somehow worn-down) Colors: shades of gray.



Figure 1.11 Spalajkovic, Neda, "Rendering of Mr.Peachum and the research board".
The Threepenny Opera. University of South Carolina.2015.



Figure 1.12 Spaljajkovic, Neda, “Mr.Peachum, final rendering”. *The Threepenny Opera*.
University of South Carolina.2015

Figure 1.13 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Rendering of Polly Peachum and the research board”. *The Threepenny Opera*. University of South Carolina.2015.



Figure 1.14 Spalajkovic, Neda, "Polly Peachum, final rendering". *The Threepenny Opera*. University of South Carolina.2015.



Figure 1.15 Spalajkovic, Neda, "Polly Peachum-wedding dress, final rendering". *The Threepenny Opera*. University of South Carolina.2015.

Tiger Brown had the look of a ‘homo novus’. He was neatly, nicely dressed, almost like Macheath, but he is on the other side of the value scale- he was in bright grey so he would look clean, in order to underline the irony of his character.



Figure1.16 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Tiger Brown, final rendering”. *The Threepenny Opera*. University of South Carolina.2015.

Lucy Brown was the same stereotypical character as Polly, but she was the other extreme. With this character I have played with the silhouette as well, for the purpose of linking her with Polly's naivety and Jenny's sexuality. She is wearing a corset over her shirt, to accentuate her prime and more reserved characteristic.



Figure 1.17 Spalajkovic, Neda, "Lucy Brown, final rendering". *The Threepenny Opera*. University of South Carolina.2015.

Jenny together with the other prostitutes was marked with different colors. Women from that period wore white undergarments, so they could show that they were ‘clean’. That is why I thought it would be interesting to dress them in white, to create a paradox to their existence. Jenny is not different from the other girls from the brothel. The only thing that was distinguished Jenny from other prostitutes was the red handkerchief, similar to the one Mac has in his jacket.

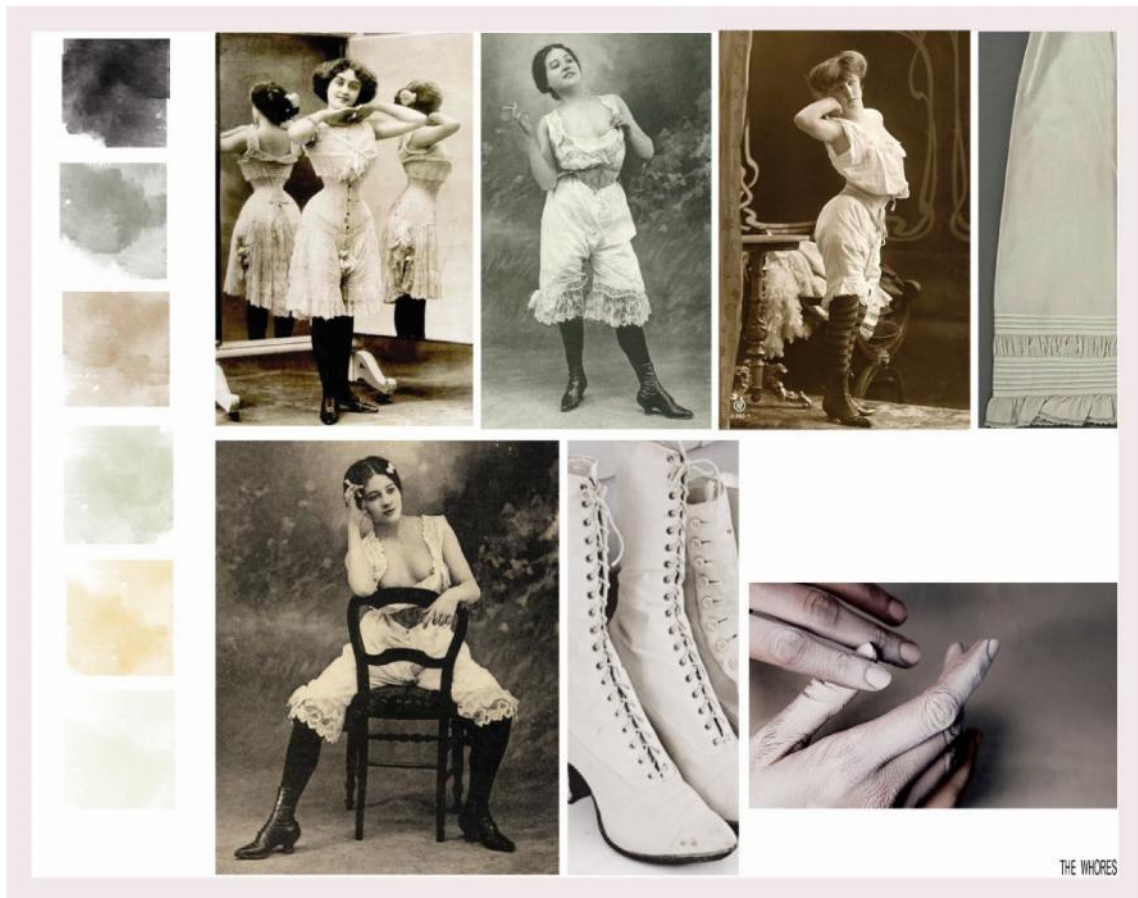


Figure 1.18 Spalajkovic, Neda, “The research board for the whores”. *The Threepenny Opera*. University of South Carolina.2015.



Figure 1.19 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Jenny, final rendering”. *The Threepenny Opera*. University of South Carolina.2015.

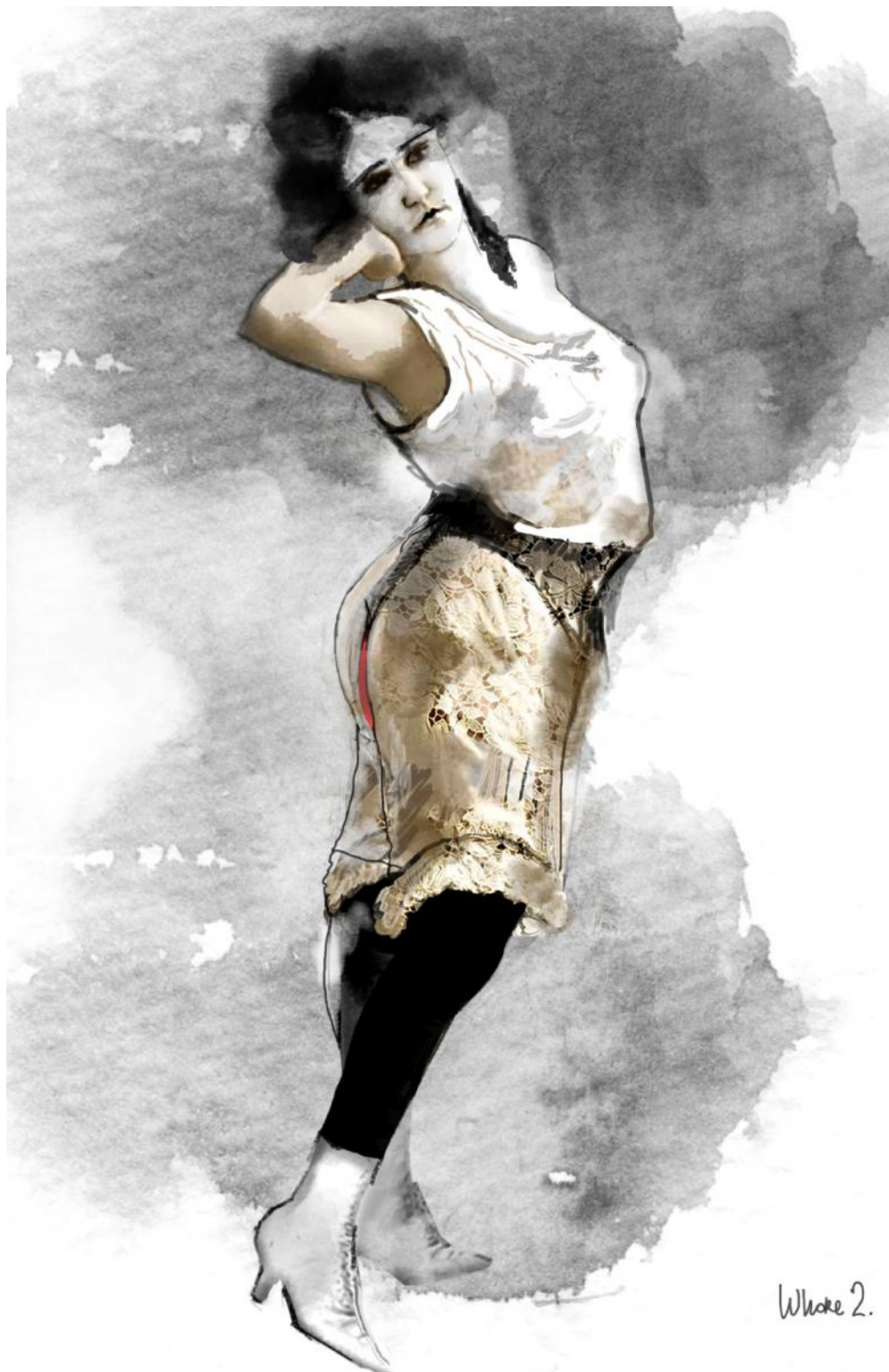


Figure 1.20 Spalajkovic, Neda, "Whore #2, final rendering". *The Threepenny Opera*. University of South Carolina.2015.



Figure 1.21 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Dolly, final rendering”. *The Threepenny Opera*.
University of South Carolina.2015.

The beggars were the most absurd characters within even more absurd circumstances. Mr. Peachum stripped all the beggars existentially, so we are left with some elements of human dignity that they are carrying around as their personal belongings. Their colors are shades of grey like Mr. Peachum's, but with beggars we tried to reveal, as well, abomination and lethargy.

