THESIS ABSTRACT

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL

(Please type all information requested. The margin requirements are the same as those for the text of your thesis.)

NAME: Anderson, Darrell Frederick
(Last, First, Middle)

QUARTER/YEAR: W1 91

DEPARTMENT: Theatre

DEGREE: MFA

ADVISER'S NAME: Hastings, Russell T.

THESIS TITLE: A Scene Design for Carlo Goldoni's The Liar

Summarize in the space below the purpose and principal conclusions of your thesis. (Please single space and do not exceed 100 words.)

This thesis is a proposed scene design for a comedy, The Liar, by the eighteenth-century Italian playwright, Carlo Goldoni. The design is based upon the traditional technique of forced perspective, from the Italian scenic practices of the eighteenth century. The major set pieces are mounted on turntables to change scenes, and the finished detail is in realistic three-dimensions. The details and colors of the setting are based upon the paintings of the eighteenth-century painter, Canaletto. Basically, the scenic design is a contemporary realization of Goldoni's play, theatrically realistic, but retaining the comic quality of The Liar.

Advisor's Signature
A SCENE DESIGN
FOR CARLO GOLDONI'S
THE LIAR

A Thesis
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the degree Master of Fine Arts
in the Graduate School
of The Ohio State University

by
Darrell Frederick Anderson, B.A.

The Ohio State University
1991

Master's Examination Committee
Firman H. Brown
Russell T. Hastings, Adviser
Mark Shanda

Approved by
Russell T. Hastings
Adviser
Department of Theatre
A fully illustrated copy of this thesis is available at the Jerome A. Lawrence and Robert E. Lee Theatre Research Institute, located on The Ohio State University campus, 14th floor, Lincoln Tower.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere and heartfelt thanks and appreciation to my adviser, Mr. Russell T. Hastings, for his continued guidance, patience, and encouragement, as well as for his generous commitment of time and inspiration. Thanks, also, to the other members of my advisory committee, Dr. Firman H. Brown and Mr. Mark Shanda, for their helpful comments and insights. To my typist, editor, and wife, Debbie, my love and thanks for her time, encouragement, and nimble fingers. To my sons, Josh and Jesse, thanks for understanding when Daddy had to be busy.
VITA

August 16, 1947 . . . . . Born, Maysville, Kentucky
August, 1969 . . . . . . B.A., University of Dayton, Dayton, Ohio
1969-1972 . . . . . . . Free-lance theatre work, chiefly at the University of Dayton
1972-1974 and 1977-1978 . . . . . Graduate work at The Ohio State University, Department of Theatre
1974-Present . . . . . . . Designer and Technical Director, Department of Communications: Theatre Program, University of Dayton

FIELD OF STUDY

Major Field: Theatre.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VITA</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF PLATES</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Background of the Playwright and the Play</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. The Script and Historical Perspective</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Analysis and Statement of Design Concept</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>APPENDICES</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX A</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX B</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BIBLIOGRAPHY</strong></td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGURES</td>
<td>PAGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Design groundplan, the Square</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Design groundplan, the interiors</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Design section on center line</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The Tavern exterior and Pantalone's interior</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The Doctor's exterior and interior</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Proscenium façade, arches, and gondola</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The Doctor's roof, and architectural details</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Side masking and furniture</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Skydrop and ground row</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Border masking</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLATES</td>
<td>PAGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. The Venetian Square</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. The Doctor's Interior: Act 2, scene 1</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Pantaloon's Interior: Act 2, scene 2</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

Background of the Playwright and the Play

Carlo Goldoni's comedy, The Liar, has been a part of the repertory of the Western theatre for over two centuries. Its distinction lies not in its being one of the greatest plays ever written, but in being the work of one of the key playwrights in the history of comedy, Carlo Goldoni. Goldoni's reforms of the once distinguished and popular Commedia dell'arte brought Italian comedy once and for all out of the Middle Ages and into the mainstream of modern theatre. This play, besides being an enjoyable comedy to experience and perform, brings us closer to the roots of our contemporary theatre, and provides a better insight to the structure and substance of comedy in all its forms.

