ABSTRACT

ENGAGING AND EDUCATING AMERICAN CULTURE THROUGH PERFORMANCE, ART, AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH IN THE STAGE PRODUCTION OF MICHAEL CRISTOFER’S THE SHADOW BOX

by Bianca Alechia Siplin

Community theatre is designed to adhere to social issues that may affect the way people think and live. In the production of The Shadow Box, a play about terminally ill patients and their loved ones, the idea was to provide a space where multi-perspectives of living with dying could meet on common ground, and perhaps engage in dialogue. This thesis is a combined analysis of Cristofer’s writing style, The Shadow Box’s production history, development of hospice, efficient rehearsal methods of the Viewpoints and Stanislavski system, and community outreach. When put into praxis, these aspects become an evaluation of how the directing process and performance brought the discussion of living with dying to audiences.
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DEDICATION

To my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for his guidance, and giving me courage, wisdom, patience, and the opportunity to share my creative vision with other theatre artists and scholars.

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INTRODUCTION

The following paper provides a creative research and reflection to support my directing thesis and the directorial process for Michael Cristofer’s *The Shadow Box*. Directing a play encompasses many aspects of the production such as research, design, rehearsal, performance, community, and especially, culture and art. As I overtly express throughout this paper, theatre is more than entertainment to me; it is a way of expressing the human experiences in a social environment that exposes a group of people to new ideas or a different way of thinking. Shakespeare once wrote: "We know what we are, but know not what we may be" (*Hamlet* IV: 5). I believe a play has the power to bring about individual and social awareness, and a theatrical experience can last a lifetime. With that said, as a director, I define myself as a mediator between the playwright and the audience. My duty is to tell the playwright’s story to my utmost ability. In *The Shadow Box*, this task was a little difficult because the play deals with issues of living with dying, the terminally ill, and family grief. This makes it hard to prepare for different audience perspectives because each person has his or her own way of dealing with death. My way of handling this issue was by incorporating community outreach and art because I felt that the audience should be invited rather than forced into the subject of living with dying. Therefore, my paper reflects my directing process of *The Shadow Box* in four chapters.

In Chapter 1, my approach to *The Shadow Box* begins with research on Michael Cristofer. First, who is Cristofer? What is his theatrical background? Does he have a specific writing pattern? What are the historical moments that influence Cristofer’s work? Cristofer has an extensive background in the theatre and film industry, in front and behind the scenes. He is an actor, writer, and director, who is not widely known for all his works. Although Cristofer has written several plays, he is mostly recognized by one, *The Shadow Box*. Many people have never heard of his other plays. In this chapter, I compare the writing techniques of Cristofer through three plays: *The Shadow Box* (1975), *Black Angel* (1978), *Breaking Up* (1997). Here, I discover the patterns of rhythm, interrupted scenes, audience confrontation, character choices, and thematical issues driven by its particular view of social problems. These patterns encouraged me to research the different historical and social events of America within the 1960s and 1970s. During this time several movements were occurring such as the Civil Right’s Movement and the Women’s Rights Movement, to name a few. Unfortunately, Cristofer didn’t incorporate any of the historical movements in his plays. This was mainly seen in Cristofer’s characters that were
dominated by the male figures. This means that Cristofer avoids some political issues in his plays, and only focuses on certain social aspects of the play. Lastly in this chapter, I analyze the characterizations and structure of *The Shadow Box*.

In Chapter 2, I analyze how America felt towards the issue of living with dying in three different decades of *The Shadow Box*, the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. This helped me to understand how an audience in 2007 would react to living with dying. Also, in this chapter, I explain Elisabeth Kübler-Ross’ five stages of dying and the history and development of hospice. Linking *The Shadow Box* with the five stage of death and development of hospice, explains how America understood *The Shadow Box* better throughout its production history as hospice developed. The problem arose when America anticipated the story of *The Shadow Box*. They wanted to see people die or deal with death, not living with dying, because the discussion about dying had shifted.

In Chapter 3, I discuss my rehearsal approach. I apply two rehearsal methods, the Viewpoints and Stanislavski system. These methods helped me communicate effective ways of playing physicality and emotions to young actors. Also, the two methods helped the actors build as an ensemble and distinguish the characters’ relationships.

In Chapter 4, I incorporate the role design played in creating the characters’ environments. Next, I discuss how community and art serves as an aesthetic for the audience. Finally, I evaluate *The Shadow Box* from various audience perspectives: students, an adjudicator, and myself.
CHAPTER 1

TEXT INTERPRETATION: A DISCUSSION OF MICHAEL CRISTOFER’S WRITING STYLE, THEMES, AND CHARACTERS

Playwrights have always been a popular voice in the theatre. They write plays to express ideas, address issues, and to share their creative imagination. One such playwright is Michael Cristofer, who is also an actor, screenwriter, stage, TV, and film director as well as a playwright. As an actor, Cristofer has appeared in several films including, *Die Hard: With a Vengeance* (1995), *The Little Drummer Girl* (1984), and *An Enemy of the People* (1978). As an actor, he has won a Theater World Award for his portrayal of Trofimov in the Lincoln Square production of *The Cherry Orchard* and an Obie Award for his performance in *Chinchilla* at the Phoenix Theater. But his most acknowledged works are *The Shadow Box*, *Gia*, and *The Witches of Eastwick*. In 1977, *The Shadow Box* won Cristofer a Pulitzer Prize and Tony award for best play. His debut as a film director in the HBO movie, *Gia*, which earned six Emmy nominations, won him a Director’s Guild of America Award and the lead actress, Angelina Jolie, a Golden Globe Award. Although Cristofer has had a lot of success in the TV and film industry, he started his theatrical career as a stage actor and was a company member of Arena Stage in Washington D.C.

In the early 1970s he began writing small plays and soon developed a relationship with the Mark Taper Forum (California) where *The Shadow Box* (1975) and many of his other plays made their debut. As a playwright, Cristofer began to challenge societal issues in his scripts through themes and fictional characters. At this time he was not the only playwright doing so. In this chapter, I will discuss the writing style of 1960s and 1970s dramas, analyze the writing style of Michael Cristofer by looking at three of his plays: *The Shadow Box* (1975), *Black Angel* (1978), *Breaking Up* (1997) that were written in three different and distinct periods of American drama, and then argue that Cristofer continues to address the social issues of America, but fails to address the political issues of gender. And lastly I will analyze the characterizations and structure of his Pulitzer Prize play *The Shadow Box*.

**Dramatic Writing in the 1960s and 1970s**

The 1960s and 1970s were periods of expression and change in America. During this time the working/lower class was suffering from lack of employment, discrimination, and increased housing prices. It was also a time when America was losing trust in its government due to the presidential Watergate scandal of Richard Nixon and the Vietnam War. Many groups were...
starting to protest and artistically articulate their positions, status, and life experiences in social organizations such as the Civil Rights Movement, Women’s Rights, West Coast Chicano Movement, the East Coast Hispanic Movement, Nuyorican literary movement, etc. When referring to the Nuyorican literary movement, a movement that consisted of Spanish Harlem and South Bronx, David Krasner, author of *American Drama: 1945-2000*, explains: “Nuyorican style consisted of a street figure (usually biographically drawn) who takes on the role of oracle. The protagonist is often a participant, moving fluidly from inside events to narrator. The events are reported as a personal history rather than from the perspective of detached observer”(97). This was more so true with all of the movements in the 1960s and 1970s that different ethnicities were writing about the personal and some were even creating their own theatre spaces.

Krasner explains that plays from 1960-1975 “challenged mainstream presumptions”(65), and they were no longer focusing primarily on the ecstatic, popular, and fancy lives of the bourgeois class, but the problematic issues faced within the bourgeois class that could also be related to the social problems of the lower class. These plays critiqued the upper/middle classes by writing about their relationships, ‘hysteria’, and social problems that couldn’t be fixed by money. Some playwrights took the opportunity to make fun of the bourgeois class. For example the characters in Amiri Baraka’s *Dutchman* (1964), Clay, an African American bourgeois male and Lula, a white woman, exchange words of ‘cultural representation.’ What does it mean to be Black or White? Because of Clay’s business-like appearance and demeanor are not representational of his ‘culture,’ Lola rejects him. The *Dutchman* portrays Clay’s want of acceptance in a world that doesn’t value him or his appearance. The *Dutchman* critiques bourgeois values by interrupting its social sphere, which is represented by Lula. Other plays such as *Dutchman* that had a “mixture of absurdity and reality, illusion and truth, farce and tragedy” were Arthur Kopit’s *Oh Dad, Poor Dad, Mamma’s Hung You in the Closet and I’m Feeling So Sad* (1962), Edward Albee’s *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962) and *All Over* (1971), and Adrienne Kennedy’s *Funnyhouse of a Negro* (1964). Michael Cristofer’s *The Shadow Box* (1975) respectfully belongs in this category as well.

*The Shadow Box* portrays themes of family, love, and life, but is goes beyond the bourgeois norms by its context of gay relationships. Its relationship to the social dramas of the 1970s is shown through its structure and context. Although the characters are middle/upper class families the issue of living with dying, according to Cristofer, is universal, and *The Shadow
Box’s critical context of bourgeois norms is a strong social discourse. Also during the 60s and 70s, many playwrights broke away from the traditional style of realistic writing—writing events in consecutive and uninterrupted manner. Meaning that the playwrights could write in an abstract fashion. When describing Funnyhouse of a Negro, Krasner writes: “In Funnyhouse events are recalled in disturbingly violent flashbacks…the characters move from role to role, repeat phrases said by others and experience difficulty recognizing who and where they are” (72). This is a similar structure Cristofer utilizes in the Shadow Box as three different stories are cut or intruded by each other.

The Shadow Box deals with the issue of death within three families. The Shadow Box’s ‘scene intrusions’ gradually tells three stories together making this depiction of death more urgent and realistic even though it is written in a non-realistic style. Although many plays in the 1970s utilized death for popular entertainment such as revenge, rage, punishment, etc. This is approached differently in The Shadow Box because here it is not a result of another human being, but a result of natural processes. In Hospice: Pitfalls, Practices, and Promises, Stephen Connor suggests, “The United States is both a death-denying and death-obsessed culture. Its people are obsessed with unnatural death but avoid natural death…People lose interest in anything that lacks violent or romantic content” (122). Connor’s ‘death obsessed culture’ are those fascinated with horror movies such as Texas Chainsaw Massacre, Halloween, and Final Destination. Final Destination is a movie that deals directly with death. It’s theme is that “You can’t escape death,” in which the movie exercises this through “bloody gory” scenes consisting of individuals getting split in half or smashed by a glass building. This movie has done so well in the box office it has three sequels. Moreover, crowds cheer when someone dies in these types of movies, but they are afraid of natural death.

Further, although Cristofer’s writing style is evident of many important movements related to the social class, his characters are still placed in a male-dominated society showing no evidence of female independence. But during the 1970s – 1980s, many feminist critics began to evaluate the roles of women in plays because of all the social changes in women’s status such as the women’s right to vote in 1928, the 1944 Education Act (opportunities for both sexes to obtain higher education), the 1969 Divorce Reform Act, and the 1970 Equal Pay Act. Feminists were tired of seeing negative depictions of women on stage by male playwrights. In The Feminist Spectator as Critic, Jill Dolan writes, “Feminism begins with a keen awareness of exclusion
from male cultural, social, sexual, political, and intellectual discourse. It is a critic of prevailing social conditions that formulate women’s position as outside of dominant male discourse” (3). As other feminists’ arguments, as Dolan’s, grew stronger into the 1980s, the women in Cristofer’s plays dated in the 1990s still remained a stereo-depiction of male hegemony.

Michael Cristofer’s Writing Style

Cristofer’s writing style is unique and tenacious at the same time. His plays reflect themes related to human experiences, but his characters pose as substantial ‘gender role-players’ for male entertainment and pleasure. Cristofer’s thematic issues are centered on his male characters, who reinforce their masculinity through dialogues with their female counterparts. Three Cristofer plays *Breaking Up*, *Black Angel*, and *The Shadow Box* exude the boundaries of ordinary drama and comedy as a common method to ‘realistically’ depict human experiences. *Breaking Up* consists of two characters, Steve and Alice, whose lust for one another overpowers the ideal relationship. Their uncertainty towards commitment and constant arguing is consistently apologetic by sex. When the couple decides to split up, Steve is miserable without Alice and proposes to her as if marriage will compromise the negative aspects of their relationship. Alice’s planning and organization of the wedding is set for failure when Steve decides not to attend the wedding. Themes in *Breaking Up* concern relationship values, commitment obligations, love versus lust.

*Black Angel* tells the story of a Nazi war criminal, Martin Engel, who lives amongst the very people that consider him an enemy. When the French discover him, they hold him captive until his execution day. While Engel is being held captive, his wife, who barely sees him, suffers financially. She argues with Engel about his innocence and pleads that he should fight for his freedom; but Engel feels his crimes of the past have caught up with him and he should be executed. Themes discussed in *Black Angel* are duty versus crime, and guilt versus freedom.

Lastly, *The Shadow Box* portrays the battles and complexities of three families living in three separate cottages on the grounds of a California hospice. The three terminally ill patients Joe, Brian, and Felicity struggle with the overbearing obstacles of living with dying. This play is journey of discovery as each family learns the value of life. And it presents themes of family values, living with dying, and celebrating life. The themes faced in these three plays are relative subjects that the average spectator can relate to. But the question becomes: Does the female spectator have to relate to male characters that dominate the stories?
Women and Gender in Cristofer’s Plays

Dolan explains that women usually find themselves identifying with male characters, who are the “active subject[s]” of texts and performances (2). Dolan adds that the “representations” of the female characters also “tend to objectify” the female viewer “as passive, invisible, unspoken subject” (2). She emphasizes:

Finding her position compromised if she allows herself to identify with these women, the feminist spectator contemplates the option of participating in the play’s narrative from the hero’s point of view. She empathizes with his romantic exploits, or his activities in a more public sphere, but has a nagging suspicion that she has become complicit in the objectification or erasure of her own gender class (2).

In the following plays I will demonstrate that the female characters are presented in roles to increase male heroism while the female spectator is forced to identify with the major male character(s) instead of those of her own gender.

In *Black Angel*, months after Engel has been captured by the French, his wife, Simone, pleads with him to stand up for his rights, so he can come home and they can start a family, which is something Engel kept putting off since Simone mentioned the idea to him years ago. She says, “I’m waiting. Do you forget that, too? Is that so hard to remember? I’m waiting in a room with no heat, no friends, no family. I am there for no other reason except that I am waiting. I scrounge for food so that I can go on waiting. I suffer meaningless work so that I can make a few more pennies so that I can go on waiting…I am nothing but she who waits. For you” (43). Shortly after she says this, she leaves and Engel doesn’t stop her. Cristofer notes that Engel quietly says, “Don’t go. Don’t do this. Stop…” (44) in a voice that can only be heard by himself. Engel’s reasons for not trying to escape, which he had the option of doing, is because of his masculine fierceness and his need to maintain his heroic image. In contrast, Simone is weak, faithful, and lonely. Cristofer plays on the fact that Simone is a child-bearer, because of her repetitious expressions for wanting a family. To add to Simone’s pettiness, Cristofer denies her everything she wants in the play such as seeing her own family, who she moved away from to be with Engel, having her own child, and now the denial of being with her husband, who is locked in a cage protected by French soldiers. Simone’s role in the play illuminates Engel’s character because Engel is, what the audience may observe, brave for wanting to be punished. But the questioning of Cristofer’s decision to write a character that wants to move in a town where he
will be prosecuted or slaughtered remains a mystery. (The specific crime is not revealed in the play.) The treatment and abuse of Simone’s character by the townspeople is result of Engel’s doing. Not once in the play did Simone question their move to France, knowing that Engel might be recognized as a murderer. She is vulnerable and passive, whereas Engel is unsympathetic. Because the actions of the play revolve around Engel, the female spectator is forced to identify with him and not Simone because Simone is seen as one of Engel’s obstacles—compromising marriage for personal justice. So Engel is considered a hero? To the average spectator, yes, because he sacrifices his personal life with his wife for maintaining his public image. In another play, *Breaking Up*, the characters, Alice and Steve are similar to Simone and Engel, yet Alice and Steve’s relationship is centered around sex.

In *Breaking Up*, after having sex Alice wants to go out to dinner because it was the original plan of the evening; however, since the two have already had sex before going to dinner, Steve doesn’t want to go out to dinner anymore.

ALICE: Anyway…(Pause.) Where do you want to eat?

STEVE: What?

ALICE: I thought we were going to dinner.

STEVE: Now?

ALICE: Yeah. It’s not too late, is it?

STEVE: No, it’s not late. It’s not that it’s late.

ALICE: Aren’t you hungry?

STEVE: Yeah. I could eat. I don’t know.

ALICE: Well, what’s the problem? I thought, when you called, you said…

STEVE: That was before.

ALICE: Before what?

STEVE: Before this [sex] (15-16).

ALICE: We were having a good time because, just because we were together. Not because we were desperate or horny or…And I thought that meant that we were good together besides the sex, it meant there was a reason for us to be together.

STEVE: It doesn’t work that way (17).

Steve is written to be insensitive and cold while Alice is left feeling insecure about the relationship. Furthermore, after this scene, Alice and Steve separate (one of the many times); but
to their sexual satisfaction they continue to see each other. Alice’s character continues to be ‘played’ by Steve in another bedroom scene when Steve tries to sneak out of Alice’s house after sex while she is asleep. Alice says, “All the time we were going together, those two years, we almost never spent the whole night together. Do you realize that? Three, four times. Maybe… But just as a favor, just this once, since it doesn’t make a difference anyway, could you not disappear in the middle of the night? Like some thief. Like you suddenly realized you’re in the wrong place” (21&22). Through Alice’s pleading with Steve, Steve continues not to show a bit of affection for Alice, which makes Alice seem so dependent upon Steve just because she ‘yearns’ for the need of his presence. Moreover, when Steve proposes to Alice, it doesn’t take much convincing for her to say yes. However, similar to Simone, Alice doesn’t get what she wants from the man she loves. Alice is rejected by Steve when she is ‘stood up at the alter and embarrassed in front of her family. At the end of the play, after the characters haven’t seen each other in years, they see each other in a hotel where they are both drunk. They show pictures of their kids by their separate spouses, discuss how life is with their new family, and have good laughs. When Alice get tired, she hints that “it’s late” signifying that Steve should leave her hotel room.

STEVE: Yeah. I better get moving.
ALICE: I have an early flight.
STEVE: You’re leaving tomorrow?
ALICE: Yeah.
STEVE: Good to see you.
ALICE: Good to see you, too. (Alice rests her head on Steve’s shoulder.) I’m going to have the worst hangover.
(Steve puts his arm around Alice’s shoulder.)
STEVE: I better go, huh?
ALICE: Yeah (55).
(They don’t move. Lights Fade very slowly.)

Even after being stood up at the alter, this scene is evident that Alice is still susceptible by Steve and that two will have an affair. More could be said about Steve’s domination in his new relationship because it’s late and he’s not at home with his wife or his six-month old baby. Cristofer wrote the same characters in Breaking Up; he just adjusted the ‘rules of marriage’ by
insisting that couples are no longer faithful in the 1990s like Simone in the 1960s. This implies that women are still vulnerable to men, just not restricted to one man. As a female spectator, Alice is seen as a disappointment and an object of obsession. The female spectator is unable to identify with Alice because she is repeatedly used for pleasure, and Alice doesn’t realize it, but the female spectator does.

In *The Shadow Box*, death isn’t a problem for men, but it makes the women weak, fearful, and denial. The two men Joe and Brian treat death as natural human experience, but Felicity is senile and in complete agony. In addition to Felicity, the other women in the play, who are not terminal, are miserable because their loved one is dying. In Cottage 1, even though Joe is fatigued, he only exposes himself in the best of shape and tries to hide his weakness, which further convinces his wife, Maggie, that Joe is not terminally ill. However, when Maggie is confronted about hiding Joe’s ill health from Steve, she cries, “Because…it isn’t true [that you’re sick]. It isn’t…” (32). She runs off stage alone and Joe doesn’t follow her. The stage directions read: “Joe is stunned. He sits down on the porch steps and puts his head in his hands” (32). Joe avoids showing emotion in anyway.

As a parallel comparison to Joe, Brian shows little remorse to his condition in fact he boasts about it. Brian’s indigent behavior towards death is rather awkward to his male-counterpart, Mark, and ex-wife, Beverly, who in turn have an exchange of words on what is best for Brian.

**MARK:** He’s dying.

**BEVERLY:** He doesn’t need *you* for that. He can do it all by himself. You’re young, intelligent, not bad looking…probably good trade on a slow market. Why hang around?

**MARK:** I can’t leave him.

**BEVERLY:** Why not?

**MARK:** I owe him.

**BEVERLY:** What? Pity?

**MARK:** No

**BEVERLY:** Then what? What?! You don’t make sense, Mark. I mean, what’s in it for you?

**MARK:** Nothing’s in it for me.

**BEVERLY:** You said it yourself. He’s just a tired old sick man (73).
This female-male dialogue is different from the other plays because it plays on the role of gender norms. Beverly is seen as an equal during her scenes with Mark because Cristofer resists homosexual and heterosexual assumptions. Mark is identifies with his own masculinity even if he is gay. Cristofer disrupts and challenges gender norms in Cottage 2 by expressing that these characters simply react versus role-play according to stereotypes. Directly after Mark and Beverly’s exchange of words in the above scene, Mark cries because he doesn’t want Brian to die, which is similar to Maggie’s emotional breakdown. Along with the emotional escapade of Mark and Beverly, Beverly consoles Mark when in fact she has to console herself by drinking alcohol. However, in the midst of this argument, Brian is asleep recovering from an earlier accident. After Mark tries to help him up, he dramatically responds, “No! No. It’s all right. I’m all right. He walks, he talks, he falls down, he gets up. Life goes on” (56). Brian walks away showing no sign of pain, but a sense of nausea expressed by a “bump into the coffee table on the way out” (56). Again Brian, who is physically weak, puts ‘up the front’ that he is well. Although Brian’s illness is very visible, Cristofer tends to punctuate Brian’s manliness through speech, and instead of Brian showing emotion, he gets angry. The female spectator is then expected to identify with Brian out of sympathy or maybe guilt. The female spectator is, once again, distant from the female character, Beverly, because of her ‘drunken’ attitude and aggressive behavior towards Mark. Although the two men Brian and Mark are written differently to resist the gender roles of a gay relationship, Cristofer still operates in a dominant gender-role-frame.