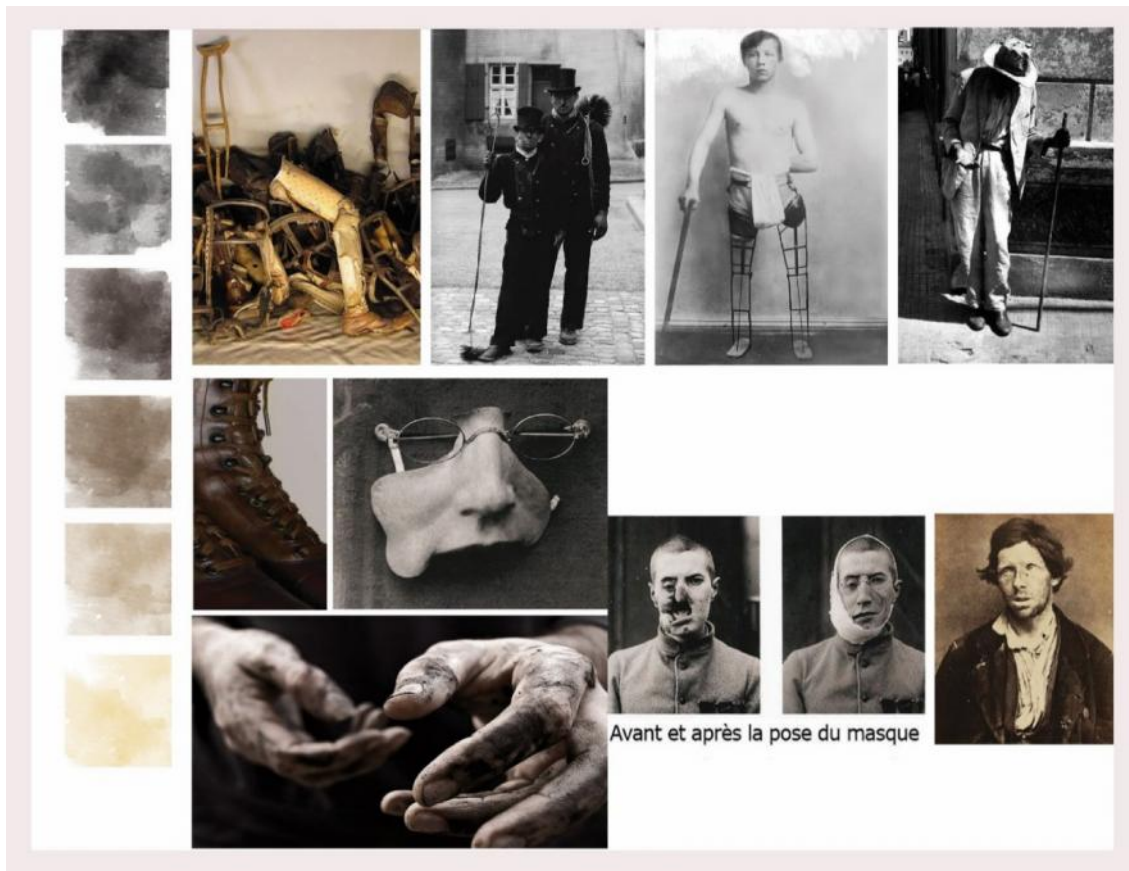


Figure 1.22 Spalajkovic, Neda, “The research board for the beggars”. *The Threepenny Opera*. University of South Carolina. 2015.



Figure 1.23 Spalajkovic, Neda, "The beggars, final rendering". *The Threepenny Opera*. University of South Carolina.2015.



Figure 1.24 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Jake-the gang member, final rendering”. *The Threepenny Opera*. University of South Carolina.2015.



Figure 1.25 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Matt-the gang member, final rendering”. *The Threepenny Opera*. University of South Carolina.2015.



Figure 1.26 Spalajkovic, Neda, “The Constable, final rendering”. *The Threepenny Opera*. University of South Carolina.2015.



Figure 1.27 Spalajkovic, Neda, “The Narrator, final rendering”. *The Threepenny Opera*. University of South Carolina.2015.



Figure 1.28 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Peachum’s Company”. *The Threepenny Opera*. University of South Carolina.2015.



Figure 1.29 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Beggars complaining”. *The Threepenny Opera*. University of South Carolina.2015.



Figure 1.30 Spalajkovic, Neda, "Mr.Peachum & Mrs.Peachum". *The Threepenny Opera*. University of South Carolina.2015.

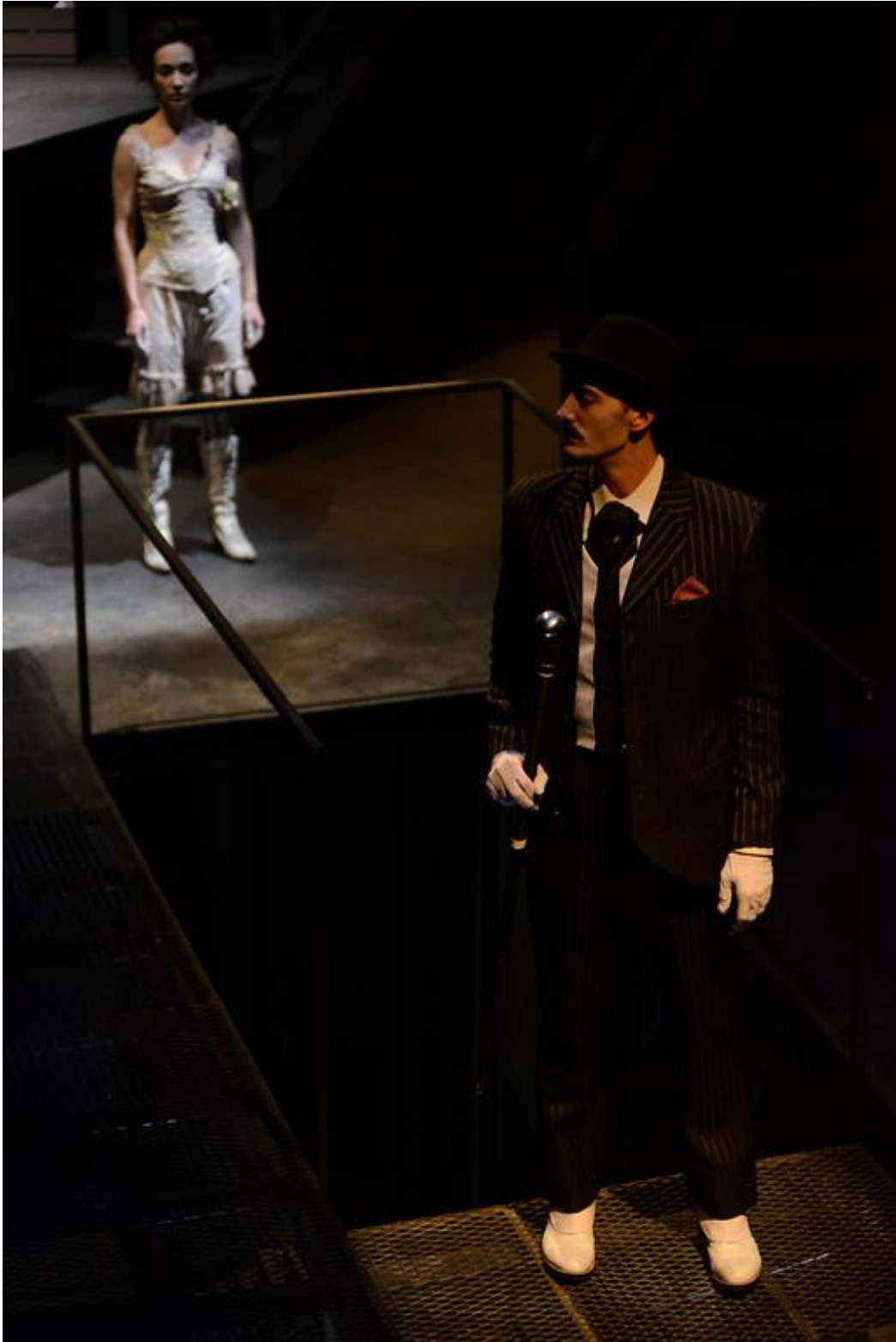


Figure 1.31 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Mac the Knife & Jenny-Prologue”. *The Threepenny Opera*. University of South Carolina.2015.



Figure 1.32 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Polly’s and Mac’s wedding”. *The Threepenny Opera*. University of South Carolina.2015.



Figure 1.33 Spalajkovic, Neda, “The gang members at the wedding”. *The Threepenny Opera*. University of South Carolina.2015.



Figure 1.34 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Peachum’s”. *The Threepenny Opera*. University of South Carolina.2015.



Figure 1.35 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Mrs.Peachum in the brothel”. *The Threepenny Opera*. University of South Carolina.2015.



Figure 1.36 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Jenny and the whores”. *The Threepenny Opera*. University of South Carolina.2015.



Figure 1.37 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Jenny and Mac”. *The Threepenny Opera*. University of South Carolina.2015.



Figure 1.38 Spalajkovic, Neda, “The Narrator”. *The Threepenny Opera*. University of South Carolina. 2015.



Figure 1.39 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Jealousy Duet-Lucy and Polly”. *The Threepenny Opera*. University of South Carolina.2015.



Figure 1.40 Spalajkovic, Neda, "Mrs. Peachum". *The Threepenny Opera*. University of South Carolina. 2015.



Figure 1.41 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Lucy Brown”. *The Threepenny Opera*. University of South Carolina.2015.



Figure 1.42 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Lucy’s and Polly’s false truce”. *The Threepenny Opera*. University of South Carolina.2015.



Figure 1.43 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Preparation for Mac’s hanging”. *The Threepenny Opera*. University of South Carolina.2015.



Figure 1.44 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Mac’s hanging”. *The Threepenny Opera*. University of South Carolina.2015.



Figure 1.45 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Mac’s amnesty”. *The Threepenny Opera*. University of South Carolina.2015.

1.7 WORK EXPERIENCE

The Threepenny Opera was my first ever costume design project. It was the most educational experience for me during my three years of study at the University of South Carolina. It was something that I had never encountered before and it opened for me an even wider understanding of the theatre creation. As scenic designers/scenographers, we are always challenged to think bigger and further then the space. We have to think about concepts with the directors, which create the basis for performance; we have to think about relationships between characters and individual characters, because with our global image of the play, we must create the style for the costumes, and even dictate the way certain characters have to walk. Therefore, the understanding and analysis of the characters was actually refreshing, it gave me an opportunity to think about characters from a different perspective.

The first challenge was to convince the director to do the most stylized version of Victorian costume, one which also had contemporary elements. The way to do that was to create renderings that were as accurate as possible to present exactly what I would create.

The other challenge was to present the final idea of the work to the costume shop as clearly as possible and as confidently as possible. As an outsider it is always hard to communicate. You can sometimes meet with resistance and possibly disinterest, because there is no proof of your competency in a specific field. So my preparation for that required a great amount of research, reading and imagery, in order to communicate exactly what my renderings were representing. The next step was to shape everything, pull the costume pieces, buy certain elements, and to stay under the budget- which was possible for this show, because it didn't require a lot of new and elaborate costume pieces. There was a lot of distressing, and reusing from the stock. After designing every costume piece, the next step was to actually fit the actor. That part was similar to painting, or maybe even sketching. It had the sense of that process, because there were a lot of discoveries and decisions to make; when to stop and when to add, in order to stay close as possible to the initial idea. Then, before the actors had a chance to get in their costumes on stage, they had an opportunity to look at the impression of them in my renderings. Luckily, the actors were inspired by my renderings and took some of the expressions and postures from them. My communication with the actors was interesting; they had my explanation of how that costumes works and what I wanted them to show in their movement, to assure that our concept was readable.