Carlo Goldoni was born in Venice, Italy, in 1707. His father, a prosperous physician, was able to send young Carlo away to a Jesuit college to receive a good classical education. The study of philosophy, however, could not compete with the magic of the theatre, and at the early age of fourteen he ran away with a troupe of actors. Soon apprehended, he was forced to live at home with his parents and accompany his father on medical visits in the hope that he might take
up his father's practice. Instead he elected to study law, receiving his Doctor of Law degree at Padua in 1732. At the same time, Goldoni began to satisfy his taste for the theatre by writing parts for the various Commedia troupes he encountered while practicing law throughout Italy. These parts soon became full-length plays and, despite a fairly successful legal career, Goldoni finally succumbed to his first love and took up playwriting exclusively in 1747.1

Goldoni wrote for the Sant' Angelo Theatre in Venice until 1753 and then for the San Luca Theatre, also in Venice, until 1756. At that time he was appointed court poet at Parma where he worked until 1758 before moving to Rome for a year, only to return to Venice to write again for the San Luca Theatre. In 1762 Goldoni accepted an offer from the Italian Theatre in Paris and left Venice, and Italy, for good. He worked with mixed success in Paris, at one time enjoying an apartment at Versailles. When the Italian Theatre was closed in 1780 he continued to earn a living through his writing despite partial blindness and poor health. He died in Paris in 1793.2

Goldoni's place in theatre history relies entirely upon his writing. He is often compared to Molière, but he was not an actor as Molière was, nor did he possess the

---

2 Ibid., 94-95.
resources to finance his own company. It was the revolution he created with his pen that made him, as Gordon Craig insists, "the father of all good modern comedy." Goldoni came by his career less by design than out of sheer delight. At the age of nine he wrote his first play before ever having seen one performed. While working with his father at the medical profession he abjured, he amused himself by writing sketches and dialogues. Even when given a chance for advancement in his legal practice he chose instead to abandon himself "without reflection to the blandishments of the stage."\(^4\)

The stage to which he devoted himself was one steeped in tradition. The *Commedia dell'arte* or Arc Comedy was the preeminent comic theatre of Goldoni's youth. This comedic form began about 1550 and had spread throughout Italy and much of Europe by the eighteenth century. When Goldoni left the legal profession to devote his life to theatre, *Commedia*’s structure depended on stock characters and an improvised storyline. These stock characters can be split into two groups: the *inamorata* characters, or young lovers, usually played without masks; and the exaggerated characters


distinguished by their use of caricature masks. The latter
characters are further divided between masters and ser-
vants. The predominant master characters of Commedia
dell’arte are: Pantaloon, Merchant of Venice; the Doctor,
a learned man of Bologna; and the Capitano, a cowardly brag-
gart. The servants are: Brighella, the clever one; and
Harlequin, the dull one. In each troupe the same actor
trayed the same character in every play, taking over the
part, usually for life, and establishing routines and bits,
known as lazzi, which were identified with that particular
character. Many of the lazzi were so popular and famous
that they were passed down through generations of Commedia
actors. The individual lazzi were used by so many companies
of actors that the various characters were not identified
with specific plays but with specific business.

When Goldoni began writing for the Commedia players,
he wrote for the masked characters which had dominated the
stage for two hundred years. He soon, however, realized and
deplored the fact that this once vital art form had fallen
into decline. Commedia had become repetitious; the same
plots and storylines had the same characters doing the same
routines with the same results. In addition, the routines

---

6 Goldoni, 520.
7 Brockett, 179-180.
themselves had become lewd and suggestive, too crude and unfeeling for the sentimental preferences of the eighteenth century audiences. Companies tried to adapt popular comedies from France and Spain, as well as the classics of Plautus and Terence, but by merely superimposing the worn out characters and routines from the Commedia upon them nothing new was achieved and the endeavors failed. Elaborate scenery was added to dress up the productions but spectacle alone could not overcome the basic weakness of this old, shopworn form of comedy. Musical interludes were also added, several of which Goldoni himself authored at the beginning of his career, but they could no more than embellish the archaic form of the comedies. Finally, aware that only a major overhaul of the Commedia style itself would improve matters, Goldoni undertook "to lift the Italian stage out of its basement."