Last to show variation of terminally ill patients, Cristofer writes the female patient, Felicity, in contrast to Joe’s and Brian’s attitudes towards death. Felicity’s character plays the role of dependent mother, bitter patient, and delusional woman. Her pain is far more present in the play and medicine, unlike with Brian and Joe, has rare effect on Felicity. Felicity shouts, “It hurts…hurts now…Make it Stop. Make it stop now (47). Felicity is talking to her daughter, Agnes, who is also her caretaker. However in this cottage, a lot of focus is drawn on Agnes, who is on an emotional rollercoaster because of Felicity’s condition and her inability to stop participating in Felicity’s fictional world—a world that revolves around the arrival of Claire, Felicity’s deceased daughter. The character Agnes is an obedient daughter, who sacrifices her own happiness for her mother, like Simone in Black Angel. The interesting thing about Cottage 3 is the fact that the Cristofer chose to write a mother-daughter relationship from a male perspective. Plus, he sets all their dialogue in a kitchen playing on the ‘stereotype phrase’ that “a
woman’s place is in the kitchen.” In another play, ‘night Mother (1983), that involves the relationship of a mother and daughter, the playwright, Marsha Norma, takes a different approach to executing this type of relationship. In ‘night Mother, Jessie tells her mother, Thelma, she is going to kill herself. Throughout the play Jessie gives Thelma instructions on what to do when she kills herself, but Thelma tries to convince her not to do it. One of Thelma’s tactics to prevent Jessie’s suicide is to explain why Jessie has had a horrible life. Krasner writes that Jessie’s “accretion of boredom, endless ironing, her mother’s insufferable palaver, and the giving without receiving make life unbearable” (122). At the end of the play Jessie shoots herself, which symbolizes that she can have some active control over her life. Parallels can be made between Jessie and Agnes’ in age and inner feelings of loneliness, but instead of taking action (not to say that taking action only means suicide), Cristofer continues Agnes’ endless cycle of misery and depression.

Unlike Norman’s ‘night Mother, Cristofer resists the notion of female characters taking action to overcome any obstacle or event that is consistently painful. The fact that Cristofer fails to achieve this in setting with two women, further proves his consistent style of dominating female roles. Michelene Wandor explains, “There are two ways of evaluating this: the first is to say that men, despite some of their intentions, are still unable to ‘imagine’ women clearly, without the taint of their own misogyny and conditioning” (157). Therefore, since Cristofer is a male, his male characters are more likely to be developed. Not to say that he purposely writes male-centered plays, but to merely suggest that Cristofer has problems relating to the female experience, which portrays his characters in an unbalanced playing field tilted towards the heroic, brave, emotionless, ideal male.

Cristofer and the Discussion Play

Although Cristofer maintains traditional approaches to gender, he still offers a powerful insight of social issues through his plays. Like many playwrights in the 1970s, Cristofer approaches problematic issues within society that leaves audiences with thought provoking questions and different perspectives on a common issue. This is a writing style known as the Discussion Play, developed by a famous playwright named George Bernard Shaw. The Discussion Play intends to challenge public discourse by complicating specified themes through characters, which was called the Discussion Play.
The subordination of incident to dialectical exigencies is the fundamental formula of the mature Discussion Play. On this foundation other qualities rest, and a descriptive definition of the genre must take into account the following technical characteristics: a central subject of discussion,…a familiar center of reference in a genre associated with the subject of discussion, but freely improvisatory handling of the basic conventions of that genre; a systematic use of representational social types in addition to representative figures embodying values and points of view (Meisel 293).

The Discussion Play is driven by its themes rather than its characters because themes allow the public to make a connection to the play regardless of characters. The characters only provide an interpretation of the author or interpretation that may dismantle a popular belief on a subject. This method causes audiences to reevaluate their beliefs on a particular topic or maybe even resist the topic. But the fact of the matter is that themes of Discussion Plays result in questions of oneself, family, society, etc. *Black Angel*, *Breaking Up*, and *The Shadow Box* each discuss a primary subject that pertains to its genre such as War Crimes, Relationships, and Living with Dying.

In *Black Angel*, Cristofer share the story of an enemy, Engel, and in turn leaves it to the audience to decide if he is guilty or not. This play asks the questions: are all Nazi soldiers bad? Usually everything you hear about the Nazis is bad, but Cristofer uses this information to challenge the audience by saying that Engel was a soldier whose orders were to ‘count and sort the bodies.’ Does this act make Engel a criminal since it is not technically a crime? It does to all of the citizens in France except the mayor, who dies in the end trying to protect Engel’s innocence.

*Breaking Up* questions the values of male-female relationships. Are you afraid of love? Do you constantly reject the growth of your relationship? When and why do we separate? Is it worth it? In the prologue Steve and Alice are in isolated areas of the stage facing the audience. They speak:

STEVE: It was good.
ALICE: In the beginning; it was really good.
STEVE: When it first started.
ALICE: When we first met.
STEVE: When we first started seeing each other.
ALICE: Going out.
STEVE: Doing things.
ALICE: Together.
STEVE: The two of us.
ALICE: Well…
STEVE: It always is.
ALICE: Isn’t it always that way?
STEVE: Isn’t it? In the beginning (5).

This scene serves as a ‘prologue’ because the playwright notes it as such, but it the play it functions as a conversation between the characters and the audience as they are immediately invited into the play. After this scene the audience is taken into the past to see the beginning of the relationship. By doing this, Cristofer portrays how two people who love each other grow a part and end up with other people. In his earlier play, *The Shadow Box*, Cristofer used this method at the end of the play where it still served the same purpose—questioning and making the audience a part of the dialogue. They speak:

BRIAN: And then you think, some one should have said it sooner.
MARK: Someone should have said it a long time ago.
BEVERLY: When you were young.
BRIAN: Someone should have said this living…
MARK: …this life…
BEVERLY: …this lifetime…
BRIAN: It doesn’t last forever (85).

These moments in *The Shadow Box* and *Breaking Up* reminds the audience that they are looking at a reflection of themselves or someone they are or have been in contact with. The significance of breaking the fourth wall and speaking directly to the audience breaks the distance/space between performer and audience and personally invites the audience into the discussion. The only difference between the two plays in this context is that *Breaking Up* invites the audience in the beginning of the play so they can make the journey(s) with the characters; and *The Shadow Box* presents the thematic issues before the audience and then invites them in, while revealing that the characters are an imitation or interpretation of the audience on the subject.
The Shadow Box confronts the audience with problems surrounding death. How will you deal with life being terminally ill? How do you discuss death amongst your family and friends? How do you deal with grief of a lost one? At what moment do you realize the value of life? When it’s almost gone? Brian reinforces: “People don’t want to let go. Do they. They think it’s a mistake. They think it’s supposed to last forever…I suppose it’s because…You don’t expect it to happen to you. You try. You want to strike a bargain…make a deal. Your whole life goes by—it feels like it was only a minute. You want to be angry” (84-85).

Cristofer is a ‘discussion playwright’ because he has a pertinent consistency of drawing focus to current events of a given time period with exposing multi-sides of a story. In this way the audience isn’t so quick to judge, rather they remain neutral and carry the problems of the plays with them after the show. But as a weakness, Cristofer tends to fall into the trap of systematic gender roles. After understanding the style of Cristofer’s writing, the one play that requires further analysis is The Shadow Box. Even though this is the earliest of the three plays, much can be said of how Cristofer’s writing developed or remained. The Shadow Box is the only play written by Cristofer that won a Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award. Since I am directing The Shadow Box, the rest of this chapter will focus on the events and actions of each cottage, Cristofer’s rationale for choosing his characters, and the juxtaposing rhythm of The Shadow Box as a complete play.

The Shadow Box Analysis

Characterization

In The Shadow Box, Cristofer has chosen to write about ten different characters to interpret different reactions and circumstances surrounding living with dying. Writing various characters makes it easier for an audience to be inclusive in the story. In Cottage One, Joe has accepted death. He wants to cherish his time with his family in the most peaceful and fulfilled way that he can; but he struggles to make his wife, Maggie, understand that he is dying. However, Maggie’s strong and self-comforting denial forces her to convince Joe that nothing is wrong with him and in turn tries to persuade Joe to leave the cottage (hospice). Because Maggie is emotional and very scared of losing her husband, Joe begins to feel that maybe he should leave the cottage; but things are more complicated than just running away when he discovers Maggie neglected to inform Steve, their son, of Joe’s diagnosis. In response to this news, Joes finds the courage to tell Steve the truth. Because of this story line, the fathers and husbands in the
audience identify with Joe. The same can be said about the women who are wives and mother as they relate Maggie. The character Steve serves two purposes: (1) To provide clarity to audience members who lost a love one by realizing how difficult it was for their parent(s) to have this type of dialogue with him or her and (2) To display a child’s survival in losing a parent. In another cottage, a child’s survival, much different than Steve, is shown through Agnes.

In Cottage Three, Felicity is very ill and at times bitter. She holds on to life in hopes of seeing her daughter, Claire, who she refuse to believe is dead. Though Felicity depends much on her loving and devoted daughter, Agnes, to care for her. Agnes is stuck in an inescapable lie—a lie of writing letters to Felicity from her dead sister.

FELICITY: I get so lonesome for Claire…
AGNES: I know mama…
FELICITY: Will you read it to me, Agnes?
AGNES: Yes, mama.
FELICITY: I get lonesome for Claire…
AGNES: Please!
FELICITY: I get lonesome…
AGNES: Mama!!
FELICITY: Agnes?
AGNES: Yes.
FELICITY: Could I have some tea?
AGNES: Yes.
FELICITY: Could you read me the letter, now?
AGNES: Yes.
FELICITY: The letter from Claire.

Agnes character is written to portray a child’s codependency and maybe responsibility to their parent(s) when they get older. Felicity is written in the script to stress that older people get bitter, but more importantly to show the effect of illness and emotional trauma. Moreover, the roles in Cottage 1 and 3 portray the loss of a child and the loss of a parent. The character Claire is dissimilar to Steve in Cottage 1. In Cottage 3, it is revealed how a mother may react to losing a child: regretful, denial, cruel? The fact that Claire’s imaginary presence distances Felicity and Agnes demonstrates how a child can be left in the background by a mother’s mourning of
another child. To contrast to the child-parent relationship, Brian, whose parents are possibly still alive and probably no longer in his life perhaps because of his sexuality. Brian says, “I even sent letters to everyone I know and told them exactly what I think of them...just so none of the wrong people show up and the funeral” (41). Because Brian is the only patient who has no ‘blood family’ or reference to such, one can only interpret that the family is no longer an active part of Brian’s life. Brian’s non-existent family is very powerful compared to other cottages because it demonstrates that sometimes the definition of family can vary.

However in Cottage Two, like Joe, Brian has also accepted his concluding life. In fact he looks at it as if everyone will die someday. He states, “Well, the trouble is that most of us spend our entire lives trying to forget that we’re going to die.” Brian is supported by his ex-wife, Beverly, and lover, Mark. Beverly is wild and adds comedy to the play especially between the dialogues of her and Mark. Though she is loud and drunk, she most certainly has Brian’s best interests at heart even if it hurts her to joke with Brian about death.

BEVERLY: I brought you some champagne.
BRIAN: I’m sorry. I must be the most tedious person alive.
BEVERLY: As a matter of fact you are. Thank God you won’t be around much longer.
BRIAN: I hope you don’t think I’m going to pass away drunk. I intend to be cold sober.
BEVERLY: No. No. I thought we could break it on your ass and shove you off with a great bon voyage, confetti and streamer all over the grave.

This powerful triangle handles drama, humor, and sensitive issues, which at times puts the audience at ease while feeling vulnerable at the same time. Expressed in the dialogue above, Beverly gives Brian a sense of life and although she joked with him about death, Beverly gives Brian the sensation of being alive through laughter, jokes, and comfort. Mark, on the other hand, sees a problem with celebrating because Brian is terminal. These characters are written to illustrate coping strategies that are most helpful to a friend who is terminal.

Lastly, the tenth character serves as a person on the outside looking in just like the audience. The Interviewer provides moral support to the characters and plays the role of active listener. They serve as advisors for the families much as a social worker in today’s modern hospice. The audience identifies with the Interviewer because they want to know about the
families and how they deal with this issue of living with dying. Now why has Cristofer chosen to write three cottages instead of two or four?

By looking at his numeral pattern, it seems that Cristofer is consistent with the number three: three cottages, three characters (real or imaginary) in each cottage, and three separate locations in the cottages. Three cottages keep the space on stage occupied without crowding it and three different spaces helps the audience grasp the details of a whole cottage. By developing three characters into three different cottages insinuates that an individual typically has two people they can consider their closest family, and those are the people that will be near you in a time if need.

Cottage 1 is set on the outside. The script describes that there are a lot of trees leading toward and surrounding cottage. This plays a big part in Maggie’s character who doesn’t want to go inside the cottage, and this symbolizes that she doesn’t want to accept Joe’s condition. The use of the outside space also gives Steve room to physically play and acknowledge all the “goddamn trees” (12). In Cottage 2, the living room symbolizes a party scene where the characters Brian and Beverly, in disregard to Mark, can dance and celebrate life. Cottage 3, as mentioned before, is in the kitchen, which makes it simple to pour Felicity’s tea without leaving her alone, but also expresses Agnes’ solitude. These 3x3 dimensional distinctions helps to understand the characterizations intended by Cristofer.

**Structure**

In *The Shadow Box*, Cristofer divides the play into two acts; and within those two acts he is progressing the story of all three cottages in which they build suspense and develop the relationships between all the characters. The style of Cristofer’s writing gives his plays an imaginary rhythm because of the suspense captured at the end of each scene and juxtaposition between each transition.

In Act I all the cottages are introduced through an interview scene. The interview scenes are described much like an interrogation room where the patients can’t see the Interviewer, but the Interviewer can see them. The interviews communicate the length of each patient’s stay in the cottages, the patients’ feelings towards the interviewer, a brief background of the patients’ families, and lastly, it provides the expositions of the characters in the play. In Joe’s interview, he articulates that he hasn’t seen his family in months and that Maggie and Steve know all about his condition. However directly in the next scene, Maggie and Steve arrive at the cottage. We are
presented with a nervous, Maggie, who keeps fiddling around with groceries that she traveled with on the plane. Moreover, we see that she and Steve only brought a few clothes to fit in one small suitcase, which emphasizes that don’t plan on staying long. When Maggie’s fast pace is finally interrupted by Joe, who ‘holds her in his arms,’ Maggie breaks down in tears:

MAGGIE: You got to tell me what’s going on. Don’t make me feel so stupid. Like I’m supposed to know everything. I don’t know anything. I just know what I see.

JOE: Maggie…

MAGGIE: But you look real good. You’re all right. You don’t have to tell me. I can see it. You’re fine. Huh? It’s just I got so scared. Thinking about it. Making things up in my head. But it’s all right now. I can see it’s all right. I knew it would be when I got her.

JOE: (Giving in.) Yes, Maggie. Everything’s all right.

MAGGIE: I knew it. I knew it (17-18).

This was an opportunity for Joe to tell Maggie exactly what is going on with him, but in response he froze and he couldn’t do it at this moment; and Maggie’s denial is prolonged. Following this scene, Brian’s interview reinforces Maggie’s denial: “people don’t want to let go. Do they?” (18), which helps the transition of this scene. Even though we are moving to another cottage, Brian and the Interviewer’s dialogue keep Cottage 1 alive. This fluid transition is successful throughout the play because each corresponding scene comments and/or expands the theme living with dying. Therefore none of the stories stop, but rather live on into the proceeding scenes. To add another example, while talking to the Interviewer, once Brian mentions Mark’s name, Mark ‘enters’ the living room. This is so the living room scene can smoothly transfer out of Brian’s interview.

During the living room scene, the conflict between Mark and Beverly proposes a problem that might make Brian uncomfortable: knowing his ex-wife, who he hasn’t seen in years, drove his companion away. At this point in the play, the characters and the actions are beginning to move faster. (Although Cottage 3 has not been introduced yet, it still keeps the rhythm of the play moving.) Revisiting Cottage 1 again, the tension between Maggie and Steve builds out of Maggie’s frustration to Steve’s question: “Aren’t you ever coming in?” (29). “Joe looks at Maggie, not knowing what came over her,” (31) but she immediately tells Joe that she didn’t tell Steve. Joe responds, “He doesn’t know? (Maggie shakes her head ‘No’.) What does he think? He
thinks I’m going home with you? Maggie? Why didn’t you tell him?” (31). In this scene, the focus on Joe’s illness shifts to Joe’s struggle to help his family deal with his sickness.

In the next scene, Felicity’s confrontation with the Interviewer works to move the action of the play forward because it develops a new kind of dialogue between patient and Interviewer. Felicity says, “Please what?! All right. All right. You want to talk? Let’s talk. I feel fine. Is that what you want to hear? Of course it is. I feel fine, there’s no pain, I’m blind as I was yesterday, my bowels are working and that’s all I got to say about it…What you got friends out there again? All come to look at the dead people” (32-33). Felicity explains that other people come and listen to her discuss her sickness on other occasions. Therefore, Felicity has refused to tell the Interviewer anything. In fact she questions the Interviewer as if the Interviewer is the patient; the Interviewer then replies, “No. You are the patient.” Defensively, Felicity interrupts: “I’m the corpse. I have one lung, one plastic bag for a stomach, and a battery where my heart used to be (34). Felicity has many physical challenges to her health, but she shows she is strong-willed. Since Felicity maintains a rude attitude, the Interviewer doesn’t see any reason to ask more questions until Felicity calls out to Claire. Seeing that no one else is in the room, the Interviewer becomes curious about Claire. Felicity explains, “She writes to me regularly. A letter almost everyday. I have them at the cottage” (34).

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER: Where is she now
FELICITY: Now?
VOICE OF INTERVIEWER: Yes.
FELICITY: She’s with me.
VOICE OF INTERVIEWER: Where?
FELICITY: Here. At the house.
VOICE OF INTERVIEWER: The house?
FELICITY: Yes you don’t run a place like this on dreams. It takes hard work. The property isn’t much but the stock is good. We showed a clear profit is ‘63. Nobody was more surprised than I was—but we did it. How do I look today?
VOICE OF INTERVIEWER: You look fine. Do you want to talk about Claire?
FELICITY: I look terrible.
VOICE OF INTERVIEWER: The more we know, the easier it is for us to know how you feel.
FELICITY: No! Claire isn’t with me anymore. She’ll be here soon (35).

After witnessing the behavior of the delusional Felicity, the Interviewer and the audience are left with questions about the mysterious Claire and wonder if Claire is a real person. Also, in this scene, the Interviewer becomes a little more developed because we can now see that they must have a lot of tolerance with the patients’ attitudes. At the end of the scene, Agnes is introduced and asked to visit the Interviewer the following day.

As the play shifts back to Cottage 2, Brian is shocked to see Beverly waiting and even more shocked to discover that Beverly upset Mark. As the two catch up on the years they were apart, Brian has a symptom of his illness—he begins to shake. But in the midst of this event, Beverly makes Brian laugh through his moment of weakness. This laughter transitions to Agnes’ singing in the kitchen. Aggravated by Agnes’ slow-tempo hymn, Felicity begins to sing a raunchy song that frustrates Agnes: “Mama!!! Stop it!! The play notes: “Agnes covers her mouth quickly, immediately ashamed and sorry for her outburst. There is a long silence” (46). This shows that Agnes rarely has this type of behavior towards her mother. Soon Felicity gets a sharp pain and Agnes tries to calm her down with some medicine and tea, but the only thing that keeps Felicity calm is when she asks about Claire’s arrival. When Agnes “checks the calendar,” the audience believes that Claire will soon visit. At the end of Act I, Steve “starts to play Goodnight Irene on his guitar” (47). At this time the actions of all three cottages move even faster because the dialogues are much shorter. The sound of the guitar heightens the suspense to the end of the act, which ends with Agnes’ persuasion of Claire’s arrival, Joe’s attempt to convince Maggie that they have to tell Steve the truth, Brian and Beverly’s dancing, and Mark discomfort about Brian’s illness, which he expresses to the Interviewer. Cristofer leaves the audience in anticipation of Claire’s arrival, the progression of the patient’s sickness, Steve’s knowledge of Joe, and the relationship between Brian, Beverly, and Mark.

Act II goes through three different phases: realization, comfort, and collective conclusions and the audience is able to distinguish and see the five stage of death through the character. Elizabeth Kübler-Ross defines the five stages of death as denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance, which will be further discussed in Chapter 2. In the final interview scene, Agnes is questioned about Claire. Agnes informs the Interviewer that Claire has been dead for several years now and she [Agnes] has been writing the letters because she’s tried to explain
to Felicity that Claire’s dead, but she doesn’t comprehend that information. The Interviewer asks, “What happens when Claire doesn’t show up?”

AGNES: Oh, but I don’t think that will happen. I mean, Mama…well, she won’t…I mean, even if…

VOICE OF INTERVIEWER: You mean she’ll probably die before she finds out.

AGNES: Yes.

Agnes admits she’s doing what’s best for her mother even though she doesn’t like lying. The Interviewer expresses that Felicity is holding on to life just to see Claire. She describes it as “making a bargain.” The Interviewer explains Agnes is prolonging Felicity’s life with false hope. Disturbed by this comment, Agnes exclaims, “She can’t do that…she can’t” (62). At this moment Agnes has come to the conclusion that her persistent letter writing is strengthening her mother’s will to live, and that Agnes, now more than ever, is in the shadow of Claire.