The costumes with all other design elements were completely unified, which was the result of good communication within the designers, and a mutual understanding with the director of the stylistic unity.

What was really unfortunate, and one part of my learning process, was the fact that our show had only one performance, due to the flooding situation we had at that time. That is the perdition of the theatre profession, proof that work does not last forever. In some way, we are creators of dust; our work has a chance to materialize, it quickly disappears, but thankfully it stays in the ether, where it waits to be recollected.

Brechtian theatre does not exist to entertain, and it always has to have a purpose. Our production, did not have the quality of the true Brechtian theatre, because of the regulations that university settings in the US have dictated. Brecht's theatre has a purpose to shock and sometimes even upset the audience in order to alienate them, but in our case it was not possible to achieve this because Brecht portrays almost everything that someone could find disturbing, or politically incorrect. That was, in a way, restrictive in my creative process. Certain choices I was considering would have never been accepted. Since Brecht is criticizes social situations and circumstances, which American society has never gone through, this audience was not ready to understand it.

CHAPTER TWO

THE TEMPEST

The performance was opened on April 15th, 2016 in Drayton Hall Theatre, which is a proscenium stage at the University of South Carolina. The production and the design team included director Robert Richmond, Artistic Director and the Department Chair, scenic designer Neda Spalajkovic, costume designer April Traquina and lighting designer Chris Patterson.

2.1 GENESIS OF THE PLAY

The Tempest was written sometime between 1610 and 1611, and it's believed to be Shakespeare's last independently written play. It was performed for the first time on November 1st 1611. It is well known that Shakespeare made historical references and sometimes connections with actual events. Almost none of his storylines were fictional. One of the beliefs of Shakespearian academics is that *The Tempest* was actually based on real events that happened in 1609; the shipwreck of the English fleet's flagship, that was on an expedition to Virginia. There was a suspicion that survivors washed on the shore of one of the islands off of the Bermuda archipelago, and stayed there for 10 months. They would tell stories during the night and they would hear strange voices, screams, cries, and they believed that those were the voices of demons, so hence the name Devil's isle. (Kott, 188)

That was probably what Shakespeare used as an inspiration for the strange noises of Prospero's imaginative isle. The shipwreck and a deserted isle was enough to inspire the creation of a magical story of one Renaissance man- Prospero.

2.2 THE PLOT AND THE CONCEPT

As a Royal Shakespeare's Theatre Company tells the plot of the play:

“Twelve years ago, Prospero was Duke of Milan. Being of a bookish disposition, he withdrew more and more into his studies, leaving the management of his state to his brother Antonio. Eventually, with the help of Alonso, King of Naples, and the King's brother Sebastian - inveterate enemies of Prospero - Antonio usurped the dukedom to rule it himself. Prospero and his baby daughter Miranda were put to sea in a rotten boat and eventually landed on a distant island once ruled by the witch Sycorax but now inhabited only by her son, Caliban, and Ariel, a spirit. Since then Prospero had ruled the island and its two inhabitants by the use of magic arts derived from his studies. His daughter Miranda grew up having seen no other human being. Prospero believed that fortune brought his enemies close to the island and he saw an opportunity to work his revenge. He used his powers to raise a storm which shipwrecks them. When Miranda questioned this, he told her the story of their arrival on the island and assured her that no real harm would come to the survivors. The shipwrecked travelers separated. At Prospero's bidding, the invisible Ariel directed their wanderings. He led Ferdinand, the King's son, to Prospero's cell, where he and Miranda fell instantly in love. Prospero set heavy tasks to test Ferdinand. The King of Naples searched for his son, although fearing him to be

drowned. Sebastian, the king's brother, plotted to kill him and seize the crown. The drunken butler, Stephano, and the jester, Trinculo, encountered Caliban and were persuaded by him to kill Prospero so that they could rule the island. However, Ariel managed to make mischief between them and they were soon bickering amongst themselves. Satisfied that Ferdinand has met all his challenges, Prospero presented the young couple with a betrothal masque celebrating chastity and the blessings of marriage. He was distracted from this, however, when he remembered Caliban's plot. As Prospero's plan drew to its climax, he vowed that upon its completion he would abandon his magic arts. Ariel brought Alonso and his followers to the cell, and Prospero, in his own persona as Duke of Milan, confronted his enemies and forgave them. In the betrothal of Ferdinand and Miranda, the rift between Naples and Milan was healed. Finally, Prospero granted Ariel his freedom and prepared to leave the island for Milan and his restored Dukedom.”(www.rsc.org.uk/the-tempest/the-plot)

The play has a simple structure that allows us to easily understand relationships and their journey. The beauty of Shakespeare’s work lies in multiple interpretations. Different readings of his words, and different contextualization are what makes Shakespeare still so contemporary, and that explains why his work has been done for some many years. The time period (17th century) of Shakespeare’s creation was dark; performances were held in spaces that are not as nearly conventional as modern once, so the audience’s engagement relied on entertainment, and hence the content of Shakespeare’s plays are radical, sometimes extreme and often brutal. The language had to provoke and intrigue in order to engage the audience. The approach of our creative team was not radical, but it had some

provoking sub context that was not staged, but it differently helped as a starting point in the creative process of our interpretation.

Director Robert Richmond had a concept for *The Tempest* which was based on the idea of a wish fulfilment of a dying man. He explored how Prospero's illness has affected him, and what he was capable of doing in that state of mind. Since Prospero was an alchemist (he had his magical book and the staff with him) he was capable of creating different kinds of wizardry. Since his illness has taken him over, he turned to the darker side and created a dual personality, Caliban, as a personification of his mental illness.



Figure 2.1 Spalajkovic, Neda, "Prospero's transformation into Caliban", *The Tempest*, University of South Carolina, 2016.



Figure 2.2 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Turning into Caliban”, *The Tempest*, University of South Carolina, 2016.



Figure 2.3 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Caliban trying to reach the Moon”, *The Tempest*, University of South Carolina, 2016.



Figure 2.4 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Caliban and his tarp”, *The Tempest*, University of South Carolina, 2016.

The director's interpretation was that Prospero, having to spend so much time alone with his young daughter Miranda, had an unnatural attraction towards her. In a moment of attraction toward his daughter, he aroused his inner creature and drowned her.



Figure 2.5 Spalajkovic, Neda, "Oracle summoning", *The Tempest*, University of South Carolina 2016.

Another part of the concept was that Prospero was in purgatory at the very end of his journey to death. That was one of the ways to justify the magical moments, because in a dreamlike world, everything is possible; from the forgiveness of an unfaithful brother, to the appearance of magical nymphs and creatures.



Figure 2.6 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Miranda’s awakening and the tempest”, *The Tempest*, University of South Carolina, 2016.



Figure 2.7 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Miranda sees the shipwreck”, *The Tempest*, University of South Carolina, 2016.



Figure 2.8 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Prospero’s books”, *The Tempest*. University of South Carolina, 2016.

2.3 SPATIAL CONCEPT

The idea was to present the very end of Prospero’s journey in purgatory and to portray the protagonist’s state of mind. The space was divided in two really strong elements, but still simplistic. The first and the most important one was the ramp. The ramp itself was the representation of the ending of Prospero’s journey through life. It was a twisted path, where at the end was the Moon, as a representation of his salvation. On the opposite side of the Moon was water, the ‘magical oracle’ where Prospero was purifying himself and where he also drowned Miranda. The middle part of the ramp was Prospero’s alter-ego Caliban’s space, the dark center of his existence. He would land there when sliding down, and would never have a chance to climb the ramp because, as Caliban, salvation was out of the reach.

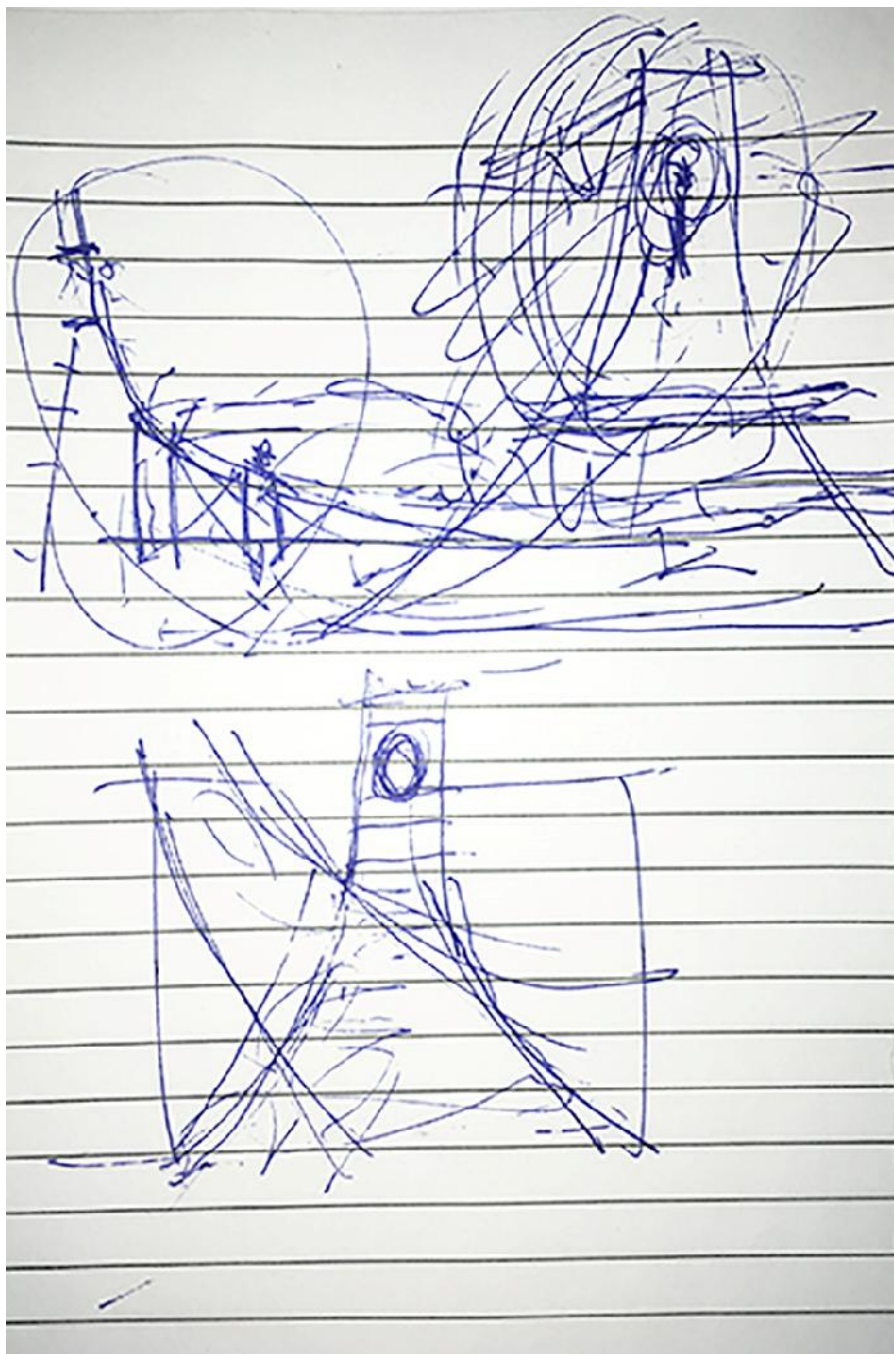


Figure 2.9 Spalajkovic, Neda, “The first visualization of the ramp”. *The Tempest*. University of South Carolina.2016.