Goldoni realized that the audiences wanted to see real characters in real situations with real results. In his treatise The Comic Theatre he observed that the comic actors, no matter how talented, were restricted in their characterizations by the masks which had long been the trademark of the Commedia dell'arte. In order to remedy this situation Goldoni took the masks off the Commedia characters. Beginning with Pantalone in The Man of the World he brought the Commedia characters, one by one, into the eighteenth century.

\[\text{Goldoni, 518.}\]
He elevated each of them from their crude and cruel forms into real human beings with souls and sensitivity. He did away with the repetitious plots and replaced them with stories based on real life situations. As a result Goldoni did not destroy the Commedia, as many would claim, rather, he gave it a new form.  

During his career Goldoni wrote 150 comedies, many of which are still produced today. Among these is The Liar, first presented in 1750. The Liar revolves around the character Lelio, a young man who finds it impossible to carry on any social intercourse without resorting to some sort of falsehood to further his personal fortunes. Rosaura, the daughter of the prosperous Doctor, catches his eye and Lelio generates one lie after another to gain her favor. He is assisted in this affair by his servant, Arlecchino, who, in turn, is smitten with Rosaura’s maidservant, Columbina. Lelio’s father, Pantalone, as well as the Doctor, are taken in by his lies and agree that their children will marry. Of course, in the end, Lelio is found out for the cheat that he is and Rosaura is united with her true love, Florindo. Rosaura’s sister, Beatrice, is betrothed to Florindo’s friend, Ottavio, and Arlecchino loses Columbina to his rival Brighella, Ottavio’s servant.

---

9 Ibid., 518-529 passim.
10 Brockett, 364.
In this play, only the characters themselves are retained from the Commedia. Lelio is a variation of the Capitano. Pantalone and the Doctor are the traditional masters. Brighella and Arlecchino are the traditional servants. Rosaura and Florindo, Beatrice and Ottavio are the young lovers. The depth of characterization involved, however, distinguishes the play from the Commedia. Pantalone is no longer just a vile old man but a caring father; he is bumbling or confused at times, but possesses many traits we might find familiar. The Doctor, no longer a mere caricature of some gullible intellectual pedant, holds a respectable office in life, loves his daughters deeply, and treats even the deceitful Lelio with the respect due another human being. Brighella, the servant, is clever but not cruel. Columbina is flirtatious but not lewd. Lelio and Arlecchino are mischievous but harmless, their human flaws show through, and we like them in spite of these flaws.

Another significant fact about Goldoni's plays in comparison to the Commedia is that even the minor characters are given real human qualities. The Liar is not just a showcase for Pantalone, Lelio, and the rest of the major characters, but also gives dimension to minor ones like the maid, Columbina. When she makes a choice between Arlecchino and Brighella, she does so with good motive. This kind of writing goes beyond mere burlesque and is based upon real life. Even Beatrice, the younger sister, in her one short
scene, is allowed to show her frustration at being kept waiting for her sister’s marriage, in the custom of the day, so that she, too, can be wed.

Goldoni changed the *Commedia dell’arte* into a fresh, vital comic form. In doing so, he retained the best aspects of the Commedia characters and infused them with the feelings and sentiments of a modern society. This was a society conscious of humanity and less tolerant of an old aristocratic order which preferred to keep the lower classes in their place. Goldoni’s primary intent was to entertain, but the political implications of this reform were not lost on the upper classes which often suffered ridicule in his plays.

As might be expected, the established order did not accept these changes without some controversy. A counter movement, led in particular by the gifted playwright Carlo Gozzi, an aristocrat, made some inroads on Goldoni’s reforms by reviving the *Commedia* style in several plays based on fantasy and improvisation. These *fiabe* became popular for a few years but then fell out of favor and the *Commedia* essentially died with them. The plays of Goldoni, however, have survived and continue to be performed today.

---

11 Brockett, 364-365.
CHAPTER II
The Script and Historical Perspective

The Liar is set in a square in Venice, near a canal. Two structures are required for the set: the house of the Doctor, and a tavern, La Locanda. Two interiors are required for one short scene each, both in Act Two: a room in the Doctor's house, and a room in Pantalone's. A gondola is used for some characters' entrances.