Joe’s realization begins as a result of reminiscing about his youth with Maggie. He realizes how short his life is and how everything moved so fast: “Somebody walks up one day, one day, somebody walks up and tells you its finished. And me…all I can say is ‘what?’…what’s finished? What did I have that’s finished? What?” (77). Beverly begins to realize Brian’s serious condition as she witnesses Brian’s inability to stand independently. She now knows that all of her jokes can’t hide the fact that Brian is dying. Beverly realizes how close she is to losing “the one human being who cares” (72). As Beverly soberes, the audience then realizes that alcohol was a coping method for Beverly to deal with Brian’s condition, why Beverly was so hostile towards Mark. It was because she didn’t trust him and she saw a part of herself in Mark and felt Brian deserved better. However, from Beverly, Mark learns that he has someone special and regardless of his selfish reasons in the beginning he “owes” Brian for making him a better person and “don’t want him to die” (74) because he [Mark] would still be on the streets “hustling” (68) if it weren’t for Brian.

In the comfort phase of Act II, all three Cottages “overlap lines.” Maggie is comforting Joe, Beverly is comforting Mark, who just broke down in tears because he doesn’t want Brian to die, and Agnes is comforting Felicity by pretending to Claire.

MAGGIE: I’m here Joe…

BEVERLY: It’s all right…

FELICITY: Claire…?
AGNES: Yes, Mama…I’m here…
MAGGIE: It’s all right now…
BEVERLY: It’s all right now.
AGNES: It’s all right now…(74).

During the comfort phase, the characters are aware of the importance of family. It is clear that all the obstacles in the play have brought the characters closer together.

As all three cottages conclude, it is clear that Joe is goes inside to tell Steve about his condition and Maggie finally enters the house. In Cottage 2, Mark and Brian reconnect with each other as Mark ‘kisses him on the forehead.’ And lastly in Cottage 3, Agnes is seen reading the letter again. However, even though the play has ended, it still brings about more dramatic questions such as: Does Felicity die at the end of the play? How does Steve react to Joe’s news? And has Mark really come to terms with Brian’s illness? These are the discussion questions the play leaves unanswered.

Writing in an era that influenced many social movements in American theatre, Cristofer attempts to build relationships in his plays between the character and the audience by finding a commonality amongst the two. Discussing themes that can be both problematic to the individual and social group(s) classifies Cristofer as a ‘Discussion Playwright.” Cristofer’s utilization of gender roles disregards the value of women, what it means to be a woman, and resolve problems as a woman. These critical feminist issues are also subjects of ‘discussion’ interpreted from Cristofer’s texts. But because his most popular play, The Shadow Box, handles such a controversial issue of living with dying, the audience identifies more with the subject rather than the gender roles of the characters. This way the audience is confronted with an issue they will ponder over after the performance.
CHAPTER 2
THE AMERICAN CRITIC AND THE SOCIAL ISSUE OF DEATH: A TIMELINE OF
THE SHADOW BOX AND HOSPICE

Since the fifth century B.C.E., theatre has been a representation of culture. As theatre began in the Greek, Roman, and Medieval culture, it has been the basis of many civilizations derived from storytelling—a tool of politics, religion, philosophy, science, etc. The protocol of these dominant eras of theatre are a reflection of its society and its critics, which then were the Kings and Queens who set the tone or rather restrictions of a production. In Greek plays, two forms emerged: tragedy and comedy. Both plays retained the similar issues of politics and religion and characters of royalty or bourgeois class, but the tragedy plays portrayed tragic heroes who die and the comedy plays made fun of these political and social issues. Two examples of the Greek tragedy and comedy play are Antigone and Lysistrata. Antigone is punished for giving her brother a proper burial, a law forbidden by her uncle, King Creon. In Lysistrata, the women of the war soldiers make a pact to withhold sex from their husbands in protest of stopping the war. The comedic plays are dramatized by extravagant costumes, which was probably a reminder and safer way to approach the audience about such issues because the characters portrayed in the plays were usually seated in front of the stage.

The Roman era was influenced by Christianity, not because of the Roman belief in religion, but because it was despised. Because of this Christians were prosecuted and/or put to death for their beliefs. Many of the Roman plays dealt with violence, dancing, pantomime, and impersonation. Edwin Wilson notes “many historians” believe American society is much like the Romans because both practice “popular entertainments” that express “all levels of society” and are “not required to appreciate them” (79). However, after hundreds of years and Christian deaths, the Christians took rule again and converted many to a non-secular tradition; and although the Christians attacked the theatre, they were the ones to revive it after being shut down for five hundred years.

Theatre in the medieval period became a way to teach biblical and moral lessons to the public. One play, Everyman, exemplifies how a typical Medieval play functions. In Everyman, the characters symbolically represent or present man, his closest friends, and his closest possessions. In the beginning of the play, the character, Everyman, is approached by Death, who tells Everyman that Angel sent him (Death) to get Everyman. As Everyman and Death agrees
that Everyman can take one person with him to the next life, Everyman sets on a journey only to find that the one person he can take with him is Good Deeds. Therefore, the play is saying that man will only be remembered for his good deeds. Medieval theatre plays suggest that through faith any and every obstacle of life is a reward of self-value and happiness. Donald Duclow explains “the traditional art of dying” in Everyman articulates how death should “be endured” (199).

By prescribing the attitudes and ritual actions appropriate to dying, the treatise and play portray death as a moral and religious event, with temptation, detachment, ‘reckoning,’ and reconciliation at its center. Specific features of these [Medieval] works, such as their emphasis on prayer, sacramental confession, and immortality, may seem foreign to modern secular culture. But the fundamental problems which they address persist: death’s inevitability, our reluctance to let go of the familiar and our very selves, and the quest for appropriate, meaningful patterns of dying (199).

In each of these historical periods, the subject of death as theatricality and a social issue have been executed differently in its culture. However, the American theatre is a rapid growing enterprise, both as a social and commercial economy. The Greek, Roman, and Medieval theatres are all influential to the American Stage; but because of the cultural mixture in America, they still exist amongst each other. For example, many Broadway plays consists of popular entertainment—singing, dancing, extravagant scenery—like Roman theatre; many Shakespeare companies tend to operate in a Greek fashion; and the small not-for-profit theatres usually perform plays of social issues and moral values as in the Medieval theatre. Writing a play in today’s society is difficult because of the cultural distinctions in America. The question becomes: who do you write for? As many playwrights face this question, some decide to approach a common topic—death. Is it a social or an individual problem? As an attempt to approach both sides of this question, The Shadow Box faced many critical reviews from American critics who thought the play to “unbelievable,” “unusual,” “brave and distinguishable,” “strange but irresistible.” As the Greek, Roman, and Medieval theatre were representations of their own cultural changes, The Shadow Box also serves as a historical change in culture. In this chapter I will examine the social shifts in discussions about death through the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s productions of The Shadow Box through a critical lens and discuss the themes of death as a public entity.
1970s, 1980s, 1990s: Productions of The Shadow Box

The Shadow Box was first produced thirty-one years ago. The premiere production in 1975 at the Mark Taper Forum was a huge success in Los Angeles, California in particular because of the Forum’s mission to not only “entertain, but also to provoke and to inspire.” Established in 1967, the Forum “believe that theatre is nothing less than a cultural force that has the power to transform the lives of individuals and society at large. After the Forum’s production of The Shadow Box, the play became popular and controversial each time it was produced.

Making its 1977 Broadway debut, The Shadow Box was overwhelmed by critics who both appreciated the play and/or didn’t understand the characters and the play’s setting in a local hospice. In a 1977 review of The Shadow Box, Douglas Watt wrote:

There, they [the patients] are expected to lead normal lives, and in the company of their families, if possible. They are, of course, living a lie and in sort of dream factory it is practically impossible to accept…And every now and then the voice of God, in the form of a man called the Interviewer, who holds some ill-defined executive position in the main house, queries them soothingly, unseen by them (Watt).

This point of view is represented because some people feel as if terminally ill patients can’t live a normal life, that they must be in agony, hospitalized, or have no hope for the future, which is a depressing way to spend your final days of life as expressed throughout The Shadow Box.

Although the characters are not a depiction of what may seem ‘rational behavior’, Cristofer proposes the three stories as a form of social dialogue to understand the way(s) in which we may react to death. The notion of “dream factory” is a very colorful word negatively used by Watt. According to some people death is a dream because some cultures believe in the afterlife and being reunited with loved ones. In cultures, such as Indian and African, death is a celebration of life. So it’s not impossible to believe that characters in The Shadow Box are realistic.

Now when discussing the issue of the Interviewer, it is evident that the critic and society is unaware of Hospice’s existence, which at the time was two years old and operating in only a few cities. In The Shadow Box the interviewer serves as the voice of reasoning, who is concerned about the patient and the family’s welfare and who acts as a listener and advisor. Today the Hospice team identifies this person as the Social Worker. He or she serves as “the primary emotional support person for the patient and family” and “functions as both counselor
and practical guide to the dying process” (Connor 21). In Joan Beder’s chapter entitled “The Hospice Social Worker,” she writes:

Social Workers consider the patient and family as one unit, as the unit of care in the hospice or in the home, and will attempt to address the multiple needs of both the patient and the family. Also implicit in the values of social work is the belief that all people are to be treated with dignity and worth. Hospice care is instrumental in guaranteeing that dying patients are cared for in a dignified manner and in a way that is respectful of their personhood (48).

In The Shadow Box, the Interviewer is also aware of the patient and the family’s emotions and feelings towards death. The Interviewer is involved with the patient and the family whether directly or indirectly. The Interviewer expresses that he is always there “even if it’s just to listen” (10).

The 1970s productions left many suspicious and confused because of the theatricality of The Shadow Box, Cristofer’s structure of the play’s dialogue, and the way the characters deal with the issue of terminal illness. When the play was produced in 1989 at Great Neck Theatre Guild in New Hyde Park, there was more appreciation for the subject of living with death because of the new AIDS/HIV epidemic; it became more of a reality to the American audience. Critic, Leah D. Frank, writes: “Mr. Cristofer sees contemporary life as having one absolute. To understand ourselves and how we live, he tells us, it is necessary to have an awareness of mortality…The play offers one playwright’s answer to metaphysical questions like ‘How are we?’ ‘Where are we going?’ and ‘What does this all mean?’” (Frank). The questions then became social and personal. The American audience was not only aware of death, but also conscience of life. The homosexual couple Brian and Mark, became a dialogue in itself because of the relationship between homosexuality and AIDS in the 1980s. But since The Shadow Box was written in 1975, it raises questions about whether medical professions knew about the AIDS crisis years before the public or was Cristofer’s characters just coincidental in the matter? However, at the time plays like Normal Heart (1985) by Larry Kramer were arguing, gay or AIDS diagnosed, homosexuals are still people who shouldn’t be stereotyped as “the anxiety-prone and fantasy-laden heterosexist depictions of gay men equated as AIDS” (Román 209), but rather portray they should portray this life-style as normal. Meaning that homosexuality does not define personality or dehumanize individuals. Both Normal Heart and The Shadow Box
demonstrate the social issue of living with dying, family values, and love and support, both just happen to involve gay characters.

As other plays about family crisis developed as social plays, America grew tired of The Shadow Box. Many even became frustrated. Making its second debut on Broadway, The Shadow Box was revived by Circle in the Square in 1994 as the first play of their season and as the theatre’s first play back in business after suffering two years due to financial reasons. The 1994 production was a disappointment to the American critic. Ben Brantley explains that many contemporary plays have “succeeded” the storyline of The Shadow Box and “engendered a new, more aggressive openness in dealing with death and illness” (Brantley). In addition, Vincent Canby argues The Shadow Box is dated:

The decision to revive ‘The Shadow Box’ is baffling. Set in what looks to be a comparatively luxe hospice for people dying of cancer, in some present time strangely remote from our own…the work is dated and superficial, partly because all the characters remain defiantly unsurprising… ‘The Shadow Box’ isn't good enough for this time and this theater. The less said about it the better (Canby).

This argument is different because, for one, people are more familiar with ‘death and illness.’ On another note, the comment of ‘people dying’ is still controversial to Cristofer’s argument. When questioned about writing a play about death, Michael Cristofer responded, “It was never about death. It’s about families—what family is, who you end up with.” So in this case, the American critic, overlooked the playwright’s intent because he (the critic) focused on death rather living with dying; and the issues that surround it. And because The Shadow Box deals with this popular 1975 social issue of end-of-life care, it is a reminder of culture and family values, which makes it ‘good enough for this time and this theatre.’

The Shadow Box illustrates the difference a decade can make in American culture. Over the span of thirty years, this suggest that a play’s subject can become a prominent aspect of culture depending on societal change, which is the reason more American audiences were able to relate to the play in the 1980s. However, with the spread of many diseases and increased death rates of the 1990s, America was becoming too overwhelmed. They didn’t want to talk about dying anymore; it was depressing. But as shown through culture, the less a subject such as dying or even AIDS is discussed, the less people are educated and the numbers will continue to
increase and/or shock society. By performing *The Shadow Box*, the subject of living with dying can remain a part of the social discourse.

This discussion of life and death is important because we have a responsibility to our community, our families, and ourselves. Conveying such a social issue as end-of-life care through a play not only gives the audience a performance, but a personal connection to the characters, a great learning experience, and a better understanding and appreciation of hospice. *The Shadow Box* promotes self-questioning such as: How can I tell my family I’m going to die? How aware am I of life? Have I taken responsibility for my parent’s health? Can I be strong for my loved ones? As briefly discussed, hospice aids the society in answering these questions and *The Shadow Box* educates and engages the community in the discussion of end-of-life care.

**Living with Dying: Why Hospice**

For many years, the definition of hospice has had many meaning such as: a place of death, another special hospital, a caregiver, and a cancer facility. Hospice is more than these four descriptions. The National Hospice Organization defines hospice as (definition provided by Stephen Connor)

> a coordinated program providing palliative care to terminally ill patients and supportive services to patients, their families, and significant others 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Comprehensive/case managed services based on physical, social, spiritual, and emotional needs are provided during the last stages of illness, during the dying process, and during bereavement by a medically directed interdisciplinary team consisting of patients/families, health care professionals and volunteers. Professional management and continuity of care is maintained across multiple settings including home, hospitals, long term care and residential settings (Connor 3).

In the 11th century, hospices were established by the Crusaders who cared for people that weren’t admitted into “places of healing” (Connor 4). Some of the first hospices treated travelers from the “Holy Land” and continued to be adapted into the Eastern ministries throughout the early 14th century. Later in the 17th century, hospice was reborn and established in London. In 1902, the Irish Sisters of Charity founded St. Joseph’s Hospice for the dying poor in London where Cicely Saunders, modern founder of hospice, went to work. From her experiences at St. Joseph’s, Saunders began to develop her own methods of caring for terminally ill patients. Connor adds, “Dame Saunders, who trained first as a nurse, then a social worker, and finally as a physician,
envisioned a center for excellence in care of the dying patient [which]…included teaching and research facilities” (6). She founded St. Christopher’s Hospice in 1967. Saunders’ philosophy of Hospice consisted of a team that would work together to care for one person. Years later, Saunders came to America to teach at Yale University School of Nursing in New Haven, Connecticut. Coincidental, the first hospice in America was developed in Connecticut around 1971-1975 (There are many debate when the first hospice was establishment in America.).

In America hospice became a great attempt to answer questions about terminal illness and society’s fear of death. As a response to the social fear of dying by violence, war, or accidental death, America was in a crisis. Science, medicine, and the law became cultural approaches to death and the individual’s right to die. The social subject of ‘life-longevity’ became researched more through medicine and machines. Some patients want to keep holding on unto life and many families weren’t ready to let go of loved ones, which compelled them to prolong life. And as innocent as it seems, to prolong life means to be isolated from the world and unable to function as human being. Through technology, scientists have been able to invent machines to breathe for patients and keep them alive? Unfortunately, these machines have been recognized for prolonging death. Before Hospice came to America, Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, who specializes in patient grievances, set out to understand the issues surrounding living with dying. Kübler-Ross insinuates:

The belief in the meaning of suffering here on earth and reward in heaven after death, has offered hope and purpose, the denial of society has given neither hope nor purpose but has only increased our anxiety and contributed to our destructiveness and aggressiveness—to kill in order to avoid the reality of facing our own death. A look into the future shows us a society in which more and more people are “kept alive” both with machines replacing vital organs and computers checking from time to time to see if some additional physiologic functionings have to be replaced by electronic equipment (Kübler-Ross 14).

Kübler-Ross is saying machines that elongate life actual kills human life because the person is no longer comprehensive or independent. And patients believe that this is a way to prevent death when in many cases its “business-minded people” who are “making money out of the fear of death” (Kübler-Ross 14). In many ways some social groups feel invincible because of this option and false hope of living.
In 1963, as a way to understand patients’ behavior(s) towards death, Dr. Kübler-Ross and a few of her students set out to research and speak with terminally ill patients in hospitals about their attitudes towards death. The study examined through various age groups that resulted in five corresponding reactions to death: Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance.

Kübler-Ross explains that denial is a common reaction because patients don’t want to believe it. She quotes, “Most reacted to the awareness of a terminal illness at first with the statement, ‘No, not me, it cannot be true’” (34). Knowing that a lot of Cristofer’s research on dying was based on Kübler-Ross’ ‘five steps,’ he integrates this reaction into the play:

JOE: You want to shout, ‘Not Me!’

BRIAN: Not me!

MAGGIE: Not me!

Even though Maggie is not a patient, Kübler-Ross notes that families often respond to the patient’s response to illness. Maggie seeing Joe “looks good” sinks more and more into denial. Also, denial, in Kübler-Ross’ observations, doesn’t last long, but sometimes the individual uses denial to “cope” with their illness. Therefore in Maggie’s case, she is trying to cope with her husband’s illness; but toward the end of The Shadow Box, her denial is slowly ‘peeled away.’ Cristofer uses Kübler-Ross’ five behaviors as a universal language to express the characters’ emotions. “As a metaphor for dealing with all losses, Kübler-Ross’s theory seems to fit with human experience. She provided a new language that can be useful if not used too concretely” (Connor 47).

Anger is the second stage. Kübler-Ross witnessed one patient’s anger that was caused from the patient’s discomfort of the hospital staff to adhere to his needs. The patient was just diagnosed. As he rests in bed, the nurse raises the side rails on the bed, admitting (in the patient’s point of view) that it was no longer an option for him to move. In, the nurse’s defense, she didn’t want him to fall out. Anger leaves patients very sensitive and at times very confrontational. Any slight or questionable changes make patients, in the angry stage, suspicious and aggressive. The nurse may have had good intentions but, to the patient, it was a plot against him.

The third stage, bargaining, is the patient’s way of amending his or her situation whether negotiating things differently to God or trying to change the past because they regret certain events. Referring back to The Shadow Box, Felicity refuses to die in hopes of seeing her daughter Claire. However, Agnes admits that Claire and Felicity used to have vicious fights that ended
with the two of them laughing at each other. But perhaps Felicity feels guilty for the fights with Claire and believes that somehow she forced Claire away in pursuit of better happiness. So if Felicity can just hold on then maybe she can see her daughter, Claire, again and express her love. In turn, this depresses Agnes.

Depression, the forth stage, is often referred to patients who give up on life and let the disease take over. In this case, Agnes’ dejection is caused by her mother’s will to live. The Interviewer reveals that Agnes has constant headaches which she (Agnes) admits are so frequent she “sometimes doesn’t know she has them—until they go away” (58). Those in the depression stage feel unappreciated and personal grief. Kübler-Ross suggests that a parent’s “inability to function” often “deprives the children of the attention they previously had.” Now that Agnes is in Claire’s shadow, she is the subject of isolation, and becomes a victim of her mother’s life-bargaining as a dependent and individual.

The final stage is acceptance—the stage Cristofer wants to highlight throughout *The Shadow Box*. By accepting death and understanding that it’s going to happen will help each family better prepare for the life after losing their loved one, which is what Joe wants—a great life for his wife and son. On another note, Kübler-Ross remarks that once a patient has accepted death, he or she is “able to express his previous feeling, his envy for the living and the healthy, his anger at those who do not have to face their end soon” (99). And at certain points, Cristofer regards Brian as a narrator to express his past feeling about dying. Also, Brian’s humor of death, his bluntness about his funeral guests, and his temper towards those who try to spoil his fun are all characteristics of Kübler-Ross’ final acceptance stage.

Kübler-Ross’s five stages of death are useful to affectively identify humane feelings of end-of-life care. It aids the community in individual and group awareness, and it shows that families have always been dealing with death; it just needed more attention and special care. Kübler-Ross’ research provides a way for health care professionals to evaluate end-of-life care. Her research also stresses the value of a social approach to dying, which is what hospice offers.

Hospice helps us to understand dying by engaging the community to talk about it more, accept the fact that death is natural, and assuring the community that dying means ‘still alive’. Ross’ five stages are significant to understanding hospice because they illustrate the necessity of individual comfort and support. In *The Shadow Box*, Cristofer portrays individual grief through the five stage of death, but as a complete play it expresses the value of family and public support.
Saunders states, “A patient, wherever he may be, should expect the same analytical attention to terminal suffering as he received for the original diagnosis and treatment of his condition. The aim is no longer cure but the chance of living to his fullest potential in physical ease and activity and with the assurance of personal relationships until he dies” (vi). The distinction between hospital and hospice are clearly divided into two separate systems by Saunders: Care and Cure.

Saunders describes that hospitals represent the Cure system and hospice represents the Care system. In the Cure system the procedure is to investigate, treat, eliminate or control a tumor or disease. The aim of the Care system is to assess, investigate, and control the symptoms of uncontrollable tumors. In the Care system Saunders’ objective is to make the spirit stronger even if the body gets weak. In a hospice, the patient is the primary focus. And as a deep concern of the patient, the hospice team aids in any and every way they possibly can. One of these ways is to make sure the patient is pain free physically, mentally, and spiritually. Therefore, hospice does provide medicine that treats pain, but only to insure the patient that he or she is still a person. If they are not reminded of their pain, they won’t be reminded of their illness. Moreover, the patient is in total control and is very aware of his or her condition. In contrast, the doctor has the final say over the patient in a hospital setting, which at times does not include the patient’s awareness and/or consent regarding his/or her needs.