Figure 2.10 Spalajkovic, Neda, “The first sample of the wall” *The Tempest*. University of South Carolina.2016.

The background was a dark texture, with the impression of the cave. The crumbled paper like walls, were a representation of something oppressive and negative for Prospero. The walls were kept all of his ‘memories’ and ‘knowledge’. Out of the walls the personifications would appear, upon Prospero’s demands. The transparency of the walls represented the presence of something that was haunting Prospero’s mind.

2.4 THE DISCOVERY OF MAJOR ELEMENTS

Our vision of the world was inspired by Renaissance artistry. The impression of magical creatures, the religious and even mythological reference we found in paintings of Hieronymus Bosch and engravings of Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*.



Figure 2.11 Bosch, Hieronymus Ascent of the Blessed. Ca. 1490-1516. Oil on panel.
Venice

The creation of the ramp was inspired by Bosch's painting (Figure 2.11). That painting also triggered associations with other art pieces.



Figure 2.12 Dore, Gustav, White Rose 1862 (Illustration for Dante's Paradiso)

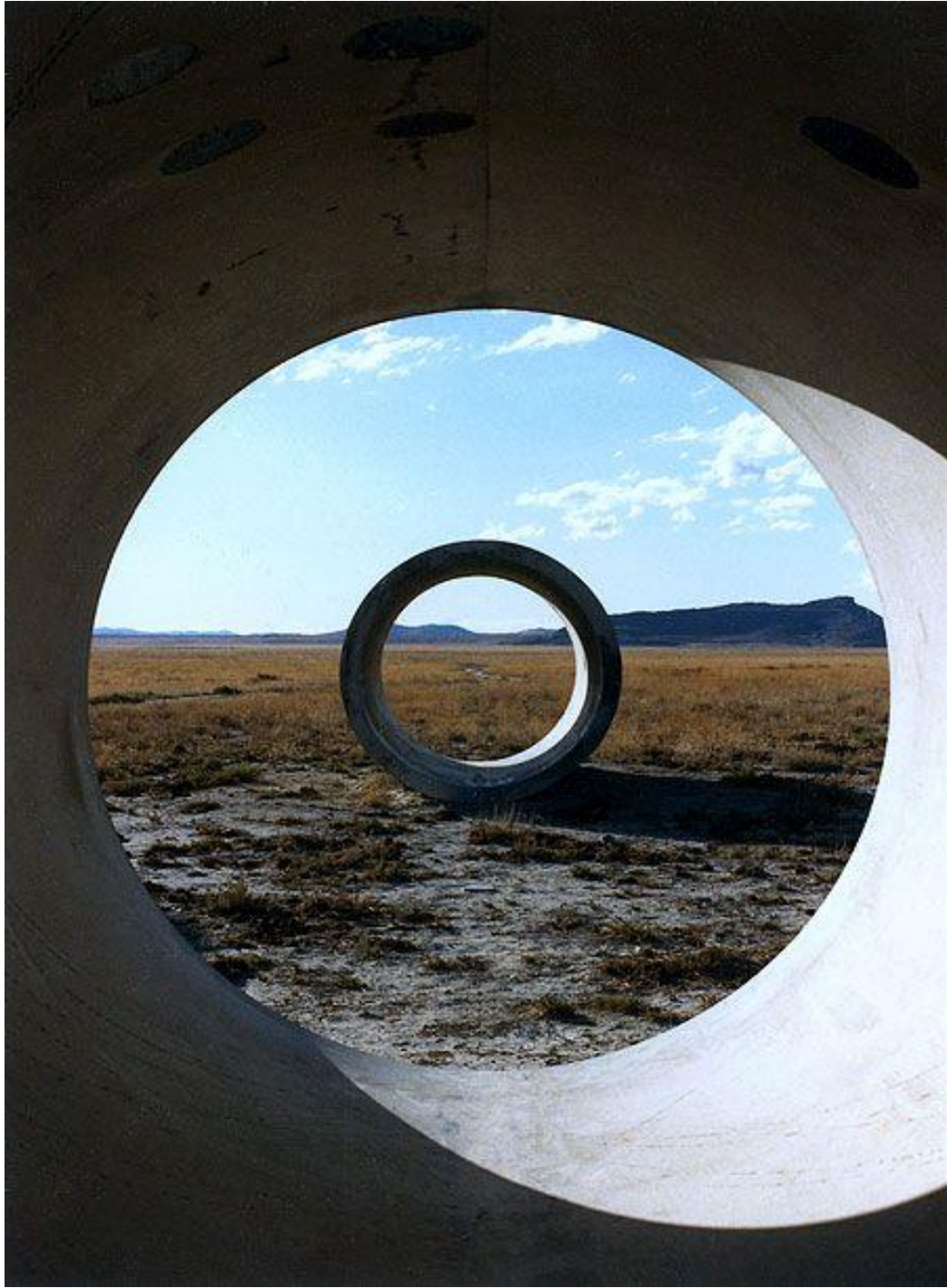


Figure 2.13 Holt, Nancy, Land Art Installation Sun Tunnel, 1973-76. Great Basin Desert, Utah

2.5 VISION OF THE SPACE



Figure 2.14 Spalajkovic, Neda, “First collage of the set”, *The Tempest*, University of South Carolina, 2016.

This Photoshop collage (Figure 2.14) was my first response to the entire discussion. At first I wanted to create at first the walls that waved, surrounding everything as body parts trapped in stones, to create the impression of Dante’s Purgatory, but this idea was rejected, because the impression of trapped body parts was too macabre. Then I have started getting the actual shape of the ramp and the textures together. (Figure 2.15)



Figure 2.15 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Rendering of the prologue”, The Tempest, University of South Carolina, 2016.

From here I started exploring colors, and the right treatment and meaning of certain materials. The director’s impression from the renderings was that it is an old ship, but my response was more abstract, so I continued examining the possibilities for the treatment of the ramp.

My idea was to introduce the storm as the surrounding’s arising. The director actually took this idea and combined it with Prospero’s summoning of the storm and bringing Miranda to life in his pond. With Miranda’s awakening, Prospero’s wish fulfillment journey begins. (Figure 2.16)

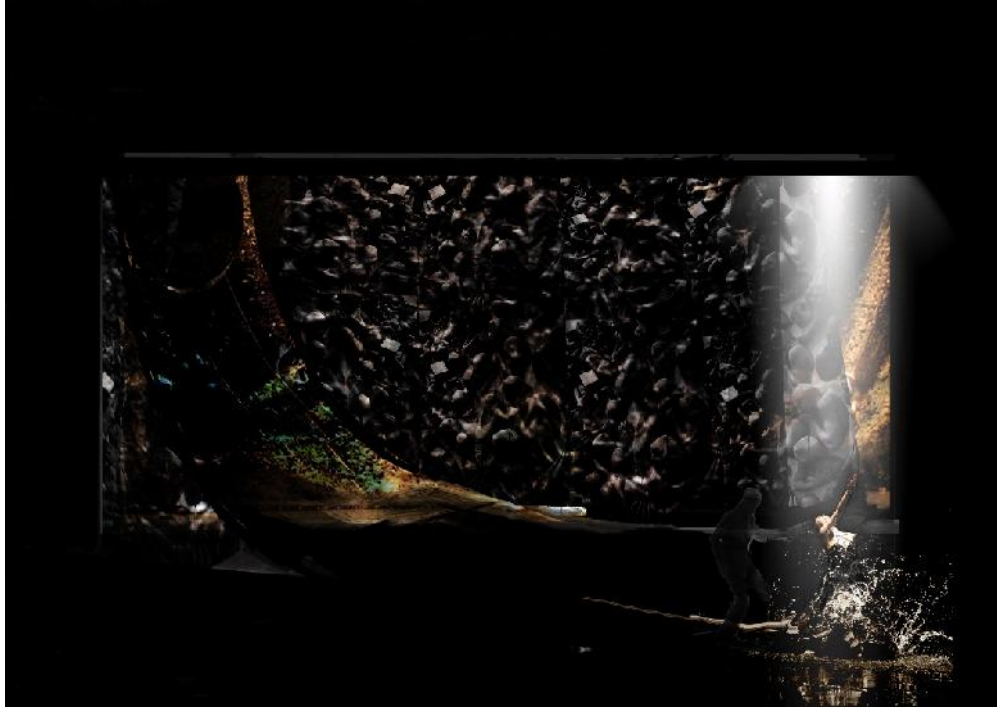


Figure 2.16 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Rendering of Miranda’s awakening”, *The Tempest*, University of South Carolina, 2016.

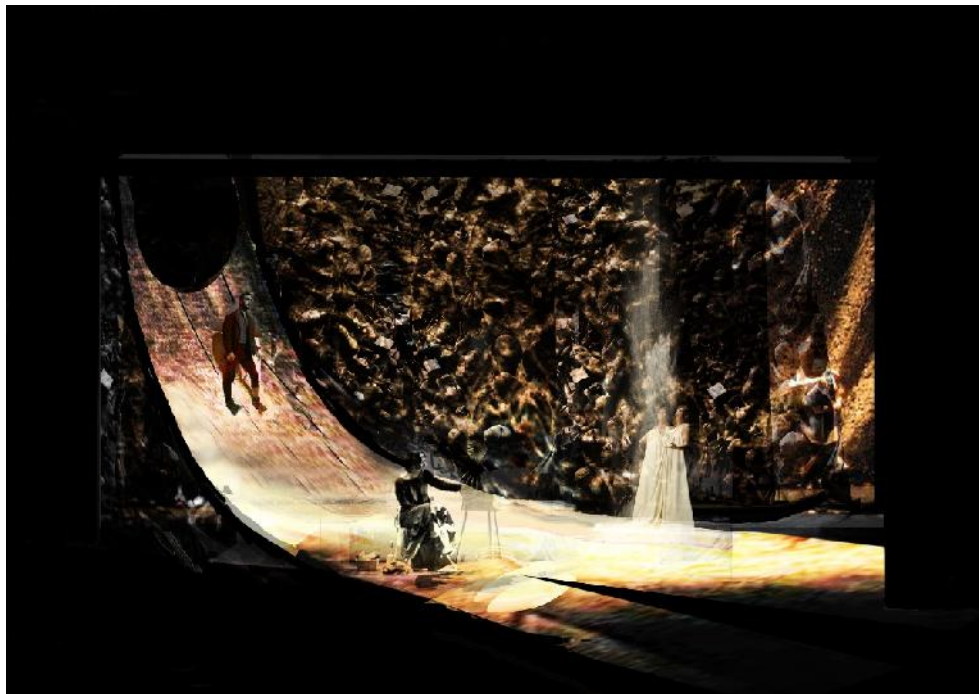


Figure 2.17 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Rendering of the possible looks”, *The Tempest*, University of South Carolina, 2016.