Tunc Yalman's translation of The Liar has been chosen for this production. Yalman's version was first presented by the Milwaukee Repertory Theatre Company in 1971 and received excellent reviews. The following season it was produced by The Cleveland Playhouse with Yalman as director and again it received raves.¹ Yalman's version presents the play in contemporary language but is very faithful to Goldoni's intent.

take on the guise of a travelling troupe of players with a simple, worn backdrop, a prop trunk for a balcony, and no gondola. The Cleveland Playhouse, on the other hand, presented the play with more elaborate staging, although Yalman does not indicate how elaborate.²

In considering The Liar for production, staging the show as The Milwaukee Repertory Company did is tempting for several reasons. First, the show could more easily be taken on the road, perhaps to tour small communities and schools without the burden of heavy scenery and the related costs and logistical problems. Another reason would be to introduce an audience to the styles of the Commedia theatre, using the characters which Goldoni had retained from the Commedia, reproducing their costumes, perhaps their masks, and hinting at some of their comic business.

This production is not to be a travelling show, however, nor should it be considered as an introduction to the Commedia dell'arte, primarily because it is not a Commedia script. Goldoni's reforms were made in order to get away from the archaic style, eliminating the lewd crudity, the improvisation, and the masks. The use of the masks would not only render Goldoni a disservice, but would also contradict the style of his script.

The Liar should be presented in a manner which is consistent with the intent of Goldoni's script. Goldoni

²Ibid., 6-7.
has written this comedy with a contrived plot, but with real albeit unlikely circumstances. The Liar is a comedy about real characters with real feelings who deserve to be pre-

sent in a manner which gives them flesh and blood, not two-dimensional caricature. This production needs a realistic setting, with little two-dimensionality.

In addition to a realistic setting, some considera-
tion should be given to the scenic practices common in Italy at the time of the original production in the eight-

eenth century. This use will acknowledge the conditions under which the play was first seen, and also draw current audiences into the spirit of the earlier era.

By the eighteenth century, Italian scenic practices had long been the standard in Europe. The use of painted perspective was first established by the Italian architect Sebastiano Serlio in 1545. Flat wings at the sides of a proscenium stage, combined with a set of flat shutters at the rear and a series of flat borders overhead, formed the foundation of the setting. Upon these surfaces a scene rendered in one-point perspective depicted a city street or alley which led to a distant horizon or prospect. Indi-

vidual scene changes from one locale to another by use of the chariot and pole configuration was pioneered by Giacomo Torelli in the 1640’s. In Torelli’s method, the individual flats were attached to masts which extended through the

3Brockett, 165-170.
floor to wagons which carried them offstage, out of sight, while another set of flats were revealed onstage. These wagons were inter-connected by an elaborate series of ropes and pulleys with the borders and shutters, so that the entire setting could be changed at once, in unison. To make the perspective illusion complete the floor of the stage behind the proscenium was inclined upward, or raked, toward the rear of the stage. This combination of wings, borders, and raked floor presented a total stage picture which, by the eighteenth century, was common throughout Italy, France, and most of Europe.

During the eighteenth century, Ferdinando Bibiena improved upon the central vanishing point perspective by his introduction of two-point perspective. With this innovation the lines of perspective went off to the sides of the stage. Two-point perspective allowed fresh treatments of the central areas and gave a more open, spacious look to settings. In addition, Bibiena departed from the treatment of the setting as an extension of the auditorium by moving the vanishing point around the stage to generate moods which were often fantastic and unreal.

Given these facts about the scenic practices current during Goldoni's era, it might seem proper to produce a street scene in two-point perspective which changes to the interior scenes by means of flat wings, shutters, and

Ibid., 356-358.
borders acting in unison. This is not the case, however, since it would not serve the best interest of the play. The primary setting for The Liar is the public square with buildings on two sides, the home of the Doctor, and the tavern. It would be possible to portray each building as a separate scene, each designed in two-point perspective, but this would be impractical. Some of the action occurs in front of one or the other building, but most of it happens in the neutral space of the square. If the square itself were to become a separate scene, changes would occur so frequently it would spoil the flow of the play. The better choice is to place the main setting in the square and portray the buildings indicated, one on each side, in one-point perspective. This approach is also more compatible with the use of the gondola, which is a clever method of moving characters in and out of the story, as well as providing a strong up-stage center entrance.