**Beginning of Hospice**

The preliminary stages of Hospice, which were unsupported by Medicare, served majority middle class patients and consisted of all volunteers. It has grown and become supported by the government in recent years. During 1970s, getting paid for helping a person deal with end-of-life care was not a factor as it is in today’s society. “All who labored to start hospice did so because they believed that care of the dying had to be improved and that hospice was the way to do it” (Connor 26). However, the cost of medical supplies and housing were the patients’ responsibility, which attracted mainly white, middle and upper class patients. This is not to say that hospice has a particular group to serve, but hospice simply couldn’t afford the medication because neither Medicare nor Medicaid assisted hospice patients; so those who could and wanted depended upon hospice. Referring back to *The Shadow Box*, the characters represent that bourgeoisie population. Joe and Felicity both owned land before admittance into hospice, and Brian raves about his cash adventures: “I finally bought a television set, I sold the house and everything in it, closed all bank accounts, got rid of all stocks, bonds, securities,
everything…And finally I went to Passaic, New Jersey…I spent two weeks at a Holiday Inn and had all my meals at Howard Johnson” (41-42).

Some of the problems with beginning such a social entity is making restrictions. In the case of establishing a permanent hospice in America the questions became: Who to admit? When to admit them? Why to admit them?

Saunders looked at three reasons for admitting patients into hospice which were:
1. Inability to control the symptoms of the disease; for example:
   - Pain
   - Restlessness
   - Confusion
   - Nausea
   - Breathlessness
   - Incontinence
   - Pressure sores
2. Breakdown in the family; for example
   - Exhaustion
   - Lack of sleep
   - Concurrent illness
   - Financial worries
   - Overwhelming anguish, often associated with a façade of deception
3. Lack of appropriate social services; for example:
   - Inadequate Social Security Benefits
   - Incontinence laundry
   - Home adaptations of equipment
   - Night sitters
   - Home help (140)

By examining these three daily criteria, hospice also determines the amount of help needed for the patients and their families. These standards serve as an evaluation of the patient’s disease and lack of independence, the family’s inability to function because of their loved one, and the lack of physical and financial assistance. This process is reexamined by hospice many times during
the patient’s enrollment to further assist the patient and the family and test their own improvement as a growing foundation.

In *The Shadow Box*, to exemplify number one of Saunders criteria, Felicity is unable to control her bladder, she is in constant pain, and she is delirious. This is a case where the patient is very dependent upon others, such as Felicity depends on Agnes for food, mobility, etc. Responding to number two, family breakdowns occur amongst Agnes and Mark. As seen in the play they reveal their deepest thoughts and concerns to the Interviewer. Lastly in number three, Joe’s need for medical support and close care is important because he has no home help. The only people to care for Joe at home are his son and wife. And this would be more painful for the family especially if Joe has a symptom where he collapses or has trouble breathing. Saunders quotes, “Terminal care refers to the management of patients whom the advent of death is felt to be certain and not too far off and for whom medical effort has turned away from (active) therapy and become more concentrated on the relief of symptoms and the support of both patient and family” (1; Saunders adapts this quote from J.M. Holford’s *Terminal Care: Care of the Dying*).

When determining terminal illness, a certified physician monitors the patient’s health through a series of observations and tests and predicts the patient’s length of life. Once the physician realizes that a patient is terminal, he or she denotes options for the patient through different types of health care agencies, which include regular visits that assist the patient in daily living such as: bathing, feeding, or cleaning. But as of the mid 1970s hospice became one of those available options and would provide twenty-four hour assistance. However, hospice only accepts patients during the last six months of life to avoid overcrowded facilities. Because of the six month guideline, cancer patients were the most dominantly diagnosed hospice patients.

Cancer patients were the majority intake because cancer can easily be monitored by an individual’s lack of independency. It is a physically noticeable disease for physicians to detect because they can measure its stages through a patient’s physical condition. In his chapter “Predicting Prognosis,” Barry M. Kinzbrunner, MD writes of a system called the Karnofsky Performance Status (KPS), which measures and calculates the progression of cancer amongst patients. The KPS system is categorized in units/segments of an individual’s need for assistance. For example, if a patient is very dependent on others as far as self-movement, they are at a very low percentage such as 40% or 40 points according to the KPS system (The KPS system is based on a point scale of 0-100. 100 being the highest level of independency). Kinzbrunner states,
“Studies have demonstrated that there is a rapid fall in KPS of at least 20 to 30 points during the last two to three months of life” (6). So when the patient’s dependency quickly drops twenty points, he or she will promptly be recommended to hospice because the disease is quickly spreading. Further, with cancer, physicians are more accurate in determining cancer patients’ length of life as oppose to heart disease or tuberculosis patients. It is important to be precise because hospice wants to avoid admitting patients who might get better and live longer than six months. Misjudgment on a terminal ill patient may cause more depression and result in hospice’s release of the patients. Stephen Connor admits that Hospices are fearful of discharging patients because the patient usually dies shortly after. Therefore, physicians mostly recommend cancer patients to hospice. However, as hospice and society evolved, many patients with various diseases were admitted to hospice because they couldn’t depend on hospitals anymore.

**Improving Hospice**

Seeing that patients need care outside of themselves and their family, the government began to take part in this social dilemma as a way to understand the social needs of the public. In 1981 the Joint Commission of Accreditation of Hospitals (JCAH) took interest in Hospice.

To gain information about this new health care field, the WK Kellogg Foundation of Battle Creek, Michigan, awarded a grant to the JCAH …to study the characteristics of the hospice care field…The objective of the project, known as the Hospice Project, were (1) to determine the current characteristics of hospice care in the United States, (2) to project future trends in hospice care, and (3) to study the impact of hospice care on other components of the health care system (McCann1).

The JCAH held two phases in order to create a national standard for accredited hospices. In it’s first phase, JCAH did surveys, phone calls, and on-site visits to various hospice programs to become fully aware of each hospice’s mission, the size of their program, and any other factors that they took interest in or differed from one another. The on-site visits observed medical supervision, family as the unit of care, primary care person, admission procedures, pain and symptom management, counseling, care providers, continuous provision of care, respite care, volunteers in hospice care, bereavement services, governing body, written policies and procedures, administrators, referrals and continuity of care, inpatient hospice units, and philosophical outlook of patient providers. By looking at these elements, the JCAH was able to start developing a criterion to be followed by accredited hospices. This phase was important in
understanding the strengths and weaknesses of hospices across America that were functioning at the time. After Phase I, Phase II began as a purpose to construct a standard hospice that would be both beneficial and supportive to its patients and staff.

The JCAH went through four drafts before finalizing the fixed standards for hospice. Also, during Phase II, it was noticed that there were four types of hospice programs: Independent, Hospital-based, Home-health agency, and Long-term agency programs. A prime factor for hospices to receive patients with Medicare and Medicaid was to receive reimbursement of any money they spent. It took the JCAH two years to complete the survey and by this time there were about 15,000 working hospices.

In 1983, hospice developed the ‘Hospice Team’ (also includes the patient and the family). Having the patient as a part of the team signifies that everyone is working together and the patient and family is inclusive in all decision-making and arrangements. The Hospice team consists of the physician, medical director, registered nurse, home health aide, social worker, chaplain, bereavement counselor, rehabilitation therapist, and volunteers. Each person has a specific duty in regards to the patient. The chaplain plays a vital role in the family’s spiritual connection to God. The chaplain brings strength letting the family know that there is no place like heaven and that they will meet again. This is important because the psychology of terminal illness can make you forget how precious life is and how beautiful death can be. The bereavement counselor supports the family after losing a loved one. They have a big impact on kids who have lost one or both parents but most of all, the counselor will keep in contact with the family for over a year during their grievance period. Again in a hospital, the family is no longer a concern to the facility. But in hospice, the family continues to be an essential responsibility and center of care. The bereavement counselor gives one-on-one counseling and/or will recommend support groups for the family. Accordingly in The Shadow Box, Cristofer expresses that sometimes it’s the family that struggles to deal with death harder than the patient. Referring back to Maggie, Kubler-Ross explains, “Serious illness and hospitalization of a husband, for example, may bring about relevant changes in the household which the wife has to get accustomed to. She may feel threatened by the loss of security and the end of her dependence on her husband” (139).

**Conclusion**
Why does *The Shadow Box* remain important as a discourse between life and death? In *The Shadow Box*, the audience is exposed to a variety of emotions from the patients and the families. These emotions are key to the audience’s consciousness of how differently we deal with death. To see live people portray the mentality and physicality of the characters in the play creates the audience’s awareness of life. Art is a living culture that challenges the human existence. And unlike our bodies, art is immortal. Just as Greek, Roman, and Medieval theatre, art serves as our familiar, something that plays a significant part in our past, present, and future lives. Even during the Stock Market Crash of 1929 when America went into years of “Depression,” the government funded the arts as a form of communication, expression, and sanity. Therefore, by presenting issues of life and death in a play, the community is automatically invited into the discourse.
CHAPTER 3
A REHEARSAL PROCESS: CREATING AND RECREATING THROUGH VIEWPOINTS AND STANISLAVSKI

Storytelling is the most prominent aspect of any production. It is viewed in two ways: the director’s story and the actor’s story. Through rehearsals, the relationship between the director and the actor form a liaison to create the world of the character(s). In the production process of *The Shadow Box*, there were concerns such as: How to play age? How to realistically depict illness? How to play emotional range? How to share the stage as an ensemble? And how to set up an environment to work with actors who have little or no experience? The answers to these problems were approached through two rehearsal methods: Bogart’s Viewpoints and Stanislavski’s Method. Viewpoints offers the insight of a director, Anne Bogart, who adapts movement of time and space from the art of dance. On another note Konstantin Stanislavski, an actor, utilizes the process of the actor’s internal thoughts and inner desires to provoke the physical dimensions of a character.

**Viewpoints**

Anne Bogart acknowledged her talent as a director in high school where she assisted the high school director on all the high school performances. Her early career was a process of understanding the history of theatre and bodies, how they effectively function in space. After obtaining a Masters in Performance Studies at New York University, Bogart began teaching at the Experimental Theatre Wing, which is an undergraduate program at NYU. This opportunity allowed Bogart to have “the time and facilities to grow as a director by originating new shows with students” (*A Director Prepares* 11). Bogart’s close relationship with actors and new script development provided her with first hand insight of what it means to be a collaborative team. Also while teaching, Bogart meets Mary Overlie, a choreographer and creator of Six Viewpoints, which Bogart adapts later. Overlie uses these Six Viewpoints to define her dance choreography as a solo and ensemble work of art that can create images and transform the body into multiple shapes, which enhances each individual’s story. In “Mary Overlie: I Was a Wild Indian Who Happened to Dance,” Sally R. Sommer writes:

Presence is a word Overlie uses often, and for her, it connotes a special kind of theatricality. She has said she seeks performers who have ‘presence,’ but she ‘is not interested in personality.’ The distinction would seem to be one of how self is presented
in performance, perhaps best explained in terms of technique. Two things need to be concurrent: deeply involved concentration and a physical activity (49).

Bogart expresses, “I found [The Six Viewpoints] to be an astonishing way of thinking about time and space. Her insights led me in the development of a new approach to training for actors” (A Director Prepares 11-12).

Bogart’s Viewpoints of Time and Space explains the many variations of levels and energy a body or group of bodies may move in relationship to themselves and their environment. Bogart defines four viewpoints of time: Tempo, Duration, Kinesthetic Response, and Repetition. Tempo is the rate of speed at which words, sounds, and/or movement are expressed. Duration exemplifies how long a speech or movement or sequence of speech and movements continues. Kinesthetic Response is a spontaneous reaction to motion, which occurs outside you. Repetition is the repeating of something onstage externally or internally and vocally or physically.

In opposition to time, space identifies the structures and functions of the body in relation to itself, other bodies and the environment. There are five Viewpoints of space: Shape, Gesture, Architecture, Spatial Relationship, and Topography. Shape is the lines, curves, or combination of lines and curves the body creates in space. A gesture is a movement consisting of one part or multiple parts of the body that can be isolated such as feet, hands, lips, etc. Architecture is the consciousness of the environment and how it affects movement. Architecture is anything present in space, its texture, brightness, color, and sound. Spatial Relationship refers to the distance of bodies and/or objects in space. Topography is the landscape, pattern and designs created by movement through space.

Why are the Viewpoints important? Because of the stylistic choreography of movement, actors may consistently portray a character through timed actions. Therefore time and space aids in the modification and articulation of a character as self or a group of characters as an ensemble. Moreover, Viewpoints brings the entire space to life by acknowledging relationships. For example an actor walks on a linoleum floor, he or she slides on the ground like it’s an Ice Skating Ring alternating each foot with the opposite arm. Next the actor begins to lose their balance on the 6th stride. On the 9th stride they fall. The actor tries to get up three times before standing up. Lastly, the actor stands. Now, the actor’s physical adjustments to the body and relationship to the floor created a new imagery for the audience without providing an actual Ice Skating Ring. Also, the actor has specific movements choreographed so that he or she can
affectively and consistently portray the Ice Skating Ring every performance. Applying the elements of time and space creates dimensions for the untrained eye.

Stanislavski

The Stanislavski system was created as a guide or method to help actors understand and support a character(s) through psychological emotions, which would build upon psychological actions. In “Stanislavsky’s System: Pathways for the Actor,” Sharon Marie Carnicke’s writes: “Stanislavsky became the first practitioner in the twentieth century to articulate systematic actor training” (13). This system became an aesthetic and a debate for actors, directors, and historians. But before Stanislavski, there were no practical traditions of approaching the art of acting.

Before being called Stanislavski, the Russian Konstantin Sergeevich Alekseev raised questions about the process of acting at a very young age as he watched both parents entertain for a living. “At various times during his career he experimented with symbolism, verse, opera, Western behaviourist psychology, Eastern ideas on the mind/body continuum, and trends in criticism of art and literature” (Carnicke 13). Stanislavski grew obsessed with finding an acting technique necessary for not only telling a character’s story, but also understanding the character’s subtext and inner emotions in order to embody a realistic person other than self. Jean Benedetti notes:

Stanislavski believed that the actor most likely to affect an audience profoundly is the actor who behaves most like a complete human being, thereby stirring not merely their emotions but their minds as well. His art is based on an understanding of the way we behave in our daily lives, which he then uses when creating a character. If the character’s behaviour is similar to our behaviour in life, then it becomes ‘human’ (2).

By understanding self-emotions and behavior, actors can relate to what a character undergoes by drawing parallel between the two.

Two main components of the Stanislavski system are concentration and imagination. Concentration deals with sharpening the five senses, but in Stanislavski there are six senses: Sight, Hearing, Touch, Smell, Taste, and Emotion. In order to create strong concentration skills each sense is demonstrated alone through exercises. This is so an individual can become precise and familiar to sounds, objects, and feelings. One exercise to strengthen sight is: Look at an object or person for thirty seconds, look away, and give an accurate description (Carnicke 18).
This exercise helps actors to build their level(s) of concentration and to mentally adapt and focus within a specific space.

Imagination values an actor’s ability to create real circumstances from fictional circumstances. For instance, if a character is explaining life on a space ship, it is the actor’s job to visualize that space ship for once the actor believes in the space ship, the audience will as well. With that said, the Stanislavski system suggests that the actor’s job is to convince himself, not the audience. And once the self is convinced, others will see what the actor sees through the imagination of the actor. Also, another part to imagination is ‘What if.’ ‘What if’ deals with raising the stakes and turning something ordinary into something more intense such as a bag of gummy worms and believing they’re flesh eating maggots. Imagination can bring things that are in existence and non-existent to life. Stanislavski notes: “Our art demands that an actor’s whole nature be actively involved, that he give himself up, both mind and body, to do his part. He must feel the challenge to action physically as well as intellectually because the imagination, which has no substance or body, can reflexively affect our physical nature and make it act” (An Actor Prepares 66).

The discussion of Viewpoints versus Stanislavski is a widely discussed topic in the theatre realm. Which method is more affective? Although both techniques are from a director and an actor, they both observe the progression of the actor(s) process whether inside looking out or outside looking in. By referring to both techniques during The Shadow Box’s rehearsal process, it became clear that both methods strengthen each other and at times both methods were needed to enhance a particular scene, a character(s) physicality or emotional performance. This chapter will demonstrate the positive and negative aspects of both Viewpoints and Stanislavski in the rehearsal process of The Shadow Box by showing how both methods are used to affectively portray characters, polish movements, and honestly tell a story. This chapter will convey the concepts of the super objective in context of the text, character work and physicality, effective ways of playing emotions, working as an ensemble, and building blocking from architecture.

**Text/Super Objective**

The text is the basis for building character work and physicality. The text gives enough information about a character to gain a preliminary idea or hint of how a person speaks, moves, and interact with others; it is one aspect of the production that is constantly redefined through
actions. By closely reading the text and understanding the character, the actor discovers the character’s super objective. Stanislavski explains that each character needs a super objective—one thing they are searching for throughout the story. The super-objective is important because it pushes the story along without giving up the main idea before the story ends. The super-objective is helpful for pacing and justifying actions that a character might take. Each character has an ulterior motive in which the actions support his or her journey throughout the play.

In a discussion with the actors in Cottage 3 (Agnes, Felicity), the super-objectives were: Felicity needs to fight death in order to see Claire; Agnes wants to keep Felicity happy until she dies or keep Felicity from dying. The two super-objectives are powerful because Agnes pretends that Claire is coming back, which makes Felicity’s objective more dominant she has to fight through constant pain. Agnes’ actions are all focused on Felicity such as: being Felicity’s caretaker, sacrificing her own happiness, and writing letters as if they were from Claire. To express her loneliness, Agnes plays checkers alone and constantly looks out the window as if she wants to escape. Moreover, Felicity’s focus on Claire, whether asleep or awake, intensifies the scene and portrays more of Agnes’ isolation. Even though Felicity is blind, she imagines Claire in the room and even calls Agnes “Claire.” Because of physical pain, a lot of Felicity’s actions are internal. The dialogue between Felicity and Agnes plays an important factor in achieving the characters’ super-objective, which helps distinguish one character from another.

Character Work

Early rehearsals set the tone for creativity; it is when the art in theatre arts is most defined. In his article, “Direction and Acting,” Stanislavski explains that “the basis of a play is always a dramatic conception; a general artistic sense is imparted to the theatrical action by the unifying, creative genius of the actor. Thus the dramatic activity begins at the foundation of the play” (28). Stanislavski suggests that the actors’ imagination begins in the primary rehearsals where the actors start to build a world for the characters. To encourage the inventiveness of the actors, two activities were assigned: write a letter to a relative, friend, etc. about your character’s thoughts and feelings about another character in the play; bring in a picture that describes your character physically and/or emotionally. These assignments helped to define the relationships between the actors and the director because it presented a form of dialogue in which character development and overall themes could be discussed. For example, the actor playing Steve wrote a letter to Joe, his father. Steve discussed life at home with Maggie, Steve’s mother, before
arriving at the cottages, which was awkward, painful, and lonely. Because this event is absent from the play, it constructed a concrete relationship between Steve and his parents, his longing to see his Father, and his depression at home with Maggie. Moreover, it revealed Steve and Maggie’s misery without Joe—a soreness that would only increase after Joe’s death.

For the second assignment, the actor playing Felicity, brought in a picture of an octopus. This wasn’t an ordinary octopus; it had multi defense mechanisms. However, the extraordinary thing about this octopus is that it looked pale, old and weak, which was a parallel description to Felicity’s appearance. Felicity is the longest diagnosed patient at the cottage, but the longest lived. Felicity’s ability to outwit and respond definitively to others portrays the octopus’ underestimated qualities. The octopus is a clever and graceful fish that usually lies at the bottom of the ocean. It can change colors to camouflage to its environment for attacking prey or warning predators and some may even shoot out black ink to create a smoke so it can disappear. Moreover, this visual representation helped the actor, who is in a wheelchair and is blind, to stylize stationary position.

To incorporate style and energetic range of the body in the early dialogues, a video entitled “Still/Here” was shown to the cast in order to exhibit physical range and the spatial relationship between bodies and the body’s vertical and horizontal alignment to nature. “Still/Here” is a video about individuals diagnosed with life threatening diseases, who exercise the power of movement as a form of therapy. Bill T. Jones, the director of the project, uses gestures from the ensemble to tell a story through dance. For instance one woman in the video covered her face to express doubt after discovering she was terminal. So this gesture would become a part of her solo performance. All the stories express the life journeys of the ensemble and at certain times each individual has the opportunity to do a personal solo within the midst of the entire choreography. Stanislavski notes: “If you do not use your body, your voice, a manner of speaking, walking, moving, if you do not find a form of characterization which corresponds to the image, you probably cannot convey to others its inner, living spirit” (Building A Character 3). Even though the ensemble in “Still/Here” develops their personal stories, this helps the cast contemplate the inner spirit of their characters by listening to the stories of real people.

After the video, a discussion took place in where the actors began to share personal experiences about living with dying and taking life for granted. One student broke down in tears after explaining a fatal accident. The actor said she wanted us to know because we were going to
be a family for the next four weeks. The actor’s testimony opened the door for others to speak. Stanislavski explains that personal experiences help an actor relate to a character’s experience. This is referred to as Emotional Recall, which will be discussed later. In the case of the video, it increased the relationships of the actors and built trust within the ensemble. The conclusion of discussion emphasized that a lot of time and life is spent on anger when there really is no need to mad. This realization was uniquely relevant to story of The Shadow Box because the characters spend so much energy arguing they forget to appreciate the time they have with one another. This video portrayed how choreography could translate emotions into movement. Moreover, it emphasized the power and strength of a gesture. Bogart notes that there are two types of gestures: behavioral (physical) and expressive (facial). “The behavioral gesture can give information about a character, time period, physical health, circumstance, weather, clothes... Expressive gesture expresses an inner state, an emotion, a desire, an idea, or a value. It is abstract and symbolic rather than representational” (The Viewpoints Book 10).