Figure 2.18 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Rendering of the idea for Prospero’s death”, *The Tempest*, University of South Carolina, 2016.

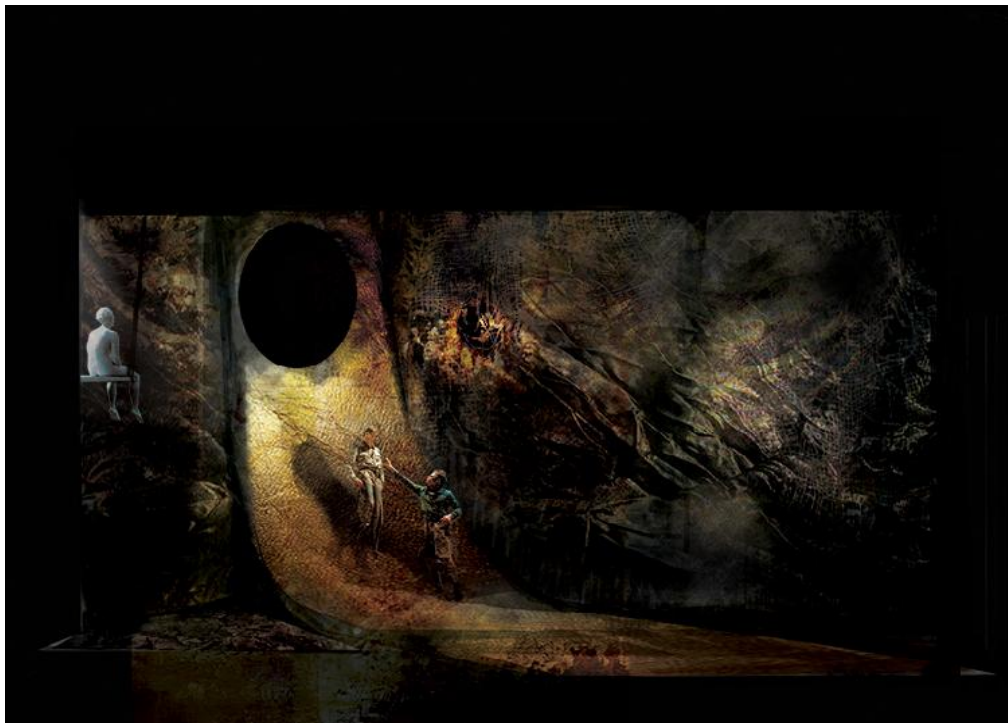


Figure 2.19 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Trinculo and Stephano on the ramp”, *The Tempest*, University of South Carolina, 2016.



Figure 2.20 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Last version of the idea of Prospero’s death”, *The Tempest*, University of South Carolina, 2016.

The treatment for the ramp was undefined almost until the very end of the construction process, but the discovery of it somehow came at the best moment. I was examining the layout of the Moon surface and it made an ambiguous impression on me, so I developed that into something that represented the surface of the Moon.



Figure 2.21 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Paint sample for the ramp with fabric swatches”, *The Tempest*, University of South Carolina, 2016.

2.6 THE DYNAMIC OF THE SPACE AND THE CONSTRUCTION

Since the story itself had a certain vibrancy, I wanted to support that by placing the ramp in a dynamic position, to bring in the audience closer to the stage.

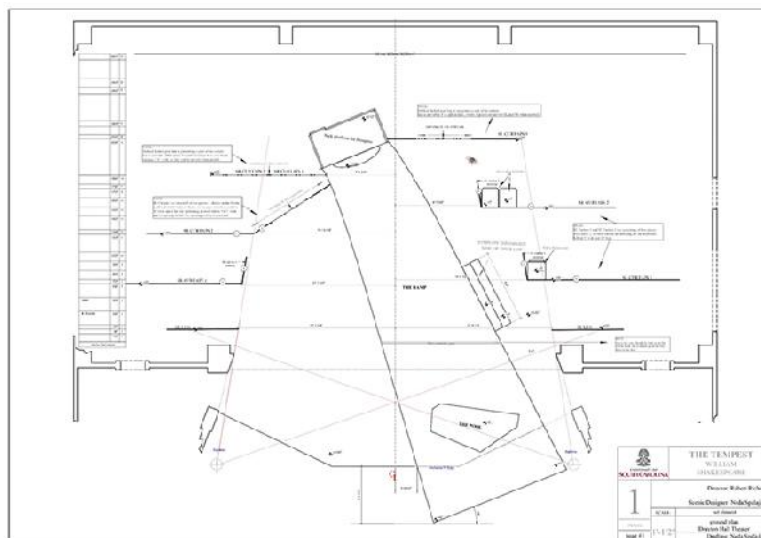


Figure 2.22 Spalajkovic, Neda, “The ground plan of the Drayton Hall stage”, University of South Carolina, 2016.

By placing the ramp diagonally, I wanted to show the energy of that strong and massive 41x20 feet tall structure. The purpose of the portion sticking out in the audience was to bring actors closer, and help make the Shakespearian language more accessible. The director, Robert Richmond, was interested in the dynamic of the ramp and he asked me to explore more possibilities to intensify the angle. The result of that exploration was to distort the ramp, by slightly tilting it. The one thing that was hard to achieve was to have the actual thing structurally stable.

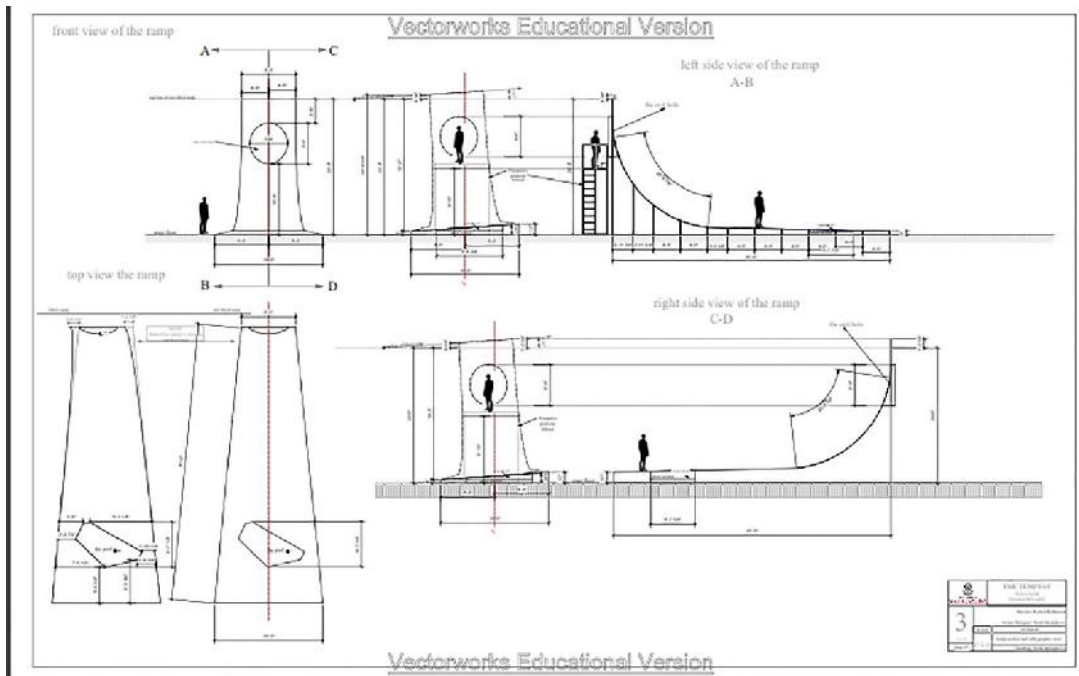


Figure 2.23 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Drafting-Section of the ramp”, University of South Carolina, 2016.

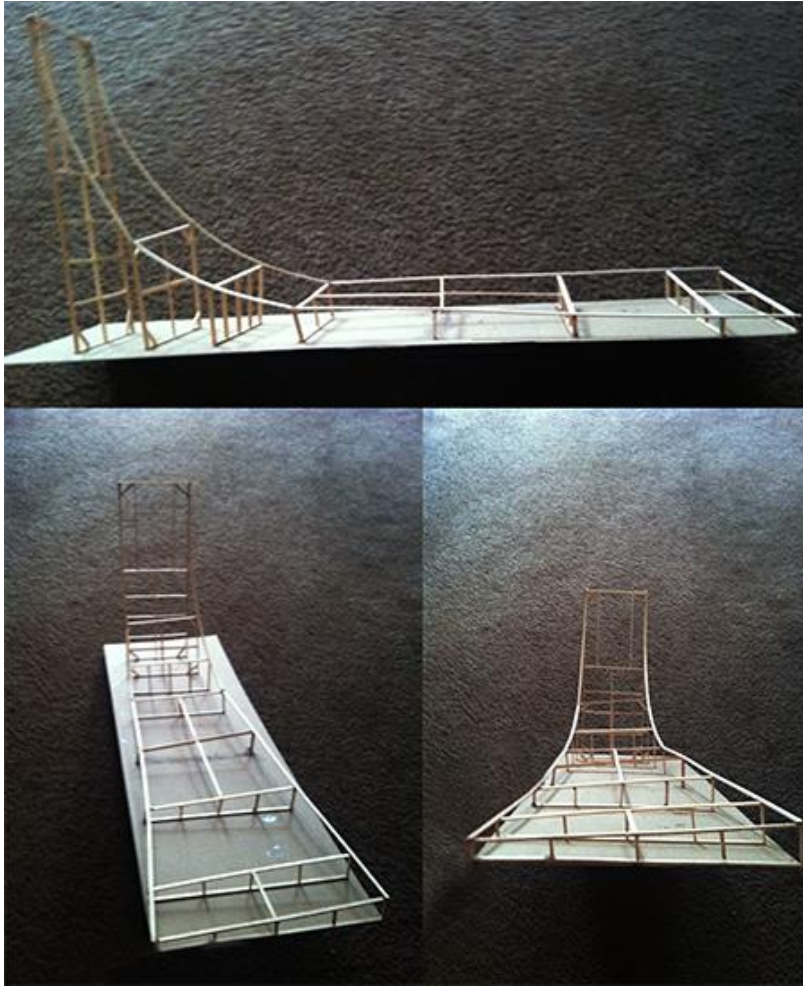


Figure 2.24 Spalajkovic, Neda, “The model of the ramp’s construction”, *The Tempest*, University of South Carolina, 2016.