The wing, shutter, and border method of changing scenes also presents some problems. First, the action of the play in Yalman's script has a balcony on the Doctor's house. While possible, this balcony would be somewhat clumsy to present satisfactorily with flat wings. Second, the two additional scenes, the interiors of the Doctor's and Pantalone's, are minor scenes; together they take up less than one-fifth of the playing time of the show. It would be irresponsible to utilize a scene shifting method
which might detract from the primary setting of the play in favor on one or both of the minor scenes. Finally, the wing, shutter, and border method assumes the use of flat painted surfaces to present the details of the Venetian square. While this method is consistent with the practices of the period being studied, it would not sufficiently convey a sense of realism to an audience of the late twentieth century as would a set using three-dimensional scenery.

A presentation of *The Liar* needs a setting which permits the use of some of the elements of eighteenth century Italian scenic practices with the ability to change to the interior scenes quickly without detracting from the primary scene. The gondola, too, must be brought on realistically and easily. Finally, a feeling of realism based on three-dimensional stagecraft must be established and maintained.
CHAPTER III

Analysis and Statement of Design Concept

The production of a comedy such as The Liar requires more than a strict adherence to the demands of the script. It is proper to present the play with a nod to the scenic practices of Goldoni's Venice, to assure the smooth and brisk change of scenes to the interiors and back again, and to observe realism and all its ramifications. But there is more to The Liar than all these proprieties. The Liar is a comedy, a farce, which stretches our belief with some of the outlandish pranks that Lelio devises. It amuses us with the foibles of the older gentlemen. It delights us with the twists and turns of the plot. The Liar is meant to be enjoyed and its enjoyment should be apparent in performance and also in design. The design decisions will, therefore, be approached in a manner best described as "playful" to match the farcical sense of the play itself.

Among the elements of eighteenth century scene design the one that most lends itself to this purpose is the key element of perspective. Painted perspective was the basis for all of the settings which adorned the theatres of Goldoni's Italy. It was the accepted convention because it
created a realistic illusion of three-dimensionality, es-
pecially in the dim light of the candles and oil lamps that
were used to illuminate the stages and auditoriums. Painted
perspective scenery persisted for more than two hundred
years after its introduction to Italian scenic art. Innova-
tions in its use are still being devised to delight
audiences.

Perspective could be easily adapted to this play by
exaggerating the lines of the set to converge at a point on
an imaginary horizon upstage center. The buildings on the
Venetian square would be intentionally distorted to empha-
size these lines and produce the effect of foreshortening,
making the square seem deeper than its actual dimensions.
This effect is known as "forced perspective." In order to
accommodate this artificial perspective, the floor of the
stage will have to be raked in the manner of the Venetian
stages of Goldoni’s day. The lines of the paving stones on
the ground of the square will follow the example of the
lines of the surrounding buildings and converge at a point
on the horizon in the distance, upstage center. This dis-
tortion will, of course, be apparent to the audience, par-
ticularly when an actor walks from downstage to upstage,
or the reverse. Such a visual contradiction is a part of
the "playful" approach. It serves to entertain as well
as to emphasize the perspective in the design of scenery
in eighteenth century Italian theatre.
The change of scene from the exterior square to the interiors will not be accomplished by methods common to the eighteenth century for reasons discussed in Chapter II. A method which will prove satisfactory, however, is the use of the turntable, a device not used as a method of changing scenery in the Western theatre until the turn of the twentieth century. Its use in this production is justifiable because it suits the spirit of the production: it contributes to the sense of "playfulness" by providing moments of surprise and spectacle much like those enjoyed in Goldoni's theatre. On a more pragmatic level it shifts the scenery smoothly and quickly. The use of the turntable would permit three-dimensional detail on the settings, and would not detract from the primary one, the square. Each of the two buildings on the square will be situated on its own turntable, the base of each house conforming to the slope of the raked main platform. During Act Two when the appropriate time comes for the shift to the interior, Columbina and the Doctor will enter the house, and the building will turn to reveal the interior of the Doctor's abode, his daughter Rosaura in a swoon on a loveseat. The effect of the change will be heightened by the direct relationship of the interior to its actual exterior.