**Physicality**

“Physical action is the basis of acting. This is what an audience sees, interprets—movement, stance, gesture—to understand the meaning of the play. The body language of the cast will convey much of that meaning, even if, for some reason, the dialogue cannot be heard, or understood” (Benedetti 16). When approaching the physicality of a character, Stanislavski believes physical action cannot be supported without inner emotions; the two cannot be separated. In Stanislavski’s ideal process of sculpturing a character, the body has to be relaxed. Free of all tension in order to create and have imagination. For a relaxed mind and body, Stanislavski proposes exercises for the actor. One exercise suggests that an actor lies on the floor and take out all the tension in his or body by tensing all the muscles and then releasing. Another exercise is counting backwards from 100 by 1 and then other multiples of 2, 3 and so forth, which frees your mind to be creative. Lastly, the Stanislavski system uses several exercises to help actors find the center of gravity to obtain good balance. Stanislavski utilizes the ideal of molding a body into a character’s body as if the actor’s instrument is a block of clay. On the other hand, Viewpoints approach to physicality begins as an abstract gesture like those demonstrated in the “Still/Here” video. A gesture is a simple way to express a character’s emotions because gestures “belong to everyday life, that are part of human behavior as we know and observe it” (The Viewpoints Book 49). For example, if a character’s emotion is joy, the actor
raises both hands up and down. Now if the actor were just to raise their hands, it might emphasize that the character is under arrest. When experiencing with gestures, viewpoints ask “how long and how fast?” which can distinguish two gestures tremendously as shown in the two examples above. “Practicing Duration increases the performer’s ability to sense how long is long enough to make something happen onstage and, conversely, how long is too long so that something starts to die” (The Viewpoints Book 40).

During The Shadow Box, both Stanislavski and Viewpoints were analyzed to affectively embody the physicality of Brian. First the actor relaxed his body. Second the actor discovered the character’s center of gravity. From that point, the actor molded his body from his feet to his head until he created a comfortable stance for the character. Because the actor was playing a sick character whose body was deformed from his disease, his posture was poor. The next step was configuring the character’s movement. Would it be slow and tiresome? Brian’s walk became a fast shuffle, which expressed his body was tired, but his mind was at a fast pace. Brian’s deformity expressed strong-will and a sense of presence. But Brian’s physicality didn’t stop there. The character still needed gestures to express his different moods, moods which the character Mark describes: “One day he’s flat on his ass, the next day he’s running around here like a two year old” (25). The gestures became a distinction of hand movements. When Brian was full of excitement, he talked with his hands because he adored them. The actor capitalized on this hand-distinction and used lotion twice during the performances, acknowledging he was proud of his hands. On the other hand, his hands were also a weakness. At times Brain’s hands would tremble displaying his illness; it was something Brian was embarrassed about and couldn’t hide.

The next thing Brian needed was a voice. During the rehearsal, the actor playing Brian stuffed the sides of his jaws with paper to help lower his pitch and swell his jaw a little. After the actor did this for a week, he asked for a day off from stuffing his jaws after he did a couple of scene. At that moment it was recognized that the actor was used to the paper on the side of his jaws and hearing the character’s voice that he delivered without the paper. The paper exercise was important because it helped the actor’s pronunciation of the words as he retained the character’s fast speech patterns.

Stanislavski and Viewpoints work well together when constructing the physicality of a character and portraying an illness. More importantly both techniques helped the actor play a
much older character than himself. It might have been impossible to embody Brian without the utilization of both methods.

**Playing Emotion**

As mentioned earlier, Emotional Recall or Emotion Memory is an exercise actors use to relate to a character. Stanislavski believes the actor’s memory should be used in recollection of a character’s emotions. Here an actor is to remember a past experience or event that helps him or her connect honestly to the character’s thoughts and emotions. Referring to the Stanislavski system, Jean Benedetti writes:

In rehearsal, Emotion Memories may come spontaneously and pass straight into the performance as part of the emotional experience of the character, not just as part of your personal memory. If they do not, then two preliminary phases need to be gone through: (1) recall a moment in your life when you experienced an emotion analogous to that which the character is experiencing—the ‘then’. (2) Improvise in the present a situation which will provoke the same emotion—the ‘now’ (66-7).

Benedetti is saying that Emotion Memory may carry into the performance, so it’s a possibility that it won’t be effective. The idea to try Emotion Memory in the rehearsal was to provoke more honesty from the actor. So one actor was asked to perform a monologue, but think about an event that will help them connect to the monologue differently. When the actor delivered the monologue, it was hard for the actor to focus on the rest of the scene because the actor couldn’t stop the emotions immediately. It was discovered that with Emotion Memory, an actor might not be able to control a specified memory in which the actor loses focus of the character and needs a break because the memory was too painful. How do you ask a young actor to go back to that place? You don’t. Careful observations have to be made by the director at that moment to note the gestures and mannerisms, if any, made at that time. This way the actor can be given specific directions when the scene is revisited. If the actor places his hand close to his chest and rotates his hands looking for words during the Emotion Memory the director has to explain these character movements as a means to form a basis for the character’s physicality.

Should emotion memory just be an exercise that aids the actor and director in constructing a character? When asked why he didn’t use Emotion Memory, Stanislavski replied, “I try to avoid that memory, because it depresses me so much” (*An Actor Prepares* 158). However as Stanislavski exercised his method throughout different characters in plays, he
realized dangers of Emotion Memory. Bogart writes: “Late in life, he [Stanislavski] rejected his earlier psychological techniques, calling them ‘misguided.’ But it was too late. Americans had already grabbed unto the severely limited aspect of his ‘system’ and turned it into a religion” (A Director Prepares 37). After experiencing Emotion Memory with the actor, a more mechanical approach was exercised in the rehearsal.

Viewpoints offers the actor the technique to create mechanical acting. But the question is: how to make mechanical acting appear authentic? In one particular scene, the actors played with tempo and rhythm. In the closing scene of Cottage 1, the idea is for Joe to finally break down into tears as his family is hit with the reality of his sickness. Throughout the rehearsals, the actors played with tempo to deliver a strong emotional reaction for the performance. Sometimes the actor would present tears in the rehearsal and sometimes not. The actor playing Joe began to play with the speed of the lines until a specific pattern of truth was identified. Next Joe could deliver this pattern in the dialogue with Maggie. The end of the scene Maggie is between Joe and the door. Maggie’s back is turned towards Joe’s chest. There’s about 5ft in between them. The scene reads (The numbers are my own to easily refer to the line and how tempo and rhythm helped deliver the correct emotions):

1. JOE: I’m going inside now, Maggie. I’m going to tell him.
2. MAGGIE: Tell me first.
3. JOE: What?
4. MAGGIE: Tell me. Say it out loud.
5. JOE: I’m going to die Maggie.
6. MAGGIE: Why?
7. JOE: I don’t know. I don’t know. I don’t know. Like everything else, I don’t know. Come inside.
8. MAGGIE: What’ll we do in there?
10. I can’t promise…

In line one, Joe speaks and moves at moderate speed towards the door because it portrays his assurance to inform Steve of his [Joe] sickness. In the second line, Joe stops in movement (Joe only takes about two steps during the first line) and Maggie speaks more up-tempo because
Maggie is demanding an explanation from Joe; and in the third line Joe responds quickly in astonishment. On the fourth line, Maggie faces Joe and then speaks. Maggie’s fourth line is done at a moderate pace because she fears the truth and is not necessarily ready for a painful answer. However, in the fifth line, Joe, who is still, responds very slowly. At this point the rate of tempo forces him to be emotional and the character begins to cry. As an observer watching and listening to the space between the words, portrays that each word Joe is saying is painful for Maggie to hear as he looks into her eyes. Note: This was not too slow that each word dragged, but rather showed difficulty in announcing such fatality. In the sixth line, Maggie’s reply is slow as well; it shows difficulty for her to start accepting what she’s denied for so long. Because the seventh line repeats “I don’t know” four times, the actors enhance the emotions by slight movements such as hugging and touching each other for comfort and security. Also, each time one of these sentences were spoken, the tempo was distinct from the others. Lines nine through eleven continued at moderate speed. However, on Joe’s last line “Just come inside,” he kisses Maggie and walks through the door. Maggie, who is still left outside, slowly walks to the door, turns around, and then walks away. While Maggie is walking away, the sound from Steve’s guitar is heard outside where Maggie is standing. Maggie freezes. She then faces the door and walks towards it. The sound of the music supports Maggie’s tempo, her emotional mood and guides her inside the house. Seeing that this type of work with performing emotions was more affective, the actors used it over and over as it became a choreographed scene of tempo and rhythm. In Stanislavski, tempo and rhythm is still strongly connected with psychological emotions and sometimes Emotion Memory. When exercising tempo and rhythm in Stanislavski, it’s practiced as if with musical notes. In one of his sessions on tempo and rhythm, Stanislavski writes: “The half note was replaced by two quarter notes, and later these two quarter notes were replaced by eighth notes with rests, then sixteenth notes, all of which caused the serenity of the earlier mood to be more and more dissipated and to be replaced by a sense of disturbance” (Building A Character 185). Explaining rhythm in these terms is very complicated and distracting whereas Viewpoints allows you to focus on the movement as a way to enhance emotions.

Viewpoints is more consistent as tool for communicating emotions in space. Also, it’s easier for young actors to memorize specific rhythms and patterns of the text that evoke emotional range. Emotion Memory is not always affective; it may cause the actor to improv or
slightly change a scene during the performance, which will probably have a negative affect on other actors on stage. Never-the-less, Emotion Memory can help the actor discover new possibilities about the character’s inner feelings and thoughts; but again, it’s an emotional risk.

**Ensemble Development**

As the actors began to understand their characters, it was time to bring the whole group together so they could work as a creative team. There were several exercises adapted from Viewpoints and Stanislavski in this process: Three Down, Two Up, Gesture Exercise, and Tug of War. Bogart defines Three Down, Two up is an exercise in which “five participants go onstage” to improve a scene and “at the moment the improvisation begins, only three people should be [standing] up and two should be down” (*The Viewpoints Book* 81-2). The first group consisted of three people instead of five. Therefore, two sat and one stood. Cottage Two (Mark, Brian, Beverly) was the first group. The three actors improved a scene from the play, which was an easy scene to choose because the three actors are only in one scene together. The importance of this exercise is to visually see how the characters interact with each other through speech and body language. Another key component is the actor’s awareness of the one rule: only two people can sit at a time, so if one person stood up, another had to sit. Soon we added another Cottage and actually did Three Up, Two Down. But this was still different because the two cottages didn’t converse with each other. Both had to be completely aware of the other’s presence, but still focus on their scene. Later we added the third cottage and the exercise became five down, three up. The purpose for adjusting this exercise is to get the actors used to being on stage all at one time, but still in their own space, which is similar to the performance. Also, it will helps the actors adjust to sharing a story or, in the case of *The Shadow Box*, stories.

Another exercise that was done was a combination of gestures and movements. The object of the exercise is to tell a fictional story as an ensemble. One by one each actor says a line with a movement and gesture. The next person repeats the line and the action of all persons in front and then adds a line, movement and gesture. For example, Person A Flaps arms and squats saying, “Once upon a time there lived a pink dragon.” Person B would flaps arms and squats saying, “Once upon a time there lived a pink dragon.” And then lie on the floor swaying his arms articulating, “Who loved to swim in the sea.” After that, Person C would repeat A & B and then add to the story, once the story went to the last person, the whole ensemble repeats the story and makes it more personal by stressing certain words or exaggerating specific gestures and
movements. To help the actors with the exercise, they were reminded of the “Still/Here” video that was shown, so they could really incorporate the entire body. Bogart explains, “In rehearsal we try to find shapes and forms to contain the living questions, in the present and alters time. We are living conduits of human memory” (A Director Prepares 22). Bogart is saying that memory can help actors remain truthful in the present. So, the actors will be able to remember all the stories and the discussions they had on the day the video was shown. Bogart adds, “Memory plays a huge role in the artistic process. Every time you stage a play you are embodying memory. Human beings are stimulated to tell stories from the experience of remembering an incident or a person…We create truths by describing, or re-describing, our beliefs and observations” (A Director Prepares 28). Memory reminds us of the familiar. For rehearsals, it was a reminder that The Shadow Box, each other, the characters, the story, and, above all, communication are not foreign.

Stanislavski was integrated into this exercise to build the actors’ level of concentration. This is helpful in the rehearsal process because it will prepare the actors for the performance in which they will all be on stage together for the majority of the production. Concentration exercises will help them effectively build a story as an ensemble. Later in the rehearsals different exercises were done to build concentration in the performance as an ensemble.

Throughout The Shadow Box there are four interview scenes in which the two actors, who are in those scenes, are not both present on stage. Since the Interviewer is off stage and speaking through a microphone, the dialogue of the two actors must correspond with each other during the performances. Because the interviews are personal and very important to story, the actors had to work on their conversational dialogue to make sure the Interviewer doesn’t overpower the scene through the microphone. To avoid this problem and still have a believable discussion between the two characters, the two actors rehearsed facing each other. This was so the actors could listen to each other, get used to each other’s reactions, and be insightful of whom they were talking to. Throughout the rehearsals the two actors moved further away from each other and then facing away from each other to keep the same urgency of the scene as when they were facing each other. By approaching this dilemma in rehearsal, it would be easier for both actors to concentrate during the performance since one actor is on stage talking to an imaginary body and the other is offstage looking at only a profile body. So by rehearsing the
actors face to face helped them imagine the other’s body in the performance because the focus in not on the interview, but what each character reveals in the interview scenes.

**Blocking**

Blocking was developed from the ensemble work in rehearsals. As the actors began to move and play emotions, they started building unique spatial relationships to each other and the architecture. Bogart expresses, “When we become aware of the expressive possibilities of Spatial Relationship on stage, we begin working with less polite but more dynamic distances of extreme proximity or extreme separation” (*The Viewpoints Book* 11). The actors began to move in accordance to mood, anxiety, embarrassment, etc which was helpful in guiding them to build towards their super-objective. This was hard because the characters tell their stories in intervals. Therefore, some rehearsals were divided by cottages in order to give special attention to each cottages’ story and mark the breaking points where the story shifts to another cottage so the entire play could build evenly and suspenseful. When working with Cottage 2 (Beverly, Mark, Brian) the blocking began a little slow because of the complexities of characters, and the tension between them. The problem was how to build the intensity of Cottage 2 in such a little space to work with? An improvisational exercise was done within Cottage 2 in order to find more energy for the actors. The exercise was called the Babysitter. Here Beverly was a five year old; Brian was a two year old; and Mark was the babysitter. The two directions were: Brian wants to do whatever Beverly does and Mark has to control both kids who are hyper. Through this exercise Beverly was more playful, Mark was very determined, and Brian was vulnerable, which was interesting to see because neither used these traits when approaching the characters; it gave them flexibility. The purpose of the exercise was to help the actors build a broader range of physicality and actions for the characters and they succeeded. The actors then could apply this to different scenes. After doing individual Cottage work, it was time to connect again as an ensemble and start reconstructing the build the play as a hold.

Stanislavski discusses the importance of space as an actor and the level of concentration it takes when confronted by an audience. This is called Circles of Attention. Benedetti notes:

In the performance we need to know what the Object of Attention is at any point, how wide the Circle of Attention is, and, as in the studio exercises, switches focus accordingly. An ability to control the focus also helps us maintain full concentration. Any actor knows that there are occasions where concentration slips, and the performance
becomes fuzzy. At that point, reduce the Circle of Attention to minimum and focus on a small Object of Attention within that circle until concentration is fully restored; then you can expand the Circle of Attention again (42).

Circles of Attention are very vital to the actors in *The Shadow Box* in terms of focus and concentrating on their cottage. In a sequence of actions in the play, each Cottage says a line and then another Cottage does the same. For example at the end of Act I the lines are:

- **BRIAN**: Dance with me Bev. (*Cottage 2*)
- **BEVERLY**: My pleasure sir. (*Cottage 2*)
- **MAGGIE**: Joe? (*Cottage 1*)
- **JOE**: We got to tell him, Maggie. We got to tell him. (*Cottage 1*)
- **AGNES**: Rest, mama…rest…(*Cottage 3*)
- **MARK**: It’ll all be over in a minute. It just seems to take forever. (*Cottage 2*)

This rendition is done quite a few times and it’s very important for the actors to keep their Circle of Attention distinct, so they can keep focus and effectively tell the stories as an ensemble.

Once all the Cottages were blocked, careful observations were made looking at each cottage at each given time, even when one cottage was in dialogue. Thinking back to duration and repetition, it became clear that a simple turn off and turn on approach wasn’t going to work. Meaning that the audience will see each transition like the snap of a finger, but this would be boring. Even though each story was different and super-objectives were distinct, there was still something similar about the story lines. They were all in cottage in a hospice and experience living with dying; and with some experiences emotions overlap. Now watching the performance, the task was to find common denominators in the stories and carefully listen to one cottage while looking at another, waiting for hint words and looking at lighting levels to experiment with Circles of Attention. The movements and the words soon became music, a tune trying to emerge from the combination of all eight characters’ journey. By looking at the Circles of Attention as a Director and as an imaginary composer, different points of interest arose in where a character(s)’ speech can transform into another character’s inner desires.

In *The Shadow Box*, Beverly and Mark have just finished their final confrontation and Mark is left with the question: Should he leave? Directly after this scene, Agnes has a mini monologue in which she describes the urge to escape, but can’t. She doesn’t know what change
may come or what hurt that’s left. This example will show how the two characters, Mark and Agnes, link:

(Agnes walks to the window) You sit down one day (Mark is standing, feeling confused with his hand on his head), and you get caught (Mark crosses wanders Upstage in the living room)…you get caught somewhere in a chair (Mark wanders Stage left)…in some foreign room (Mark eyes jacket). Caught in slow motion (Mark crosses to jacket upstage on coat rack)…stretched across the floor (Mark pick up jacket and accidentally knocks over Brian’s medicine bottles), listening to the windows and the doors. (Mark crosses Stage Left behind couch and puts one arm in the jacket) It’s hard to remember sometimes what you’re listening for (Mark pauses in action). A whistle, maybe…or a shout…somebody calling your name. (Mark takes off jacket) Or maybe just a few words. (Mark crosses to face of couch) A few kind words. (Mark slowly sits) A ticket to Louisiana…a letter (Mark is seated and lights fade to kitchen where Agnes is still in the window)…something…

Mark’s stage directions helped the audience see the similarity of the two, but also allowed both actors to support the character’s emotions in a different way.

The Circles of Attention strengthens an actor’s focus in which he or she can visualize stage presence in a poetic fashion. Also by referring to Viewpoints of time, Circles of Attention can motivate new levels of communication between the actors and the director. This helps build relationships and allow for a more professional environment.

Through this new lens, this enhanced way of envisioning art, different symbols began to appear from the actors’ movement in the space. From these new rehearsals, a picture of a shadow box was thriving for inscription. The drawing began with the shapes in each cottage. Cottage 1 was envisioned as a circle because of the family’s attempt to escape the reality of Joe’s illness. And for the simple fact, they spend the whole play moving away from this issue that they are faced with it at the end. Cottage 2’s movement showed a series of triangle and sharpness. There was no hesitation in this cottage, but much bluntness in speech and demeanor. Cottage 3 was a little difficult at first because of Claire’s presence in the scenes even though a body does not represent her on stage. So a cylinder seemed representational because of Claire’s interference of the opposing ends—circles. Then more cylinder variations emerged such as a treadmill, which is separated by a band; and the cylinder became an expressive pattern of Agnes’ action for two
reasons: Agnes does the same routine just at different rates of speed, and she is committed to her exercise. Lastly, Felicity’s wheelchair is an ideal cylinder, but in this pattern Felicity is sitting on the median and Agnes controls it. This portrays that Agnes has a lot of power in her hands, though she just rejects it. The drawing finally looked as shown. The interesting thing about this picture is that all shapes are restricted inside of a box; and the smaller boxes represent the shadows of the overall box. After showing this drawing to the design team and making minor adjustments in rehearsal, later the set design was adjusted. The main adjustment was Cottage 1. At first Cottage 1 was going to take place upstage; but because of the first set design and the actors movement, the rehearsal provided an experimental environment to monitor what worked and didn’t. The new set design was established parallel to the drawing whereas Cottage 1’s space surrounded cottage two and three. Moreover to impel the viewer in the story, a strong decision was made for the characters to overlap in space. For instance, when Steve (Cottage 1) puts the groceries up, he walks into the kitchen, where Cottage 3 takes place and so forth. This juxtaposition illustrates that the stories do in fact connect in a related way.

Bogart writes: “In rehearsal an actor searches for shapes that can be repeated. Actors and directors together are constructing a framework that will allow for endlessly new currents of vital life-force, emotional vicissitudes and connection with other actors” (A Director Prepares 46). Using shapes and patterns in rehearsals and production meetings helped this collaborative understand each other’s issues and concerns within the production of The Shadow Box. The shapes and symbols started out as an idea and because the actors and the designers added and redefined one idea it “opened doors” for more creative ones.
In the process of using Stanislavski and Viewpoints in the rehearsal process, it has been noted that Viewpoints was used a lot in the beginning and in the end. Why is that? Viewpoints offers a lot of exercises that engages the ensemble in dialogue. It’s a great method to use in the early stages of rehearsals. And when Viewpoints are revisited at the end, they help tune the story’s instrument. However, Stanislavski helps attack the text and understand what it means to have a super objective and a defining action. Stanislavski details what an actor’s homework should be and Viewpoints exercises the ways the actor can magnify his or her homework in rehearsals. Also, there are times when the two methods can’t stand on their own, which is probably because one side is an actor’s story and the other is a director’s story. Never the less, using both perspectives helped modify different aspects of the production such as: Timing, Focus, Shapes, Blocking, and Communication. It may impossible to direct a play like The Shadow Box without using both methods.
“Thinking like an artist rather a journeyman means locating and dreaming about a body of writing that moves you. It cannot be done over a weekend or on a summer reading binge. It is a continual process of recognizing and honing a sensibility and of relating dramatic writing to the world. Of all the art forms, theatre is the most fashion conscious.” –Michael Bloom

In the quote above, Bloom explains that a work of art is a continuous process because it not only has to make sense to the artist, but to other bodies. “Relating” a piece of “dramatic writing to the world” means developing ways, through art, to communicate to a group of people that the artistic vision of one person can be universal. Bloom adds that “theatre is the most fashion conscious” meaning that there are many expectations, a variety of individuals to serve, a multitude of theatrical space arrangements, and indefinite approaches to satisfy all. These are the various aspects of theatre that affect my directorial approach and enthusiasm to The Shadow Box.

It was my artistic obsessions of research, learning about Michael Cristofer, understanding the social versus individual issues surrounding death, and studying acting techniques by two of the most well-known artist in theatre that influenced me to bring this particular work of art to life in the most profound, entertaining, and aesthetic fashion.