2.7 BUILDING PROCESS

The construction process for the ramp was quite challenging. I had to think about it in order to convince the technical director of the possibility of building and sustaining it. The drafting and the 3D modeling of it definitely helped me to constructively discover the best possible solution, which we partially used in our final execution of it.

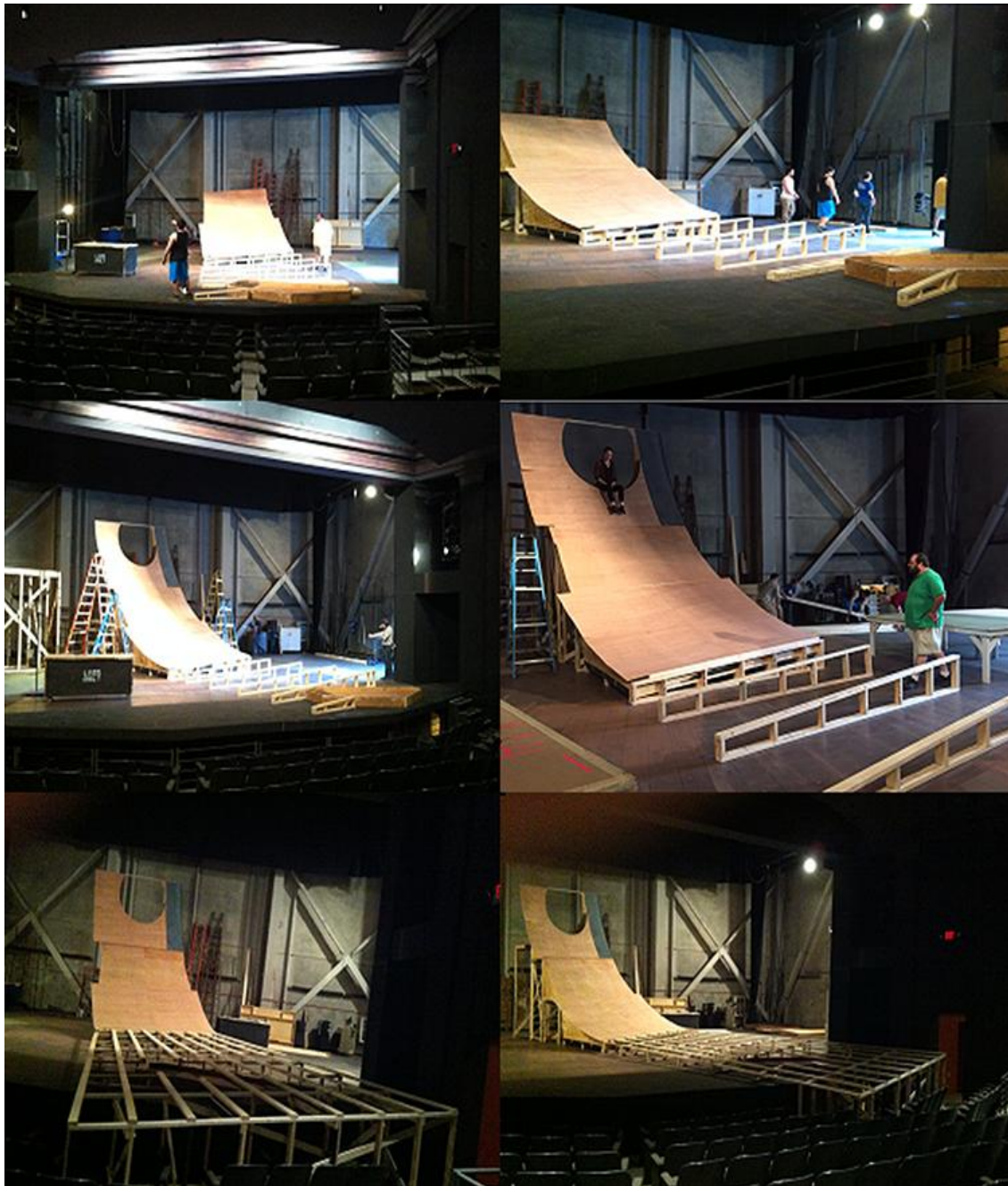


Figure 2.25 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Building process the ramp’s construction”, *The Tempest*, University of South Carolina, 2016.

When the building process started I realized the actual scale and the effectiveness of that massive element. After looking at my idea on the paper for several months, it was a great relief to see the proof of my concept.

2.8 PAINTING AND THE LIGHTING PROCESS

This was the part of the process that was the most exciting. It combined all design aspects together with a pleasing visual result. The discovery of the paint treatment helped lighting designer Chris Patterson to unify the entire production into one magical, mysterious whole.

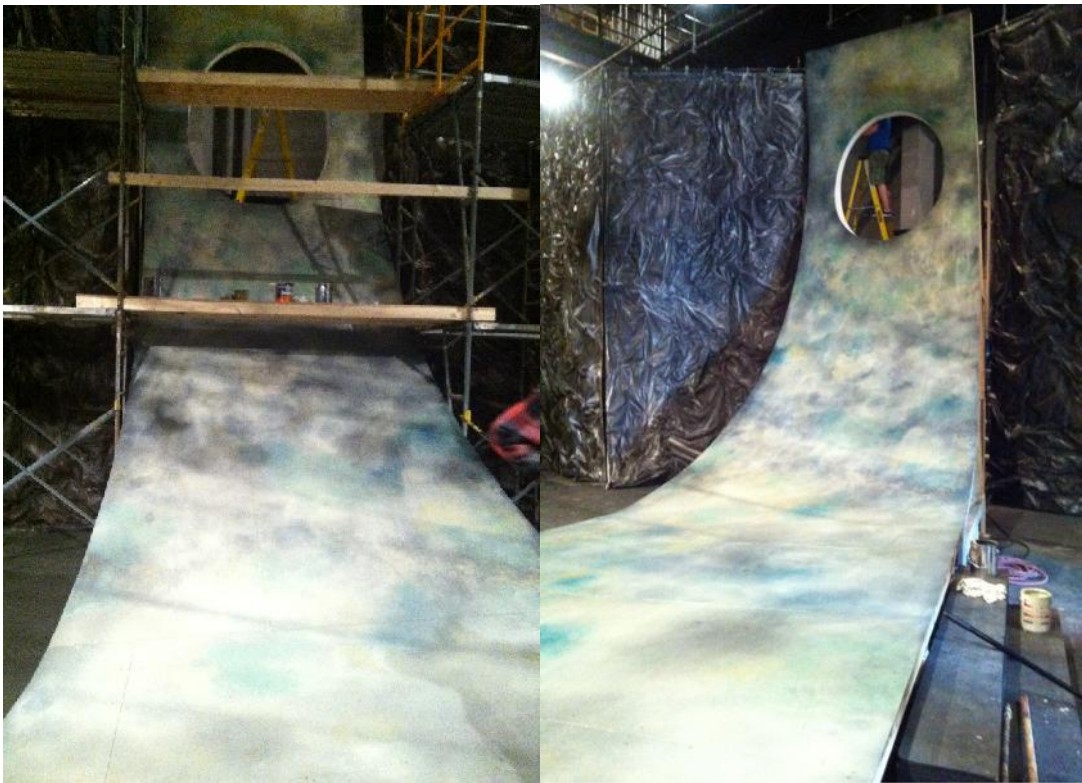


Figure 2.26 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Painting process the ramp”, *The Tempest*, University of South Carolina, 2016.



Figure 2.27 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Finalization of the paint process”, *The Tempest*, University of South Carolina, 2016.



Figure 2.28 Spalajkovic, Neda, “The exploration of the lights with the paint”, *The Tempest*, University of South Carolina, 2016.



Figure 2.29 Spalajkovic, Neda, “One of the final looks for the beginning of the show”,
The Tempest, University of South Carolina, 2016.

2.9 WORK EXPERIENCE

During this process I discovered how self-criticism can be limiting and how, while imagining, I should not have had thought about technicalities as much, and instead I should have allowed myself more freedom in that first creational process. When we had the ramp built, I was sitting with the director in the audience looking at the monstrosity that was in front of us. Director Robert Richmond and I were thinking about creating magical moments on stage with it. At that point, we were already far along in the rehearsal process and my financial resources and labor requirements were already exceeding my initial requirements. While discovering new things during our conversation, I realized that I was not thinking

through other possibilities, my focus on one element had kept me away from realigning other magical things.

Therefore, the final design had elements that did not fit within my idea. Even though the director made it work, they were not always clear dramaturgically.



Figure 2.30 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Ariel’s cage”, *The Tempest*, University of South Carolina, 2016.

The elements that we had to introduce as static elements on stage were Prospero’s books and Ariel’s cage. Dramaturgically, it was possible to justify those elements but the actual spatial concept did not support any other elements within a realistic context. For example, Prospero’s chair (Figure 2.31) was an additional element, but the introduction of it on stage occurred as a part of magical summoning. The look of the chair and its purpose were justified as Prospero’s recollection of long lost comfort.



Figure 2.31 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Prospero’s chair”, *The Tempest*, University of South Carolina, 2016.



Figure 2.32 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Prospero talking to Ariel”, *The Tempest*, University of South Carolina, 2016.

The lighting designer Chris Patterson contributed so much to the creation of the visual quality of the production. What was also educational for me in this process was collaboration with other designers, but especially with the lighting designer, since we worked really closely together in order to understand each other's ideas. We tested every single element on stage that could have had a problem, and we learned so much from each step.

CHAPTER THREE

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

The production opened on September 30th, 2016 at Drayton Hall Theatre, which is a proscenium stage at the University of South Carolina. The production and the design team included director Robert Richmond, Artistic Director and the Department Chair, scenic designer Neda Spalajkovic and costume designer April Traquina, and lighting designer Bruce Auerbach.

3.1 CREATION OF THE MESSAGE

The first interaction with the script was began when I started designing the poster for this production. The indication I received from the director was that this production had to attract young audience, and therefore, what we were doing was supposed to have something that would draw a younger population. My first response was to create something very recognizable and simplistic, but to be abstract enough that the production itself would not end up being completely different from the poster design.