In selecting a play such as The Shadow Box, I saw an opportunity to gain knowledge and courage to explore an existing world of the terminally ill, hospice, and family—a world that I, myself, take for granted. Because the beginning stages of my process as a director consisted of research and studies of living with dying, I acknowledged myself as both director and as dramaturg. I had to balance my artistic vision between these two roles in order to have a well-rounded perception of the art I wanted to create. As dramaturg, I had to learn to be the communicator of all the information I retained in hopes of teaching others. Geoffrey S. Proehl explains that the role of the dramaturg is that of a multi-functioning advocator of a play’s historical and present significance. The dramaturg enhances the awareness of all individuals within its process: “They [dramaturges] often function in roles most notable for their liminal characteristics” (135). (The term ‘liminal’ refers to the space the dramaturg creates as resourceful information. The dramaturg serves as a guide to incorporate and reincorporate valuable knowledge to an individual or group of people.) By looking closely at The Shadow Box, I discovered that hospice functions similarly to a dramaturg, for hospice serves as a primary source between persons and forges a delicate balance amongst the two. A dramaturge is a reliable source for directors, actors, and designers within a production because often they’ve
done the most in depth historical research within the team. In addition, hospice acts as a fundamental supporter and aid to its patients and their families. Hospice makes sure that the patient/family ‘unit’ is inclusive of all data and options within its ‘care system.’ Therefore, I had to balance my responsibilities as dramaturge, director, and, later, spectator—viewing *The Shadow Box* from an audience’s perspective—which allowed me to appropriately approach the rehearsals and community aspects of Cristofer’s *The Shadow Box*. In this chapter I will specify the typical Miami audience, the problems addressed when performing a play about living with dying, and my directorial approach to facing those problems through design, art, and community. Finally, I will discuss the efficacy of *The Shadow Box* production at Miami University.

**Audience: Who are they?**

My goal for *The Shadow Box* was to bring the audience into a discussion of living with dying—a controversial worldwide issue in today’s society. Furthermore, getting people to talk about death is still an ongoing agenda of hospice. Theatre presents such a discussion. The typical Miami University audience is usually college students and parents, so I knew they would be able to connect to the play through Cristofer’s characters as discussed in chapter one. The roles of wife/husband, mother/daughter, father/son, mother/son, and friend as family are relationships that this particular audience can relate to; and the issue of living with dying challenges and maybe even complicate them. Therefore, I had a series of problems I needed to consider for this production: How do I have a discussion about living with dying without overwhelming the audience? How do I have a performance about living with dying without making the audience feel ashamed, embarrassed, guilty, or angry because of personal experiences? How do I address those who don’t find this issue relevant or take it too seriously? How do I have a successful production without forcing or preaching to the audience about life and death? These questions helped me focus on what I want the audience to take from *The Shadow Box*. First, I wanted the audience to enjoy life, family, and friends no matter how much or little time they have with them. Secondly, I wanted the audience to be informed about hospice—who they are and their principles. These problematic questions were approached through design choices, a lobby display, and community talkbacks.

**Design Collaboration**

In the design aspect, there were many contributions from the set, costume, and light designers to address these problems. Early in the production meetings I expressed that I wanted
to avoid bold colors during the performance. This choice supported my concept of ‘the outside looking in.’ I wanted the design elements to provide distance between the characters and audience. Although distancing the two would be difficult because of the proximity of the theatre that includes a thrust stage. A quick definition of a thrust stage is spatial arrangement where the audience is seated on three sides of the stage and the furthest side of the stage is against a back wall. In this close space the audience was sometimes 2 feet away from the performers. By using muted coloring, the design created some separation from the audience whereas they were looking into the lives of other families and not their own. Furthermore, the audience wouldn’t feel confronted by the performances. The colors of the set consisted of a nude pallet of creams, tans, browns, and greens. In chapter three I discussed how I linked Agnes and Mark’s emotions through text and blocking, here the cottages were linked by color, making all three cottages appear as one. Color and space were also symbolic of the characters that were all dealing with the same issue of living with dying. Then ultimately the set presented that the characters were connected through shared space and its colors.

In Cottage 1, the space was green, reflecting the outside world and Maggie’s outside world. In “Color Psychology,” David Johnson writes: “Green symbolizes nature. It is a calming, refreshing color. People waiting to appear on TV sit in "green rooms" to relax. Hospitals often use green because it relaxes…” Maggie is comforted by the green. When Joe asks her, one of the many times, to come inside because it’s getting late, she says, “It’s pretty” referring to all the trees. Also, since Cottage 1’s dominant green space surrounds Cottage 2 and 3, it is also the closest space to the audience, which hopefully relaxes them throughout the performance. To further the implication of green, Johnson adds, “Dark green is masculine, conservative, and implies wealth.” In Cottage 2, the green love seat represents Brian’s personality because of his death-acceptance as well as fortune. A brown linoleum floor that reflects earth’s tone also grounds Cottage 2. The combination of brown and green are a metaphor for natural death because a body resides in nature whether alive or not. As brown is shown in Cottage 3, there is also a cream checkered floor. One of the colors, in particular, is a dull yellow. “While it is considered an optimistic color, people lose their tempers more often in yellow rooms” (Johnson). Both Agnes and Felicity, show this to be true. Although there is frustration in the other cottages, it is unique in this cottage because Agnes is not a confrontational character, but she is irritated by Felicity unlike any other time before. The color of yellow is also known to make people
miserable and that’s what both Agnes and Felicity are because Felicity’s in pain waiting for Claire and Agnes is depressed pretending Claire’s alive.

Though these color schemes are not suggestive in the script, they provided symbolic and metaphorical representations of the characters and the idea of living with dying. But as previously noted, I didn’t want to overwhelm the audience about living with dying, so the costume designer incorporated comedy in a few of the costumes. Two of my favorite comedic costumes from the play were: Steve’s wig and Beverly’s black dress and accessories.

Steve wore a blue and stripped shirt; brown, trimmed corduroy shorts; stripped baseball knee socks; and blue Converse tennis shoes. These clothes allowed the actor to move more freely and sometimes even run. But funniest part of Steve’s costume was his wig. Steve’s wig was just hilarious; it was red, curly, and big like an Afro. At times, the wig would jiggle a bit because of the actor’s playfulness, but not to the point where it would fall off. The wig made it fun to listen to Steve and moreover, it gave the character presence when he was in a scene. This focus on Steve drew us closer to him and his innocence in the matter of his father’s illness, which allowed us to laugh and sympathize with Steve because we liked him.

Another character, Beverly, was impossible not to laugh at. Her poker dotted black and white raincoat, black torn prom dress, and wacky jewelry draws you near her, not because you’re fond of her, but because she seems awkward. Beverly’s black dress symbolizes mourning and the fact that she jokes about death is kind of ironic. In a scene with Brian, Beverly says, “I thought we could break it [the champagne bottle] on your ass and shove you off with a great bon voyage, confetti and streamers all over the grave” (43). Moreover, Beverly carried a black purse with a picture of an owl on it. The owl, in particular, symbolizes that Beverly is or can be a predator. This predator idea is carried out in the scenes between Beverly and Mark. The fact that she forces Mark to cry in the end furthers my example of Beverly as an owl.

The characters Steve and Beverly were a joy to watch because they gave us comedic relief from some of the most serious scenes in the play such as Maggie’s breakdown, Agnes’ loneliness, and Felicity’s pain. Comedic relief is important in a play like The Shadow Box because some people can only take so much seriousness at a time. I believe the interspersed comic moments keeps the audience attentive and learning.

To continue my concept: ‘the outside looking in,’ the lights created windows and trees as a presentation of a wall and a forest. (Using gobos, which are thin, round, metallic sheets that
have carved images within them creates an imaginary wall and forest. The parts of the gobo that are not carved hides portions of the light.) The wall gave the allusion that the characters are inside a house. Further, when the characters looked outside the windows, the audience was reminded that they were ‘looking in.’

The forest did two things: created shadows and gave the impression that these characters were far away, even if they were right in front of the audience. The shadows helped to portray a symbolic image of a ‘shadow box.’ This is because the shadows may signify that we keep things hidden in a box like the discussion of life and death. Metaphorically this lighting affect translates into many meanings. For example the audience can take from the box as they please, death is kept in the midst of a shadow, life and death are inseparable, one day you will have to open the box. Other than shadows, the lighting created the environment for the actors. In Chapter 3, I discussed that the circles of attention helps the actor focus. Well the creation of the environment makes it easier for actors to concentrate on stage. Moreover, lights help the audience focus on specific bodies in separate or shared spaces during the performance.

Designing a production for eight major characters is not an easy task. The stage has to accompany all eight characters at once and create three distinct spaces that can coalesce as a whole and also stand solitary. On another note, designing costumes for the characters is also no easy task because it reflects the characters’ personalities and their body shapes and also affects the actors’ movements. Lights, on the other hand, helps us to see these movements, but it also helps to create the environment and sometimes the mood(s) of the play. The use of warm colors provided distance between the audience and the characters. Supposing these are real people and real issues, the audience does not have to make The Shadow Box personal. The purpose of a Discussion Play as stated in Chapter 1 allows multiple perspectives to interpret a specific subject and these three design elements reinforced that theory just through color choices.

**Lobby Display and Community Outreach**

**Lobby Display**

Earlier in chapter 2, I discussed the theatre’s historical relevance to its culture from the Greek period to The Shadow Box and Hospice’s progression from the 1970s to the present. Furthermore, my perception of history, art, and education coexist within the theatre. Furthermore these factors influence my ‘liminal’ vision of educating and engaging the audience in the conversation of life and death. The lobby allowed me to share my dramaturgical work and
director's vision together in one room; I could provide an aesthetic environment and advocate the importance of *The Shadow Box* in the 21st century. However, after doing research and analyzing the play, I had to focus more on the performance aspects of the production within the rehearsals. Therefore, I decided to work with another dramaturge, Shiree Campbell, also an Interviewer, who would eventually take over the lobby display. The advantage of working with another dramaturg provides a second opinion and brings more creative ideas to the table. More importantly, I could have dialogue with someone who had done the same and sometimes different research than myself.

In contrast to colors used in the design elements, the lobby display exhibited bold colors. Campbell and I discussed the importance of color and art that would invite the audience into a social community. Therefore lobby consisted of a timeline of hospice, information on Cicely Saunders and Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, a combined clip of Bill Moyer’s “Living with Dying” and “Still/Here,” family portraits of the characters describing their specific stage of death or dealing with death, and art that symbolized the value of life. The timeline showed the growth and expansion of hospice from the 1970s. It provided a quick and valuable resource for the audience. The two biographies on Saunders and Kübler-Ross gave background information on the two modern pioneers of responsibility for addressing living with dying as a social entity; and the value of their work as described in Chapter 2.

Mentioned in Chapter 3, “Still/Here” is a documentary of terminally ill patients, who find their voice through the movement of dance as expressive relief to deal with pain, self-discovery, and one’s rebirth. One detail from both videos that I wanted to portray was that the patients didn’t fear death, but pain. I thought these personal testimonies reinforced the positive aspects of hospice and Saunders’ motto “live until you die.” Hospice focuses on pain treatment, and if a patient is constantly reminded of pain their focusing death rather than life. As far as the art, the actors, the dramaturg (Campbell), and myself played a part in this area. To express the themes of life and death, Campbell and I created a montage of drawings and symbols that expressed life and death indirectly. So when the audience sees these pictures, they have to look at them for a while in order to understand drawings. This helped us to engage the audience without overwhelming them. Also, Campbell suggested the idea of a family tree where each cottage’s family photo would link each character to one of the five stages of death, according to Kübler-Ross. I thought this was an interesting idea because you usually look at portraits with intentions.
of seeing a happy family, not expecting that each member is going through, what we might call, a crisis. In another aspect of art, I decided to include the actors’ pictures of their characters. (I referred to this in Chapter 3 as one of the actors’ first homework assignments that served as a form of dialogue between us.) Campbell added that we could use these pictures as a game by having the audiences guess which character the art represented. This would also make the lobby fun and not just a ‘fact gallery.’

The lobby was exquisite, and I don’t think 85% of the audience even noticed the hospice facts. This was because the audience came 5-10 minutes before the start of the performances. At this time the doors to the theatre were opened so the audience could walk right in, not acknowledging the lobby display. Moreover, at intermission 70% of the audience stayed in the theatre and the other 30% went to the bathroom. In my head, the audience would have been ushered in the theatre from looking at the lobby display, and they would have enjoyed all the pictures. Looking back now, I could have proposed to keep the house close d a little longer. But if nothing, I know the lobby helped create the mood of the play because of the color contradistinction.

The lobby was responsible for many things such as: supporting the design elements by creating more distance from the characters, welcoming the audience into the space, and providing a historical timeline of hospice for the audience’s awareness. The lobby and the design helped to create two worlds: the past and the present. The use of bright colors in the lobby insinuated a time warps into the theatre, almost as if looking at a black and white television show. For example, when I watch old “I Love Lucy” episodes, I can relate to the characters, but I can also distance myself from it maybe because of the lack of color. Secondly, the lobby welcomed the audience into the space because of the use of art. In “INROADS: The Intersection of Art & Civic Dialogue,” Andrea Assaf articulates, “Art might sometimes be a provocateur, a mediator of ideas, or might even put forward a particular perspective in relation to an issue. Art can bring people to the conversation who might not otherwise participate.” Using art as a communicative device engages the audience because it allows them to personally interpret the art’s meaning. Thirdly, the lobby helped the audience answer the main question pertaining to hospice and The Shadow Box: Why are these people in these cottages?

**Community Outreach**

The community outreach portion of the production consisted of talkbacks, which served
as a dialogue forum between the audience and hospice. The talkbacks would also help the audience answer questions about the cottages, but in a more intimate and verbal-exchange environment. Throughout the performances of *The Shadow Box*, there were two panel discussions with members of the Hospice of Cincinnati. My goals for the talkbacks were to raise community awareness of hospice, address problems and question in *The Shadow Box*, and provide social dialogue for the audience to discuss their opinions about living with dying. However, the hospice talkbacks were not what I had in mind. I expected more students to stay and give responses to the subject of end-of-life care, I expected more people to be a part of the discussion, and I expected the group to know little or nothing about hospice. There were about 20-25 people combined at both talkbacks, and I was hoping to have that many at each talkback. Moreover, by assuming age, my audience ranged from 23-55 years of age and these people were aware of hospice. So it was kind of disappointing to not have the conversation that I planned, but it was still interesting to hear the little comments that I did from this advanced group of people.

One audience member asked if Social workers are trained to not handle a situation, meaning that they are told it’s okay if they can’t solve everyone’s problems. To my surprise, hospice workers are taught to be able to handle anything the job requires because the patient and the family comes first and they have to find a solution for all problems that may occur. Referring back to Chapter 2, this is how hospice grows—by discovering new problems and solving them. For instance, if a patient of family requires something that hospice has never dealt with before, they address in the best possible manner; but later they evaluate this new process, see if it’s the best solution and share it with other hospices during conferences. One of the Hospice workers said, “Some families don’t want me to tell the patient I’m from hospice because it makes the patient feel as if the family has given up on them.” Therefore, the hospice team tells the patient they are from healthcare, which makes the patient feel as if they can be cured. At first I thought that the patient decides Hospice, but the family has that right as well. In these instances hospice helps the family take a break from the patient as much as needed because a caregiver, such as Agnes in *The Shadow Box*, gets exhausted at times.

When mentioning a problem in the play, the hospice panel expressed that children know something is wrong. They felt that Steve was inaccurately written in that manner. They emphasized that in today’s society, Steve would be completely aware of Joe’s illness. However, the actor that played Steve confided in me that she felt Steve knew something was wrong. I
thought it was quite interesting to hear that hospice still felt Steve was unaware of Joe’s sickness, when the actor played on Steve’s awareness. Or maybe it didn’t matter because of how Cristofer writes Steve’s dialogue. Hospice also mentioned that the family does not have to travel as far to see a relative as seen in Cottage 1, and that now hospice comes to homes as well. I shared briefly my experience at Hamilton Hospice with the audience. I talked about the children’s program and the assisted living hospice provides for caregivers who need a break. The children’s programs are therapeutic sessions to connect to kids who have lost loved ones. In this program they create drawings that express their inner emotions, which helps the children express their feeling in hopes of finding peace. The assisted living program will place an individual in one of their home units while their caregiver goes on vacation or other types of traveling purposes.

Therefore when planning a talkback, there is no guarantee of the crowd you may encounter. Although my expectations for the panel discussion were unmet, I still appreciated the discussion. However, my primary aesthetic during this production was the play itself. The lobby display and the panel discussions were supportive aesthetics for the audience to better understand end-of-life care.

**Directing Choices**

In my directing process, I had to make tough decisions from the moment I chose to direct *The Shadow Box*. I knew about the controversial issues about life and death and out-dated information within the text; but I still chose it because it touched me in a positive way. And part of being any artist is “relating dramatic writing into the world.” With that said, my last rehearsals were the time for me to really sit in the audience seat and direct at the same time. In this section I will discuss my role as a director in the last rehearsal and how I had to evaluate my directing choices from a spectator’s view.

**Final Choices**

The last nights of rehearsal are strenuous times for a director. I had to 1) Remain patient 2) Address necessary problems only 3) Make adjustments for the audience if any 4) Correct any technical difficulties 5) Make sure the actors were comfortable 6) Make sure that we were telling a story 7) Make sure my vision was coming across. My role was to efficiently communicate with the entire collaborative team, control the environment, and address any and all concerns in an appropriate manner.
All the technical elements came together on the same night, which was three days before the performance. So I really had little time to address concerns. One major concern of mine was the lights. If you have a particular eye for something it can be a rude awakening and that’s exactly what it was. When I envisioned the play, I thought it would be pitch black on certain areas of the stage especially since the play is jumping from one story to another. But since the stage was so small, light spilled on other spaces that I didn’t expect it to. However this wasn’t a problem for the light designer, but for the actors and myself. We addressed the problem of the spilled lighting in two different ways. The first way was through continued conversations, in which the actors moved their lips and displayed small movements. This would give the affect that their stories/lives are still going on. But the problem with this was that it was too distracting. The second was that the actors would freeze in action. But I didn’t like this one either. After looking at both it was finalized that the actors would make slight movements to keep the actions going and not move their lips. However, the movements were so slow it was almost as if they were frozen. Early in the rehearsal process, we explored the different levels of movement in time so it was easy to communicate the rate of tempo the characters should move when adjusting to the light spills. For the actors, it helped them to stay focus within their circle(s) of attention while another cottage was in dialogue. As a spectator looking at these pictures created by spilled lighting, I saw more of a distinction between the characters and I never forgot they existed when my attention shifted to other spaces. Also, the spilled lighting now linked the cottages together along with the set design.

In one particular scene, we made a choice to use the lights to share focus between Maggie and Joe and Brian. The scene ends with Maggie’s persuasion of Joe’s health.

JOE: Everything’s all right.

MAGGIE: I knew it. I knew it (18).

In the stage directions Cristofer writes: “They embrace, and move Upstage. Our focus shifts now to the Interview Area. Brian is talking” (18). For this particular scene, the couple embraced until Brian’s third line as we see them walk off romantically in the woods. Since Brian was describing how some people deal with death and that they “don’t want to let go” (18), I wanted his words to reflect on Maggie’s denial, so they shared light focus within that dialogue for a moment. (This was continued throughout many of the scenes.) To add, the timing of the lights became a crucial factor within these modifications because lights helped support the mood of the characters and
progression of all three stories. I say this because at certain points in the play, the lights influenced tempo. My best example is the flashbacks at the end of the play. Here we see recap of the actions in *The Shadow Box* being retold, which highlights some of the important scenes of the story.

The flashbacks take place after the stories’ conclusions. In Chapter 1 I discussed how Cristofer’s characters confront the audience by talking directly to them and making them a part of the dialogue. However, this type of confrontation may make the audience more uncomfortable or be too harsh on the audience especially after the sad endings in the play. Further, I wanted to keep the distance between the audience and the characters. I chose to be a little more creative with the last lines of the play, which were prerecorded in the earlier rehearsals. The actors and I worked together in choosing the right moments to “replay.” We ended up fifteen different moments, five per cottage. We called them ‘moving tableaus’ because we replayed a few seconds of the action and then paused. A regular tableau just shows a visual images building toward the resolution, but I wanted a movie effect. Seeming that Cristofer’s writing style is influenced by film, this was a reflection of his artistic writing style. Also, I felt that it was a strong statement that reflected upon “it doesn’t last forever” (86). Now how did lights influence this tempo?

Each cottage did their first tableaus directly after another, but as the first tableaus began, the light transitions were slower, meaning while one cottage froze, the lights slowly faded away and slowly emerged on the next cottage. However, when we got to the third tableaus, light moved faster in which there was really no fading. For example, when Beverly hugs Brian, the lights stay up on them and then we see Maggie and Joe cuddle. But the lights continue to stay up on both Cottage 1 and 2, and show Agnes embrace Felicity. At this time all three lights are up portraying the families’ affection for one another. And then the light completely shut off on Cottage 1 and 3 (Note: the lights can’t really shut off because of the spilled lighting, but technically the lights were off on these two cottage), and we see Beverly and Mark fighting over the jacket. In the last tableaus, all three cottages moved at the same time and we see the last moments in all three stories: Maggie sits inside the house, Mark kisses Brian on the forehead, and Agnes reading the letter. This was not an easy process. The designers, actors, stage manager, my wonderful advisor, and myself all worked hard and patiently to accomplish this. One thing that made it easier for us was that the actors, stage manager and I worked to
choreograph the blocking in accordance with the recorded lines. A Viewpoints style of choreography, as referred to in Chapter 3, helped the actors to stay consistent with repeating emotions and movements in this sequence. So we knew exactly where each person was and when we wanted the lights to transition the tableaus. However, in the last rehearsals we continued to play with the timing of the lights, so blocking didn’t have to change, but rather be supported by the tempo of the lights.

By the end of the last rehearsal I felt pretty good about the show. The actors were adjusting to tech and making smart decisions. We left the last rehearsal with nothing broken, misplaced, or out of order. There are always several things that can go wrong in a production and we as a collaborative team made sure we were prepared to move on. As a director, it felt good to be surrounded by so many people who gave their all. However I must add, directing does not mean making all the choices. In these last rehearsals, my design team also approached me with concerns such as Beverly throwing jewelry, make-up suggestions, music choices, etc. As a team, we all adapted to each other. During my last directing notes with the technicians, stage-manager, and actors, I slowly evolved into a spectator, and I was looking at my directing choices through a different lens.

Evaluation of Directing Choices

Opening night was the night I could completely evaluate all my work as a director. I could answer the questions: Did I prepare my actors? Did the actors and I fully build the relationships of the characters? Will the actors trust everything I said to them in rehearsal? Will the audience appreciate the performance? I must admit I was a little nervous sitting with the audience surrounding me. As Joe came out on stage, I froze in motion and temperature. I couldn’t remember any director writing or describing the sensation and anxiety of “Opening Night.” At times while you’re sitting there looking at your actors on stage, you have to glance throughout the audience to see a few expressions. I call it the “Bang, Boom, Pow.” You just need three turns in the head to catch a glimpse. I figured three different glances would help me see the audience’s expressions towards different scenes and maybe see if we both have the same reaction(s) or which audience members had the same reactions to each other.

I was very impressed to see how all the actors grew over night. In particular, I was amazed with Beverly, Agnes, and Steve’s performances. They really carried their scenes on stage not because of their commitment to the character but because of their ability to support the other
characters whom they were in dialogue with. Beverly’s relationship to Mark and Brian were very
distinct. Her love for Brian prevailed in each scene as well as her resent for Mark. I believe she
balanced the comedy and serious aspects of her character’s bluntness very well. Beverly is a
complex role for any actor, and I think I chose the best responsible actor for the role. Even
though I spent weeks in rehearsal with actor, Beverly was always fresh, and I enjoyed her in all
the performances. And from my Bang, Boom, Pow method, I could tell the audience enjoyed
Beverly as well.

Another character I enjoyed was Agnes. There was something about Agnes that made me
feel sorry for her. From the actor’s analysis and portrayal of the character, I saw a forty-year-old
child, and it broke my heart. Her performances were consistent just like they were in rehearsals.
But in her performances, I could actually see subtext, which is hard for some young actors to
achieve. In the performances, I felt like Agnes wanted to escape, but then she had nowhere to
escape. Felicity is her only family, and I kind of sympathized with her for writing the letter; it
gave Agnes purpose. Of course my interpretation was different from this whereas I just saw
Agnes as miserable. And maybe even longing for the day she is no longer caregiver. That’s why
it was unique for me to see the actor exert such depth into Agnes and change my perception.

Steve has the least lines in the play, but the actor decided to bring more to the
performance. The actor took guitar lessons for the role. Although the script says that Steve plays
the guitar, I surely wasn’t insistent on finding and actor that could play the guitar. So the actor
learned how to play “Stairway to Heaven,” which was her choice, and I agreed. Because she took
the time to learn the song, she played the guitar for two significant points in the play: building
the last scene in Act I and Maggie’s decision to walk in the door. At the end of Act I, the
dialogue of the cottages goes back and forth amongst each other. (Refer to Chapter 2) The sound
of the live guitar music filled in the empty spaces of dialogue, which were maybe 3-4 seconds,
and made the transitions smoother. The guitar was powerful and it gave the audience a reason to
comeback for Act II.

I enjoyed every moment of the performances, but these three characters stick out to me
because of the actors’ ambition, research, and initiative to give something special to the
performance and audience. I was justified by the actors’ performances that they trusted me and
corrected the minor things that I thought would make the characters look better. For example, at
the end of Act I, Brian and Beverly danced. So I told the actor playing Brian to accidentally step
on Beverly’s foot so they could stop dancing. The continued dancing would be a distraction to the audience and disrespectful to the other cottage in dialogue. However, when Brian stepped on Beverly’s foot, it was funny and it also refined Brian who has “lousy feet” (19). During these performances I realized that I shouldn’t just see if the actors trusted me, but that I had to trust them.

In spite of my personal responses, I must articulate my biggest concern was the audience. All the weeks of rehearsals and research were for them (the audience), whom we (the actors and myself) don’t get a chance to practice with. John Ahart, author of *The Director’s Eye*, asserts:

> Audiences make a difference. They affect the performance in subtle and sometimes not so subtle ways. Differences in the audiences require actor adjustments to compensate if the core of the play is to maintain its impact…but of one thing we can be sure: there is no actor who leaves the stage oblivious to the audience if it is unresponsive. A comedy without laughter, a serious play with restless coughing, a near empty house with few signs of life and work of weeks is lost. The good director will help his [or her] cast learn to handle the integration of performer and viewer in the total experience (322-23).

In response to this quote, the audience does indeed affect the actors during the performances or maybe I was the most affected. There were jokes being missed, there was pain being joked about, and there was laughter to get over pain. Or maybe what I thought was funny and serious were the opposite for other people and maybe they just didn’t get it. It’s not enough to assume that the characters in the play are the only complex personalities in the theatre because each audience member brings his or her character(s) as well. By this statement, I suggest that audiences sometimes try to block their true emotional facades because of the powerful connections they might make with the characters on stage because of fear or maybe guilt. To be honest, I just wanted the audience to connect with the characters. Maybe jokes Beverly made about death aren’t funny to those who may feel guilty or embarrassed. They were funny to the actors and me. This is not say that many people didn’t laugh because they did. It’s that we all deal with laughter differently.

However, as I felt the audience try so hard to avoid tears during Joe’s memorable lines “I’m going to die Maggie,” many of them had to release and undergo the characters’ inner texts as they connect to Maggie’s觉醒 denial or Agnes’ continuous depression of lies. It was through Joe and Maggie’s dialogue when the audience couldn’t fight the reality of losing a love
one and the importance of family. A gradual range of sighs and sniffs could be heard throughout the theatre; and so often a person would try to sneak their fingertips to the corner of their eyelids to wipe human’s natural rain before it ran down their cheek. It was this moment when I heard a profound melody—a shared bond—in a place where performance prevails...honesty.

**Audience Response and Conclusion**

**Audience Response**

The audience responses I received were from students, who never read *The Shadow Box* before, an ACTF respondent, and group of English students, who studied and read the script of *The Shadow Box*. After the production I received many verbal comments about the use of space and the talented actors. Many thought an intimate space aided in the play’s message and they also loved the actors’ movements within the space. I agree that the thrust stage supported the actions of *The Shadow Box* and carried the audience through the characters’ journeys more effectively. Sonja Kuftinec’s discusses how the shared space between the performers and the audience is an inner text: “The physical space of a performance can also be read as a double-voiced manner, contributing to the sense that the community has a stake in the artistic product, as well as recontextualizing the familiar. In some instances, the memories associated with a site can add to the emotional resonance of a piece” (78). Kuftinec adds that this aesthetic design reminds the audience of their ownership to space. Several students also wrote comments about the space and play’s context.

These students explained that the play was more “intimate” because of the thrust theatre and that they “felt a part of each family.” One student was “impressed” by watching other students be so “serious,” and another said that *The Shadow Box* is “a play for the audience’s benefit.” I was exceptionally proud to hear these comments from this audience who “prefers” comedic plays. This production risked not being liked for its seriousness in front of a student audience such as Miami. It was a great experience to travel with the audience through the performance. From the students’ comments, I distinguished the two acts according to emotions. Act I was hilarious to the audience because they adored the characters and the drama! This is why the emotions of the audience became so strong by the end of Act II. Act II introduced secrets, pain, and sympathy and the audience didn’t want anyone to die. Student exclaimed they were on an “emotional rollercoaster” and “mentally exhausted.” I was intrigued by these responses for their honesty and thankful to even hear them.
During the final performance, an ACTF (American College Theatre Festival) adjudicator, Tony Horne, was invited to critique the production. Horne expressed that before he arrived, he couldn’t understand why we were doing a show that called for such age range and a play that was thirty years old, which reminded me of the 1994 critique by Canby, who argued “The Shadow Box is not of this time”. Fortunately after seeing The Shadow Box, Horne thought we took on the challenge very well. Then he was interested in my reason for doing the show. He was very pleased with that answer and wanted to discuss the actors’ process into their characters and their relationships to one another. One thing he said to me that stuck out was Joe’s physicality. Horne felt that Joe built a wall with his body as a way to stay strong for his family and that Maggie kept picking at the wall until he broke down. I thought that was a great metaphorical analysis especially since I thought Joe was too stiff at times. He also asked why I chose two interviewers. I carefully explained that I looked closely at the dialogues between Interviewer and patient and I couldn’t picture a male in all the interview scenes. For example, I couldn’t imagine a male having such an intimate conversation with Agnes about her mother, so I chose a female for that scene. Secondly, I was asked why I chose to use both Interviewers with Felicity. This was because she can be very bitter and rude and I felt it would take more than one to talk to her. Also, Felicity comments, “He doesn’t like me to say things like that. He’s sensitive,” gave purpose for the Female Interviewer to talk. This emphasized that the male was a little aggravated with Felicity’s coldness as she describes his “piss poor attitude”. To add, the respondent thought the interviews were prerecorded because they were timed correctly. But they were live. This justified the ensemble work I discussed in Chapter 3 between the Interviewers and patients, which added to the authenticity of dialogue.

One of the problems mentioned by Horne was the bench’s location in Cottage 1 because he couldn’t see the characters’ faces from a certain side of the audience. The bench was located downstage right. When Horne made this comment he seated stage left. There was a time that every side of the audience received more attention than others, but in my eyes, this reassured the affect that we were looking in on lives rather lives positioning themselves for an audience. He stated, “I also liked it [the bench’s position] because it put distance between Maggie and the door and she had somewhere to go.” Also, he would have liked the living room to be bigger because of the action taking place within it. However, the living could not be bigger because of the wheelchair ramp that provided easy transitions into the kitchen. Lastly Horne expressed that he
liked my interpretation of the play’s “coda,” which is a term Cristofer uses to describe the position of the characters “facing the audience as if they speaking to the interviewer” (84). Referring to my moving tableaus, Horne explains as “a cinematic montage” was a “bold” decision that was “successful in the thrust configuration.”

On another occasion, in an English class talkback, the students also admired the tableaus. The English students are different from the student I discussed before, because they studied the play before the performances. The English students informed me that they had problems deciphering how the show should end. They didn’t like the script’s ending, and thought it was “cheesy” and “boring.” So they were excited to see the flashbacks, thought it worked well, and never imagined that I would do that. Further in our session, these students brought up some interesting questions and concerns about my directing choices. One student wanted to know which actor I had to work with the most. It was a pretty hard question because this is an ensemble play. I answered, “Mark, Joe, Brian, Beverly, Felicity, and Maggie. I did more work with Brian outside of rehearsal. I had to balance my rehearsals to work with everyone and later in the process I focused on relationships.” Another question was, Did Maggie really slap Steve and how do actors feel about situations like that? I wanted to make it clear that any type of touching is always made upon agreement between the actors and myself. In this situation, Steve clearly stated to Maggie to “slap Steve and she can take it.” Even though Maggie slapped Steve, the actors practiced so the audience would have the affect of the noise, but also so the actors wouldn’t hurt one another. I next had to give my rationale for cross-gender casting. I surely wouldn’t have mind choosing a boy for Steve, but I needed energy and a committed actor who would work hard, and I knew I would get this from this actor, which proved true when she learned how to play the guitar in three weeks. Another thing I wanted was a family look and a range of height. I definitely wanted Steve shorter than Maggie with a young voice.

When we discussed the characters, I was surprised with a couple of things from the students. For example half of the class blamed Agnes for lying to her mother and felt that she was the antagonist. I felt the same way…at first, but Agnes really doesn’t have a choice. Agnes says, “It [knowing Claire is coming] makes her happy.” Certainly we can’t blame her for this because her mother will be heartbroken. And when Felicity dies she will see Claire. Another thing was that students found it difficult to dislike Felicity. They feel that she is not to blame for making Agnes miserable; it’s Agnes’ fault. Lastly a shocking protagonist was revealed: Beverly. The students
felt as if Beverly made Mark and Brian have a happy ending. They suggested that Beverly is the person that both men talk to and share their stories with, which I thought was a very interesting perception. If I were to insist this, I certainly would first have to say that Beverly evolved into a protagonist because she didn’t start off as one. Being in this class and listening to these students was a special moment for me because it gave me more to think about in my original analysis of the script.

I left the class thinking about Felicity’s, Agnes’, and Beverly’s role in *The Shadow Box*. I started to think why all the cottages have a happy ending and Cottage 3 doesn’t. That’s when it made more sense to me that maybe this is a happy ending because Felicity’s waiting for Claire and Agnes is really not alone. So in a way they are both holding on to something rather someone when it hurts. And I couldn’t blame either one of them, but I understood them more after talking with these students. When I thought about Beverly as a protagonist, I began to see her more as a symbol of life. She celebrates, jokes about death, and really ‘lives it up.’ And the fact that Brian, who I thought to be the protagonist, says, “I never understood it [your foolishness],” meaning he never knew why Beverly celebrated all the time until he was diagnosed. Therefore, when trying to answer the question of protagonist, I believe Cristofer is suggesting that we are our protagonist and antagonist, which is more rational to me, now.

These comments, especially this English class, made me realize a director never finishes learning about a play in the last days of rehearsal. It is carried throughout the performances alongside the audience’s reactions. “Dialogue aims for a greater understanding of others’ viewpoints through empathy. In dialogue, multiple perspectives are invited to the table and people are encouraged to voice them” (Assaf). Because of production of *The Shadow Box*, I was able communicate and receive feedback from a group of people, whom I would have never met without bringing up the issue of living with dying and using art as way to invite them into the discourse. My dialogue with these people gave me a greater understanding of the characters in *The Shadow Box*, and I identify with them differently now.

**Conclusion**

Balancing roles is about making smart decisions. My dramaturgical work allowed me to understand the contexts, themes, perceptions of living with dying and *The Shadow Box*. Some people will remain stubborn about the issue and others will take positive messages from the characters such as the value of family and friends. It was through my dramaturgy I developed
questions to solve through my directing choices. And as I directed *The Shadow Box*, I questioned myself if this is appropriate for the audience. I had to figure out what could get my attention as a spectator or teach me as a student. And my answer to that as a director was to be inclusive of everyone’s opinions, make them feel comfortable, allow them ask questions, and provide resources for more information. And I believe I accomplished that through my design, lobby, and community talkbacks with hospice and students.

As a director, I have learned that research serves as the primary denominator for any successful production. Since this was my first production with a budget and design team, I have discovered the depth of a director’s responsibilities to each individual throughout the process. It takes careful planning, constant communication, quick problem solving, and a great abundance of trust. There were so many things that could have gone wrong in this production, but my ability to listen and not assume I know everything played to my advantage. Whenever I had a problem or just wanted advice, my collaborative team helped me solve the problem(s) efficiently. It seems as if it were yesterday that we had our first production meeting, and we were sharing our opinions and questions about the production of *The Shadow Box*.

Through this process, I’ve discovered that I am willing to take chances as a person and as a director. I recall the night I was casting the show. I saw so much potential in ten wonderful actors. I never stopped believing in them; and I know they felt the same towards me. Right now I can hear all the laughs we shared on the very first rehearsal as we were preparing to spend the next five weeks learning from each other. The main thing I adapted from my cast was humor. It was okay to laugh at mistakes or even Felicity’s “bitchiness” or Maggie’s ham. But as much as we laughed, we also cried; the characters were very dear and near to us. These characters will forever remain a part of my life because of their human characteristics and ability to grow in a positive manner. If I ever have the opportunity to work with these actors again, I will take advantage of it.

*The Shadow Box* was the first of many community projects for me. As a young director *The Shadow Box* has been a learning and growing experience. This play has enhanced the ways I view space and proximity. Close spaces are intimate and inviting. If I had the opportunity to direct *The Shadow Box* again, I will further develop ways to discuss issues of living with dying and hospice. Since *The Shadow Box* was the first of many community theatre projects for me, I didn’t expect it to be perfect because I wouldn’t have learned from mistakes.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


---, *The Shadow Box*. New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1977


APPENDIX I: PROGRAM GUIDE

The Shadow Box

By Michael Cristofer
Directed by Blanca Siplin

8:00 p.m. October 25–28, 2006
2:00 pm. October 28 & 29, 2006
Studio 88 Theatre
2006-07 MU Theatre Season

MAIN STAGE

Gates-Abeglen Theatre

Built on the model of a small regional theatre, the mainstage is the place our students are mentored by faculty or guest directors and designers.

Rhinoceros
By Eugene Ionesco. Translated by Derek Prouse
Directed by William Doan
October 4-7, 2006 at 8:00 pm
October 8 at 2:00 pm

All’s Well That Ends Well
8th Annual John D. Yeck Production
By William Shakespeare
Directed by Roger Bechtel
November 16-18, Nov. 30-Dec. 2, 2006 at 8:00 pm
December 3 at 2:00 pm

Candide
Music by Leonard Bernstein
Book by Hugh Wheeler adapted from Voltaire
Lyrics by Richard Wilbur, John Latouche and Stephen Sondheim
Directed by Gion DeFrancesco
Musical direction by Ben Smoulder
A production of the Departments of Theatre and Music
April 5-7, 12-14, 2007 at 8:00 pm
April 15 at 2:00 pm

SECONDSTAGE – Studio 88

Built on the model of a storefront theatre, the secondstage is run with limited budgets, allowing beginning student directors and designers to keep focus on the text and performers.

The Shadow Box
By Michael Cristofer
Directed by Blanca Siplin
October 25-28, 2006 at 8:00 pm
October 28 & 29 at 2:00 pm

The Conversion of Ka’ahumanu
By Victoria Nalani Kneubuhler
Directed by Ann Elizabeth Armstrong
February 21-24, 2007 at 8:00 pm
February 24 & 25 at 2:00 pm
Miami University Department of Theatre presents

The Shadow Box
By Michael Cristofer

Blanca Siplin, Director
advised by Anne Elizabeth Armstrong

Tya Dawson, Scenic Designer
advised by Glon DeFrancesco

Jessica Basista, Costume Designer
advised by Lin Conaway

Jay S. Rozema, Lighting and Sound Designer

Daniella Briseno, Makeup Designer

Sheree Campbell, Production Dramaturg

Produced by special arrangement with Samuel French, Inc.

ARTS Department of Theatre
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THEATRE ETIQUETTE

- Please turn off all cell phones and pagers.
- The taking of photographs or use of recording devices is strictly prohibited.
- If you have candy to unwrap, kindly do so before the show begins.
- Please note the closest exit in case of an emergency.
- Smoking is not permitted in the Center for Performing Arts.
- Please discard all food and drinks before entering the theatre.
- As a courtesy to the audience and performers, latecomers will not be seated until an appropriate break in the performance.

COMING SOON!
All's Well That Ends Well

Thursday, November 16 – Saturday, November 18
Thursday, November 30 – Sunday, December 3

8th Annual John D. Yeck Production
By William Shakespeare
Directed by Roger Bechtel
November 16–18, Nov. 30-Dec. 2, 8:00 pm
December 3, 2:00 pm
Gates-Abegglen Theatre
$9 Public, $8 Seniors, $6 Student/Youth

In this bittersweet comedy, Shakespeare explores love and war, and love as war, and leaves us wondering if a good end can really rectify a bad beginning.
CAST OF CHARACTERS

Cottage 1
Joe ................................................. Jason Howard
Maggie............................................ Wendy Jobes
Steve............................................. Daniella Briseño

Cottage 2
Brian .............................................. Jake Carr
Mark.............................................. Derek Thomas
Beverly.......................................... Kat Paddock

Cottage 3
Felicity........................................... Annie Perry
Agnes............................................. Courtney Maistros

Female Interviewer ............. Shreee Campbell
Male Interviewer ................... Jeff Leshansky

SYNOPSIS

The Shadow Box takes place in 1975 right after the first hospice in America was established. The three patients Brian, Joe, and Felicity have been moved into separate cottages because the hospital facility can't care for them. Although these patients are terminally ill, they and their families are struggling to overcome the hardships of bargaining and accepting life's somewhat rejuvenating obstacles.

In Cottage One, Joe wants to cherish his time with his family in the most peaceful and fulfilled way that he can; but he has trouble making his wife, Maggie, understand that he is dying. In Cottage Two, Brian believes everyone will die someday. He states, "Well, the trouble is that most of us spend our entire lives trying to forget that we're going to die." However, Brian's fear is not death but the last moment of life—the unknown. In Cottage Three, Felicity is very ill and at times bitter. She holds on to life in hopes of seeing her daughter, Claire; but at the same time she is ungrateful to her daughter Agnes, who is her caregiver. The Shadow Box expresses that the psychology of terminal illness affects both the patient and the family.
DIRECTOR’S NOTES
by Bianca Siplin

The box shown at right portrays depth, dimension, and levels of emotions - mentally, physically, and spiritually - and creates shadows. The drawing symbolically represents the themes, ideas, and actions I see in each cottage - the places where the terminally ill patients in the play go to live with dying.

The first symbol—a circle—reflects Cottage 1. I chose a circle because the family has a hard time acknowledging the truth and they mentally go through circles to escape their problems although they end up back where they started. Looking at the drawing you see the large circle outlines the inside of the box, which also represents my spatial choice: Cottage 1’s actions take place around the other cottages. Cottage 2 is the shape of a triangle because Mark and Beverly have a common interest—Brian. (One point of a triangle always has the focus of two other points.) In Cottage 3, I chose the physical aspect of a cylinder. In the drawing, this is presented by the two vertical and horizontal pairs of circles. A cylinder represents the third symbol because the two circles—Agnes and Felicity are separated by a life field—Claire. The cylinder can also be referred to as a treadmill because Agnes does the same routine at modified levels: slow, medium, fast.

My shadow box is a place of love, hope, fear, and support. It's everything about life. The shadow [death] just makes us realize how precious life is once the two are boxed together. Lastly, the center of the box is a place of acceptance where all is one unit of care.