THEATRE SOUTH CAROLINA PRESENTS

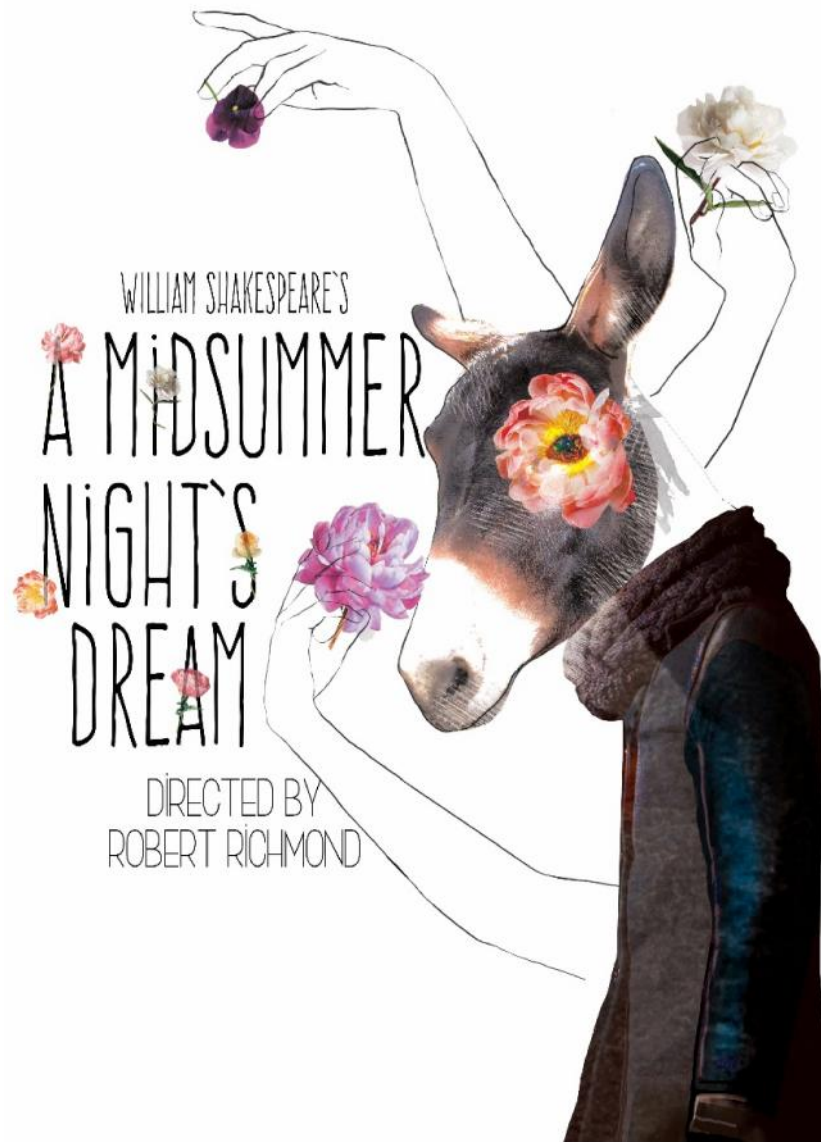


Figure 3.1 Spalajkovic, Neda, “First draft of the poster “, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, University of South Carolina, 2016.

The director disliked the idea of a romantic story. He thought the world of this play was more erotic and visceral. The vision he had about the world of the fairies was that they were all vampires and that juice from the flower is actually blood.

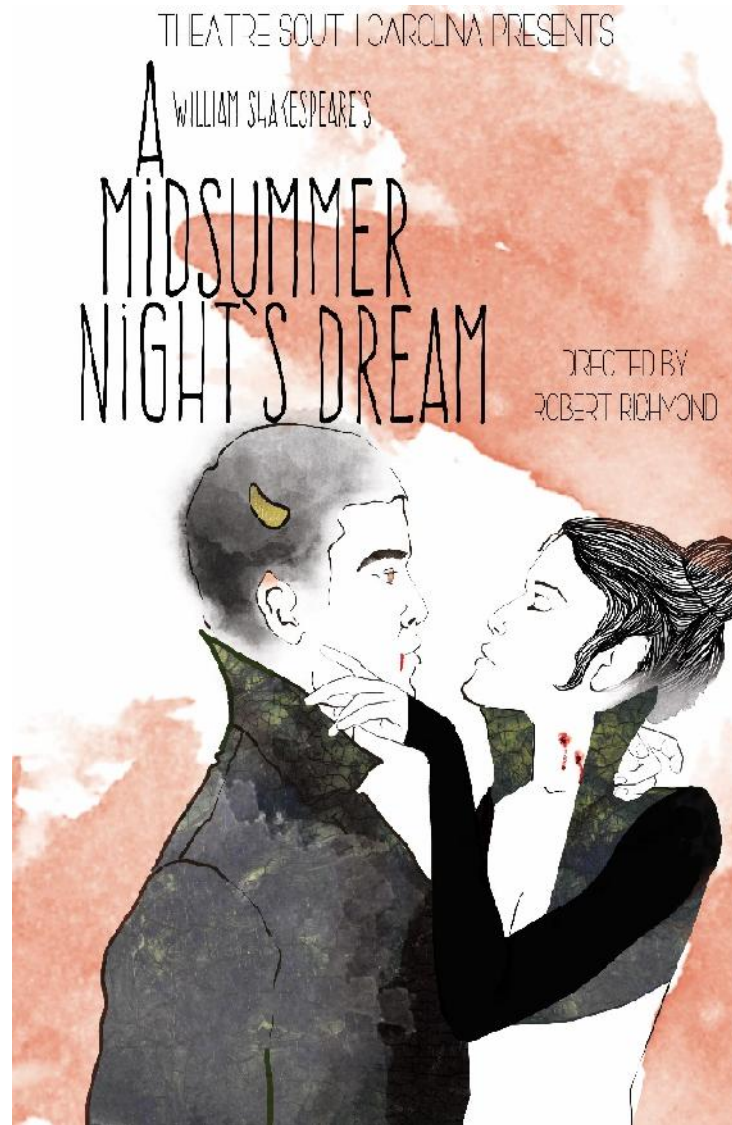


Figure 3.2 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Second draft of the poster “, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, University of South Carolina, 2016.

This design (Figure 3.2) had a negative response from the marketing point of view because it was too defining in terms of costumes and the story. Therefore, we moved in a completely different direction, which was to present the essence of the play’s title- the notion of the dream. The act of the enchantment with the flower was our motif. It was ambiguous enough for the other designers’ interpretations that had to correspond with the creative team’s later on concept.

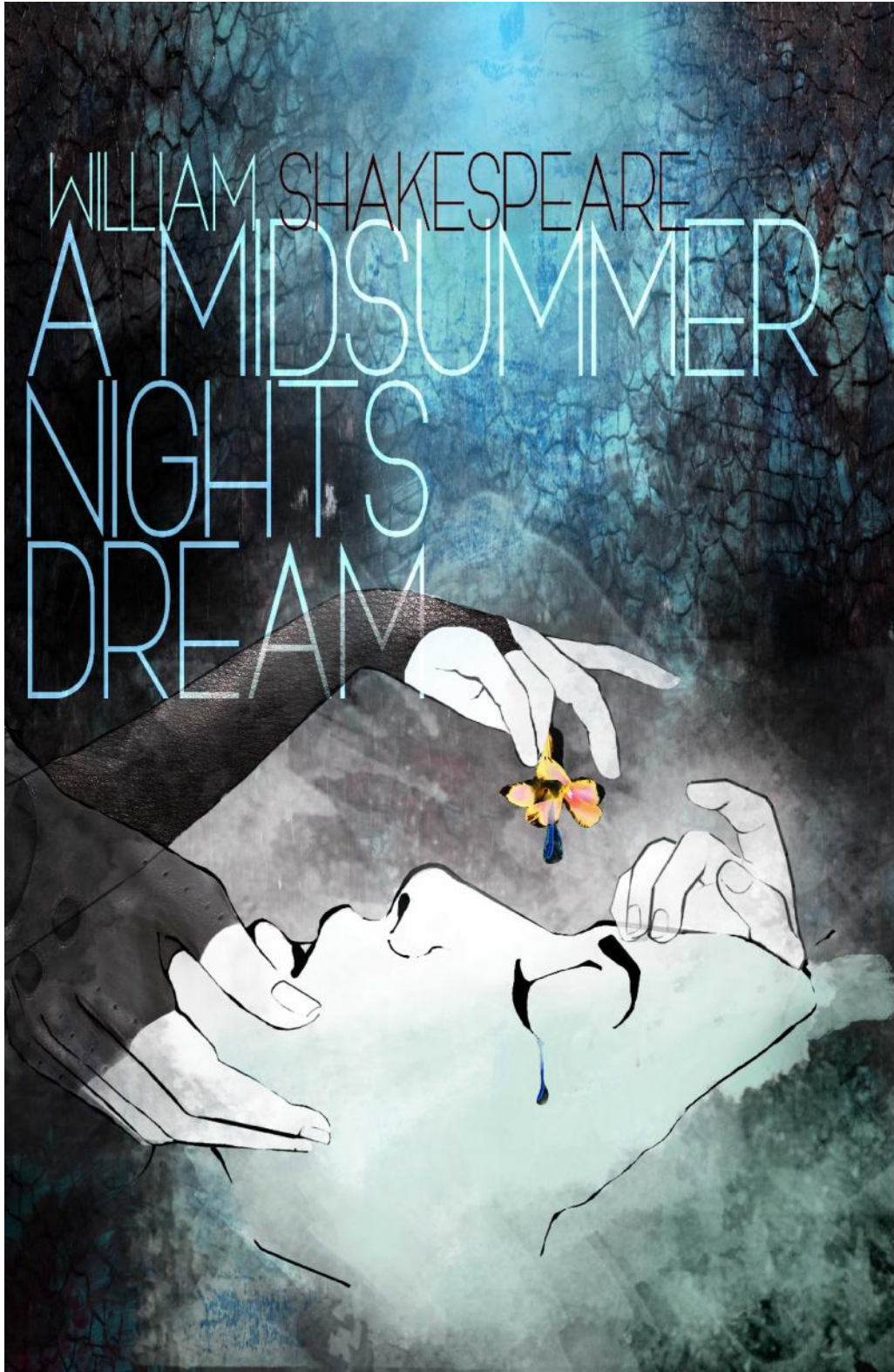


Figure 3.3 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Final design of the poster “, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, University of South Carolina, 2016.

3.2 REVERSED PROCESS

Director Robert Richmond and I started from the exploration of the script itself and we tried to figure out who the characters were. There were several different approaches we might have taken, but none of them were inspiring me and I could not relate to the script at all. The reason for that was the specificity of the fairy world. The vampire world was something that the director thought would be interesting, and that idea was preserved until the very end. The unfortunate thing about that was that I could not find the spatial justification for the vampires' existence and the overall space's identity. Our ideas were evolving and changing pretty dynamically. My constant search for a solution was not successful. After struggling to define the space, I decided to abandon the notion of the vampire fairy world for a while, in order to discover the world of the play.

I found three associative words that I could relate visually with this play. Those words were “oppressiveness”, “liberation” and “verticality”. These concepts were the triggers for my search for the visual identity. I found supporting research for those words, in the art work of Brazilian artist Ernesto Neto, who is known for his dreamlike/ teardrop-like sculpture installations. The fluidity and intimacy of his installations inspired my further development and creation.

The first idea for the ‘court scene’ was to create an obstructive space with walls on each side. The walls would have been angled in order to create the false perspective, and to focus the audience's attention towards the Up Stage center where I wanted to have all the entrances.

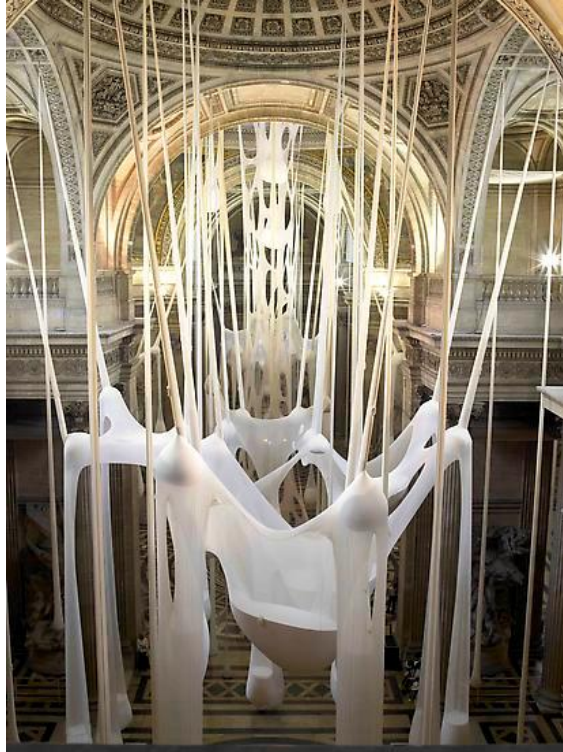


Figure 3.4 Neto, Ernesto, “Léviathan Thot“, Panthéon, Paris, 2006.



Figure 3.5 Neto, Ernesto, “Léviathan Thot“, Panthéon, Paris, 2006.

This would enhance the struggle for the lovers in their journey through the forest. The forms of the future forest would appear as glimpses at the very beginning, hanging above everything, to make the atmosphere in the court scene denser.



Figure 3.6 Spalajkovic, Neda, "First rendering of the court scene", *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, University of South Carolina, 2016.

The idea with the floor was to create the sense of a ramp to suggest some sort of hierarchy with the steps. In the forest scene, I wanted to have a maze of these raindrops, to create physical and visual obstacles, and to support the vertical repetition of actual trees in the forest. The raindrops would have to fly in and the walls would slightly open up to symbolically portray the liberation of the lovers. One of the big raindrops would have been Titania's bed, revealed by the fairies kicking and moving other suspended raindrops.

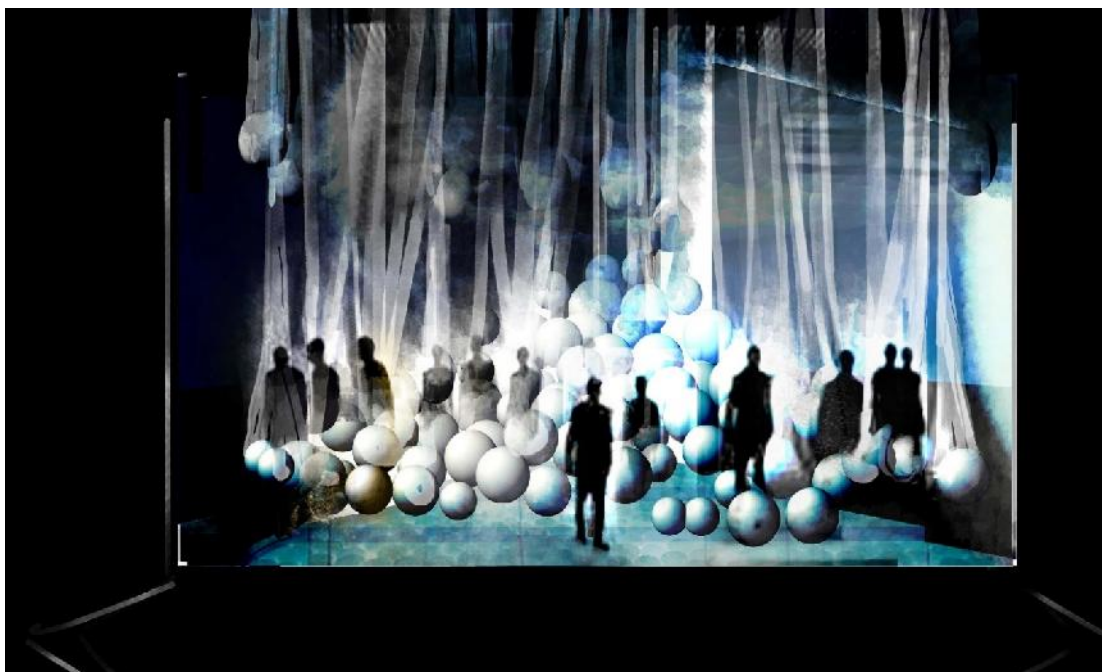


Figure 3.7 Spalajkovic, Neda, “First rendering of the forest scene “, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, University of South Carolina, 2016.

This part of my creative process was useful because it helped me to discover where I would ideally place this play. I had to retreat from this idea because I was aware that time and the financial resources were limited, and there were technical issue with this idea. The nature of this set required experimentation. I wasn't sure what materials we might use for this. It required some testing, and I was not able to communicate what was needed at that time. The financial situation determined our decision. We could not afford to build this, so we had to move on from this idea. That took us to a different approach to the concept.

Drayton Hall Theatre is a venue needs a lot of renovations and improvements, and the best way to reveal the condition of it was to open up the whole stage and to use as few resources as possible in order to portrair the theaters' capability. Our starting point for the new concept was to not hide the fact that we were in a theatre, and to use the existing stage

as it was, with some additional elements to help the story telling. Director Robert Richmond called this idea a ‘valentine to the theatre’ to celebrate our theatre space as it is.



Figure 3.8 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Drayton Hall Stage in a preparation phase “, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, University of South Carolina, 2016.

We started to implement our idea in this context. We juxtaposed the dark, rebellious world of the fairies with the traditional, law-abiding world of the humans, and we explored how those two worlds would come together, and what the metaphors were behind those two worlds. Since the world of humans and fairies are not connected until the forest scene, we wanted to combine those two worlds and show how one world is affecting the other.



Figure 3.9 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Prologue-Introduction of the abandoned theatre space “, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, University of South Carolina, 2016.



Figure 3.10 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Opening scene- The court in an abandoned theatre “, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, University of South Carolina, 2016.

Since the world of our fairies was conceived in the dark world of vampires, we wanted to substantiate their changing of the weather with their dark and devilish characteristics. The change of the weather led us to the ‘rain’ - a vertical repetition that was oppressive, (similar to my initial research, which struck both the director and me), the vertical rain created somehow the dark atmosphere. Vertical repetition was definitely something that was beneficial for the ‘magic forest’, and for an actual representation of the forest. The director introduced the space, as a ‘random’ hiding spot in an abandoned theatre space. The storm was happening outside and the courtiers have rushed into the space to hide from the rain. They carried umbrellas, to indicate the storm outside (with additional sound effects). As the story was unfolding, the back wall of the space was revealed and we saw the remains of old scenery and props from previous theater performances. On the wall was Oberon’s throne. He would sit in the chair mounted to the back wall and observe, to demonstrate his omnipotence.



Figure 3.11 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Elevation of the back wall with Oberon’s chair “, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, University of South Carolina, 2016.

The introduction of the umbrellas was important because with Oberon's presence in the space, the multiplication of forest umbrellas was presented as a magical echo of things that had happened in the opening scene. This was the effect we wanted to have with the transposition of those oversized teardrops- to represent the notion of the forest, creating the sense of organized chaos. Also it provided the shelter with its vault shape, the same as the umbrella.



Figure 3.12 Spalajkovic, Neda, “The Forest scene-Close-up on the suspended umbrellas“, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, University of South Carolina, 2016.



Figure 3.13 Spalajkovic, Neda, “The Forest scene “, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, University of South Carolina, 2016.



Figure 3.14 Spalajkovic, Neda, “The Forest scene-different part of the forest “, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, University of South Carolina, 2016.

3.3 WORK EXPERIENCE

This production showed me where I was as the designer. It helped me to understand the importance of the time and money in theatre, and how those things can restrict the creative process. My indecisiveness in this process led to a somewhat undefined and confusing set. I would have made better choices if something had not blocked my ideas.

The interesting part of this production was that my final idea definitely had a visually strong emphasis, but only because it had the final creative contribution of the lighting designer Bruce Auerbach. The richness of the textures and colors he introduces and his reading of my renderings was so flattering to every element on the stage. In our first conversation I explained the set and how it should work, and from there he started creating the light plot. Bruce Auerbach is a scenic designer as well, so his lighting practice is to make sure to light the actors and also to the set as well as possible. He used almost seventy percent of the lighting inventory to light the umbrellas and the back wall.

The combination of everything in my design worked, but there was a lack of the unification and consistency in the style. Maybe because of my misinterpretation of the director's ideas, or miscommunication with the costume designer, but it was clear that there was not a stylistic connection. Most of the things on stage were not justifiably present, and they were there for the sake of decoration and illustration only. The educational setting has let me explore and find out how to manage my design skills, to demonstrate them or to refine them. There are so many things I would approach and create differently now, with less judgement, and less self-restriction.



Figure 3.15 Spalajkovic, Neda, “The Court scene-Prologue “, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, University of South Carolina, 2016.



Figure 3.16 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Mechanicals“, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, University of South Carolina, 2016.



Figure 3.17 Spalajkovic, Neda, “The transition into the forest“, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, University of South Carolina, 2016.



Figure 3.18 Spalajkovic, Neda, “The Forest“, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, University of South Carolina, 2016.



Figure 3.19 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Titania and Bottom going to sleep “, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, University of South Carolina, 2016.



Figure 3.20 Spalajkovic, Neda, “The Forest Scene-Puck pairing the lovers back again “, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, University of South Carolina, 2016.



Figure 3.21 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Titania and Bottom in the bed “, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, University of South Carolina, 2016.



Figure 3.22 Spalajkovic, Neda, “The Wedding of Theseus and Hippolyta “, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, University of South Carolina, 2016.



Figure 3.23 Spalajkovic, Neda, “Mechanicals”, performance of Pyramus and Thisbe “, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, University of South Carolina, 2016.



Figure 3.24 Spalajkovic, Neda, “The final scene-Puck’s final speech“, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, University of South Carolina, 2016.



Figure 3.25 Spalajkovic, Neda, “The final scene-The End” *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, University of South Carolina, 2016.

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