In 1963, Dr. Elizabeth Kübler-Ross and a few of her students conducted research about terminally ill patients to try to understand attitudes towards death. Studying various age groups, the Kübler-Ross study was able to identify five reactions to (stages of) death: Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance. She explained that denial is a common reaction because patients don’t want to believe it. She quotes, “Most reacted to the awareness of a terminal illness at first with the statement, ‘No, not me, it cannot be true.’” Anger is the second stage. Patients get furious at their families and/or their caregivers because they want to blame somebody. The third stage, bargaining, is the patient’s way of amending his or her situation whether negotiating things differently to God or trying to change the past because they regret certain events. Depression, the forth stage, is often referred to patients who give up on life and let the disease take over. The final stage is acceptance. This is when the patient acknowledges that he or she is dying and they are comfortable with its terms. Sometimes a patient goes through all stages; sometimes a patient skips stages; and sometimes a patient just stays in denial or anger. In contrast to Kübler-Ross’ research, The Shadow Box shares that these are also stages the family goes through and that the family and the patient are usually at different stages during the time of diagnosis.
In my process of directing The Shadow Box, I wanted to reflect on hospice from the past to the present. To do this, my production team and I created two distinct worlds, one of the past (the theatre) and one of the present (the lobby). This was accomplished by contrast of style, color, and music. The lobby’s goal is to welcome the audience and to prepare them for the show, but at the same time create a neutral environment for entering into themes about life and death.

With that said, one of my goals for The Shadow Box is to engage the audience in the discussion of end-of-life care. What is care? Care is one of the most valuable and important aspects of life that one human being can give to another. It consists of family, love, and support—something we all need especially when the doctor says, “You have six months left to live.” Normally we get angry and only think about dying—the one natural thing that can’t be avoided. And yet we can’t talk about it. So tonight I want to talk about it and place all our emotions, fears, and joys in one space. I believe the last six months should be a continuation of celebrating... life!

“We are able to read the great plays of the past because we can relate to the human experience dramatized therein; and we continue to stage these plays because the dramatists, with their extraordinary sense of the dramatic, their ability to portray character and action, and their transcendentally brilliant theatrical language, have created scripts that can still be made to speak to audiences, despite their unfamiliar cultural signals, despite their antiquated theatrical conventions, and despite problems of translation from foreign or antiquated languages.” —Cary M. Mazer

“Those who learned to know death, rather than fear fight it, become our teacher about life.”
—Elisabeth Kübler-Ross

Bianca Siplin is a second year graduate student in Theatre at Miami University. She is a talented actor and director with aspirations of owning her own theatre company. Bianca has directed other productions such as Bik Love Song #1 by Kalamu ya Salaam. Moon’s Kid Don’t Cry, and Mixed Babies. Upon graduation, Bianca seeks more training and experience at a professional theatre company. Above all, she thanks God for guiding her in the right direction, her production team and cast for their commitment, and her family and boyfriend for their support.
Living with Dying: The Shadow Box and Hospice

For the longest time doctors had viewed dying patients as medical failures. Nurses would respond more slowly to them and society wanted nothing to do with them. These people were no longer considered people but as already dead and worthless objects. Luckily, Hospice and Hospice care came along and changed the way our society views death and the dying process. "Death is no longer a wholly taboo subject, banished from ordinary discourse, served up only as a bland and neutered event on TV crime shows and in brutal films about war. Death, in fact, has very nearly stopped being pornographic." Death used to be very much an unmentionable horror and a dark secret that everyone knew existed but no one wanted to confront. As a result, it was as Stoddard had deemed: pornographic. It is a wonderful advancement that has been made, through Hospice, to change the status of death from something wholly unacceptable to what it is: an acceptable and natural part of life.

In today's world with the baby boomer generation aging and some of them entering the last years of their lives, it has finally been realized that you are really living all the way until you die. Just because someone is aware of the fact that they are entering their last days—that they are incapable of caring for themselves or struggling with being pronounced terminal—does not mean that these people are no longer living.

"Brian. They tell you you're dying, and you say all right. But if I am dying... I must still be alive."

It is this line from Michael Cristofer's The Shadow Box that reverberated off of the walls in my mind since the very first time I read this play. All of the characters in the play are living, and perhaps more importantly, they are living with dying. Hospices exist specifically to help those confronting the end of their lives and also to help their families get through the process of dying as well as the process of bereavement that follows it. "You matter because you are you. You matter to the last moment of your life, and we will do all we can not only to help you die peacefully, but also to live until you die." —Dame Cicely Saunders

While watching this play, the audience is shown how each one of the characters is struggling to live until they die. Many of them are going through one of the five stages of death and dying as identified by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Maggie is very much in denial regarding Joe's death; Brian is struggling with depression due to not being able to care for himself and having to rely on Mark; and finally, Felicity is an angry woman who is bargaining and waiting for a long lost Claire.

The characters are also dealing with how the process of living with dying changes the roles they play in their families. Brian can no longer dance with Beverly or has no control over his bladder. Mark has had to face something that is not altogether lovely and had all of a sudden become responsible for an individual he loves and that needs him. Felicity must be taken care of by her daughter, Agnes and is almost childish in her pleas for tea, in her stubbornness with the interviewer, and in her innocent confusion that is due to her dementia. On the other hand, Agnes as caregiver has very much become the parent consumed by her child's life. Maggie and Joe struggle over who
must support whom. Maggie wants Joe to come home and for everything to be normal. However, what Joe needs is for Maggie to step into a primary support role by accepting that he is dying and therefore not let him “do it alone.”

Hospice makes sure that all of those living with dying, whether they are the patient, caregiver, or another family member, do not have to go through it alone. They offer their staff and services specifically so that people like the characters in The Shadow Box can truly live until they die as a fully respected and living human being. “Here I am treated as a person. I have a sense of my dignity. Well, I don’t mean that, it sounds so proud, but here I am simply myself, and no one minds.”

2 Stoddard (109)
3 Stoddard (109)

SCENIC DESIGN
by Tya Dawson

The Shadow Box design emerged from researching 1970s modern art. Nature, light, and shadow were essential to art and design at the time. Incorporating these features was crucial to the overall concept of the play: “bringing the outside in.” From this the following ideas for the set evolved.

The set is composed of three sections (Cabin 1-3), but is made to resemble one complete and seamless cabin that accommodates all of the characters and their stories. There are no structural divisions between the rooms, except for the exterior door, which is accessible by everyone. The first cabin is actually played outside, but it also a part of the whole and never an alienated space. Thus, it is located around the interior rooms (kitchen and living room). The living room is the second cabin and the kitchen is the third.

Again, the door is a special area because it is the one structure that the characters will be able to move through. In a sense, they are bringing the outside in by crossing paths and entering into each other spaces. That way, the audience will be able to see that the characters’ lives never cease. The other wall structures, such as the kitchen wall, suggest full rooms, and ultimately a complete cabin with constructed walls. However, the choice to use partial walls came from the desire to let shadow and light fill in the rest of the space to make it complete. From there, nature will run its course and the characters’ stories will be told.
The Shadow Box is more about celebrating life than about death. Unfortunately the three sick patients are all in secluded cottages because their time left is short. Therefore, I started looking at floral paintings by Georgia O’Keefe. Because just like a flower the three patients have a limited time on earth, but during that time on earth they flourish. I then stumbled on a painting O’Keefe painted after her nervous breakdown (Ram’s Head, White Hollyhock) which at first glance one would associate with death since it’s a skull in the desert. In actuality this painting symbolizes O’Keefe’s “resurrection” as an artist. Like O’Keefe, each character goes through their own rebirth. Because of their similar situations, each character is forced to live in their secluded desert cottages until their loved one passes. Thus, my design intends to cloak each characters pain in the beauty of a desert flower. I chose different flowers and plants from the desert that represent each character through line, texture, and shapes created in the flowers. I intend each characters flower to be represented in the costumes by using the earthy palette in O’Keefe’s painting and by using aspects of their flowers. For instance, Beverly’s dress intends to mimic the rounded shape of the Barrel cactus while her spotted raincoat intends to express the cacti’s needles. I hope you are able to see each character bloom on stage.
WHO’S WHO IN THE COMPANY

Ann Elizabeth Armstrong (Directing Advisor) is Assistant Professor in the Department of Theatre where she teaches directing and theatre history and criticism. Dr. Armstrong's areas of specialization include community-based theatre, feminist theatre, and Asian theatre. She holds both an M.E.A. and a Ph. D. from the University of Hawai‘i. In addition to directing plays such as J. B. (MU Theatre 2002) and Pentecost (MU Theatre 2005), she has created original performance scripts with various professional theatre companies. Dr. Armstrong is co-director of the "Finding Freedom Summer Project," a campus-wide interdisciplinary project that will culminate in a new play about Freedom Summer 1964, and she is faculty advisor for the Walking Theatre Project. Her forthcoming book is Radical Acts: Encounters between Feminism, Theatre and Teaching, published by Aunt Lute Books (San Francisco, CA).

Jessica Basista (Costume Designer) is a senior theatre major who is pursuing costume design in graduate school. She would like to go to graduate school in London where she had an internship this past summer, but alas knows Boston or Tucson would be more reasonable. Jessica has also been fortunate enough to design two shows for hair and make up (The Genesis Project and Hair) and has taken advantage of the theatre design courses, thus she is ecstatic to have her costume designs realized with this production. Jessica would like to thank her family for being supportive and loving for all her ventures, Bianca and the cast for being great to work with, most importantly Lin and Meggan for helping her through the design process, and of course her phenomenal friends Amber, Marguerite, Kelly, and Erin who rock.

Daniella Brusino (Stage) - This is Daniella's debut in a Miami University stage and she is very excited to have this opportunity. She has previously appeared in roles such as Dorothy in The Wizard of Oz and Ahgel Williams in The Crucible. She would like to take this time to thank her family and friends for their love and support specifically Ian for acting as chauffeur, chef, and best friend, her mom for always telling her to follow her heart, her Dad for never missing a show, or anything for that matter, and Ash for always knowing when to call and tell her the misses her. This, like always, is for you.

Shiree Campbell (Interviewer) - Shiree is a junior Theatre Major and Interdisciplinary Studies Minor from Newark, OH. Here at Miami, she has been in Scapin (Messenger) and How I Learned to Drive (Chorus), and has been working in the costume shop, and as a house manager for the theatre department too. Shiree would like to thank her amazing roomie, razz-your-boxer neighbors, other friends, family (especially her mother with acquiring research information on Hospice), and not to sound cheesy but instead most sincerely, God for allowing her to not only be the dramaturge but a voice in a show that deals with such a very important part of living life.

Jake Carr (Bison) - Jake Carr is a sophomore Psychology major and theatre minor. This is his second appearance on the Miami stage, with the first being a Drug Addict in last years production of The Good Person of Szechuan. He is honored to be in this thought provoking play, working along side such a talented cast and crew. He hopes that everyone can walk away from this play with a greater appreciation for the little moments that make life worth living and the time that all everyone reading this is lucky enough to have left. He dedicates this performance to his amazing parents who have never stopped believing in him, even though there have been many speed bumps along the way. Enjoy!
Lin Conaway (Costume Designer Advisor) - is a faculty member at Miami who specializes in costume design and movement for the actor. She is a member of United Scenic Artists and the United States Institute for Theatre Technology. She is a charter member of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE) on which board of governors she served as chair of the Theatre Movement Program. She has been chair of the Association of Theatre Movement Professionals and has served as conference planner and editor for this group both for the University/College Theatre Association and ATHE. She is a former regional chair and member of the national committee for the Kennedy Center/AMCTF Festival (KCACTF) and served as a member of a National Selection Team for the National KCACTF Festival in Washington, D.C. Lin served on the Executive Committee of KCACTF Region III for more than a decade. Lin was honored for outstanding contribution to theatre education as a recipient of the Kennedy Center Gold Medalist. Currently she is the Regional Representative to the National Partners of the American Theatre (NAPAT). Lin was instrumental in establishing the award for designers including a residency at the Korean National University of the Arts (KNUA) sponsored by KNUA and NAPAT.

Tya Sharel Dawson (Scene Design) - is a senior English Literature major with a minor in Theatre. Tya has been performing and building sets for Miami's Theatre Department since 2004. She was last seen in The Vagin Monologues as the Googie Snatcher. The Shadow Box is her first set design to be built and her last project with the department before she graduates in December. She would like to thank the Theatre Department for allowing her to realize her dream.

Gion DeFrancesco (Scene Designer Advisor) - joined the faculty of Miami University in the fall of 2001 and teaches courses in scene design, design communication skills, scenic painting and American musical theatre. He also designs scenery and serves as scenic change artist for Mill Theatre productions. Favorite designs at Miami include Pentecost, In Quest of Love, As Bees In Honey Dew, A View From the Bridge, and The Good Person of Szechuan. Regionally he has designed and painted at a number of theatres including Big River at the Gallery Players of Brooklyn, I Love You! You're Perfect! Now Change! at the Florida Repertory Theatre, and The Magic Flute at the Illinois Opera Theatre. His 2006 design for Ovation Theatre's production of The Little Foxes earned a Cincinnati Enquirer Acclaim Award.

Taylor Fenderosch (Associate Stage Manager) - Taylor Fenderosch is a sophomore here at Miami, majoring in English Literature with a minor in Theatre. She has worked on Stage Left's The Rocky Horror Show and You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown, but this is her first experience with Miami's theatre department. She is very excited to be ASLing Shadowbox and wants to congratulate both the cast and crew for making it such an amazing production.

Jason Howard (Stage Manager) - Jason Howard is a student at Miami University, majoring in business. He has just recently joined the theatre department. He has been in plays such as Our Town, You Can't Take it With You, and The Disappearance of Elizabeth Mutcherson. He would like to thank Bianca for all her support.

Wendy Jobes (Maggie) - Wendy Jobes is a freshman Theatre major. She is a graduate of Newark High School where she was extensively involved in the Drama department and other various academic and social groups. She is also a four year member of the All-Ohio Youth Choir, and has actively participated at Thistledown Young Actors' Theatre for nine years. Some highlights of her acting career have included: Season of (Ophelia), Ransom (Chet), Arsenic and Old Lace (Abby), Cinderella (Fairy Godmother), and Don't Drink the Water (Susan) at Newark High School, and Fallen Angels (Jane) at The Ohio State University. Wendy is excited to be making her debut on the Miami University stage.

James Lees (Stage Manager) - James Lees is a sophomore here at Miami University and is currently undecided in his major. Although he plans to switch to a theatre and history double major. Having ASMed How I Learned to Drive last year, he is thrilled to finally be taking the reins as Stage Manager. He hopes that everyone comes away with a better appreciation of life after having
watched this play. He would like to thank the cost, crew, and all involved in this production for making this show a great success, and his friends and family for putting up with his disappearance during the production. Enjoy the show.

Jeffrey Leshansky (Interviewer) - Jeffrey Leshansky is currently a sophomore theatre and biochemistry double-major, and is thrilled to be apart of this production. Previously at Miami, Jeff was seen as Rodolpho in Arthur Miller's A View From the Bridge, and in Arthur Miller’s Death of a Salesman, in the tri-state area, and will be going to Taiwan with Miami Theatre Department's Freil's Children Theatre Troupe. This summer Jeff was also seen in Teatro Marino’s Orlando in Love - an adaptation of a series of Italian epic poems - in Central Park. Most importantly, Jeff would like to thank Bianca and the cast and crew for a job well done!

Courtney Maistros (Apert) - Courtney is a junior Theatre major. She would really like to thank everyone for this wonderful opportunity. Her friends and family have been so supportive, and she can’t tell them enough. To all those that worked on the production, and to those who have been supportive throughout … thanks. Enjoy the show.

Kat Paddock (Beaty) - Kat is thrilled to be finally playing a woman again! A senior theatre major from California, Kat is excited to be getting back to those Golden Hills!!! However, she will not forget the inedible experience she has had at Miami University. She would like to thank Bianca for seeing her feminine side, her WTP family for their passion and friendship, her Subtle Sister for her rapping/ballet talents, Berthe for the gilgles, LJ (and Pepsi Jazz) for being part of her past, present, and future, Leininger for the years of laughter and tears, the musical styling of Arl Elflanke, her “oomie” Juju for those late night phone calls, back breaking dance moves and the “graveyard adventures”, big brother Brian/ Luke Skywalker for his support, and her brother and father for their incredible love, support and endless supply of soy milk. She would like to dedicate her performance to her life-partner, Weebie. Meow.

Annie Perry (Felicity) - Annie is ecstatic to be making her first appearance in Studio 88. A senior Theatre Major from Knoxville, Tennessee she was one of the co-collaborators for Walk with me: Finding Freedom Summer and most recently she appeared as Allie in Arthur Miller’s A View From the Bridge. Past performance credits include Birds, The Devils, Fagin, and Pentecost. She would like to thank Bianca Spinbin, James Lees, fellow cast mates, and the production crew for a wonderful experience. She would also like to thank her family and friends for their constant love and support. This performance is dedicated to her parents, Bill and Julie Perry, Kelly Andrew, and her Grandma Perry – they have taught her more about living life than she ever could have asked for.

Jay S. Rozema (Lighting and Sound Design) is the resident Lighting and Sound Designer and Assistant Professor for the Department of Theatre at Miami. He holds a Masters of Fine Arts degree in lighting design from The Florida State University School of Theatre and a BFA from the University of Arizona. Jay has designed and worked for numerous regional theatres, performing arts centers, and summer stock companies. As a member of the United States Institute for Theatre Technology Jay frequently presents at the annual conference and leads the institute’s Creative Teaching on the Web, an online jury publication. Jay is also active on campus as a member of University Senate and Student Affairs Council.

Derek Thomas, Jr. (Mark) - Derek Thomas, Jr., who is playing Mark, is a senior here at Miami University. This is his fourth Miami production and this is what he had to say, "I just want to thank Jesus my Lord and Savior for this opportunity, and thanks to Bianca for giving me a chance to showcase this talent called acting." All joking aside, Derek thanks the entire theatre department, from the faculty to the students, for being very welcoming and accepting him into the theater program. It has definitely been a great experience and I wouldn’t trade it for anything. Kat, Justin, Tim, Annie, Hodge, Courtney, Shiree, Derek, Liz, Dr. Jackson, Dr. Doan, Steve Pana, Gior, and all those I didn’t have room to mention I love you all and I’ll miss you after December 15th!" Thanks for coming to the show and enjoy.
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The Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival—XXXIX

sponsored in part by

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The National Committee for the Performing Arts
and Dr. and Mrs. Gerald McNichols

This production is entered in the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival (KCACTF). The aims of this national theater education program are to identify and promote quality in college-level theater production. To this end, each production entered is eligible for a response by a regional KCACTF representative, and selected students and faculty are invited to participate in KCACTF programs involving scholarships, internships, grants and awards for actors, directors, dramaturgs, playwrights, designers, stage managers and critics at both the regional and national levels.

Productions entered on the Participating level are eligible for inclusion at the KCACTF regional festival and can also be considered for invitation to the KCACTF national festival at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC in the spring of 2007.

Last year more than 1,300 productions were entered in the KCACTF involving more than 200,000 students nationwide. By entering this production, our theater department is sharing in the KCACTF goals to recognize, reward, and celebrate the exemplary work produced in college and university theaters across the nation.
Woven Harmony
Robert Bluestone, guitar
Rebecca Bluestone, fiber artist
Friday, November 17
7:30 pm, Hall Auditorium
$12 Public, $11 Seniors, $6 Student/Youth
Sponsored by the White Garden Inn
Experience the Bluestone's unique and fascinating harmony of their collective works of classical guitar and fiber.

Ricky Skaggs Family Christmas
Featuring Ricky Skaggs & The Whites
Friday, December 1
7:30 pm, Millett Hall
$30 Public, $29 Seniors, $15 Student/Youth
Sponsored by Americast Inn & Suites
Celebrate the holidays with this ten-time Grammy winner in an evening of Christmas favorites.

Robin Hood
Missoula Children's Theatre
Saturday, December 9
2:30 & 7:30 pm
Talawanda High School Auditoria
$6 Public, $5 Seniors, $3 Student/Youth
Sponsored by the Talawanda Miami Partnership
Watch the children of our community perform in this classic production.

Department of Theatre
All's Well That Ends Well
8th Annual John D. Yeck Production
By William Shakespeare
Directed by Roger Bechtel
November 16-18
November 30-December 2, 8:00 pm
December 3, 2:00 pm
Gates-Abeglen Theatre
$9 Public, $8 Seniors, $6 Student/Youth
In this bitter-wit comedy, Shakespeare explores love and war, and love as war, and loves us wondering if a good end can really rectify a bad beginning.

Miami University Art Museum
Art Explorers
Thursday, October 26
10:00 am, MU Art Museum
Free and open to the public
Co-sponsored by the Lane Public Libraries Children's Department
Arts, crafts, and stories for you and your toddler!

Parents' Weekend Open House
Thursday, October 26
4:00 pm, MU Art Museum
Free and open to the public

Miami University Art Museum
Thursday, November 14
Brown Bag Talk
12:00 pm, MU Art Museum
Free and open to the public
Dave DeSorbo, M.F.A., will discuss his on-site installation created during an intensive six-week cultural/sculptural course in Berlin, Germany.

Department of Music
String Faculty Recital
Harvey Thurmer, violin
Mary E.M. Harris, viola
Pansy Chang, cello
with guest pianist Anton Naz
Sunday, October 29
3:00 pm, Souers Recital Hall
Free and open to the public

Miami University Opera
Die Fledermaus
by Johann Strauss (sung in English)
Thursday-Saturday
7:30 pm, November 9, 10, 11
3:00 pm, Sunday, November 12
Hall Auditorium
Directed by Buzz Davis
Music direction by Ricardo Averbach
$10 Public, $8 Seniors, $5 Students
A witty, sexy comedy of mistaken identity explodes in the whitewash of Mardi Gras. Don't miss seeing Miami's talented vocal students perform with the MU Symphony Orchestra!

Miami University Box Office in the Shriver Center
open Monday – Friday 8:00 am to 5:00 pm
Phone 513 529 3200
Online www.tickets.muohio.edu
Appendix II: Production Photos of *The Shadow Box*

Mark breakdowns and Beverly comforts Mark
Joe and Steve reunite after months
Joe and Steve playfully try to convince Maggie to go inside the cottage
Agnes plays checkers while Felicity thinks about Claire
Brian speaks to the Interviewer
The final moments of each cottage
Beverly shows off her medals (jewelry) to Brian and Mark
Mark gets frustrated at Beverly’s jokes about death
Steve plays the guitar to support the moods of each cottage at the end of Act I
Maggie gets upset for bringing the ham to the cottage
Steve makes faces at Maggie and Joe through the window
Agnes comforts Felicity