When the scene shifts from the Doctor's interior to the room at Pantalone's, the same close relationship of

1Brockett, 587.
interior to exterior will not be present because the tavern interior represents Pantalone's house, not the building being turned. While this might be a problem if Pantalone's were the first interior to be used, it should not be a problem in this circumstance because the scene at Pantalone's does not depend on an association with an exterior structure as does the scene at the Doctor's. In addition, the scene shift is from the Doctor's interior to Pantalone's interior without an intervening scene on the square. This will help the transition and obscure the audience's identification of Pantalone's room with the tavern.

One problem that arises with the use of the turntable in conjunction with the raked stage is the potentially conflicting angle of the rake when the turntable is rotated. If each building is constructed on a turntable which has been covered with a raked platform that is uniformly slanted across its full surface, the floor of the interior, once turned, will be raked downstage instead of upstage. Since this would make actor movement unmanageable, some other arrangement must be found. It is possible that the interior floor could be tilted in the opposite direction so that when the turntable is rotated it will match the rake of the main platform. This, however, would cause problems when the door was opened, particularly since the door and the adjacent floor would be visible to at least part of the audience in both the interior and exterior positions. Also, if the
floor of the interior is flush with the pavement of the square, there might be some confusion in the separation of the interior from the exterior, even with the focus provided by the lighting. The best solution is to build the floor of the interior with no rake at all. It would be level, positioned at a height to allow the exterior door to swing freely. Setting the floor in this position also helps to add to the contrast between interior and exterior, as well as to contribute to the "playful" approach by taking exception to the forced perspective of the primary scene.

There is one more problem to solve in this design: the passage of the gondola. The gondola is a valuable part of the production because it serves several functions. It is a pleasant and unique reminder of the location of the play—Venice, Italy. Its presence evokes romantic images of a simpler time and might even provoke a sort of identity between past and present, since gondolas are still in use in Venice today. On a pragmatic level it gives the director a strong upstage center entrance or exit. The gondola will also provide an element of surprise and will add to the spectacle. In addition it could be incorporated into the action of the show in a manner which contributes to the "playful" mood intended.

To bring the gondola across the front of the stage might be startling. An entrance at the center apron might
delight the audience. This would be difficult to accomplish, however, without detracting from the rest of the action. It would be more reasonable to locate it at the rear of the stage, behind the raked deck and the two houses. In this way, its bottom, and the canal, can be masked behind the rise of the raked platform which serves as the square. This would also allow the passengers to step up or down as they enter or exit, adding to the sense of realism implied by the rest of the set. The gondola will be powered by a winch, driven from one wing or the other, and will be able to move across the stage in either direction. The ornament which distinguishes its prow will be designed to be moveable from one end of the boat to the other each time it has crossed and is safely out of sight in the wings.

It is also suggested, in the spirit of the play, that the gondola might be used as a method of breaking the scenes, passing across the stage, possibly in silhouette, during transitions between scenes.

The canal on which the gondola is driven might not be visible were it not for the forced perspective imposed upon the set. Realistically, this sense of perspective would permit us to see the water of the canal. Including the water in the set opens up several options. In the spirit of "playfulness" and spectacle it is tempting to include one of the wonderful wave machines which were devised by the scenic technicians of the seventeenth and eighteenth
centuries. The problem with this addition, though, is the realization that the water is in a canal and not the open sea, so the turbulence suggested by one of these machines would be out of place and distracting. Therefore, as a nod to the effects of perspective, the water will be indicated merely by a ground row, in two dimensions, painted to suggest one of the Venetian canals. This will also serve to help mask any lighting equipment which might be used to light scenery beyond the canal.

The same realization that the water of the canal would be visible also suggests that the buildings on the other side of that canal might be visible as well, requiring their addition to the set. It would be possible to erect a flat, painted backing to the set showing the distant buildings across the water. However, adding to the complexity of a set for a play which is light and not very complex could distract from the action downstage. It is preferable to draw a line at the canal and its gondola, and eliminate the vista across the water. The set will be backed by a plain sky drop, brightly and colorfully lit.

With the necessary scenic elements in place, a few embellishments are necessary. First, the square with its two buildings and the gondola landing leaves a gaping hole at the rear of the stage. Something is needed to tie the two sides together and to help keep the audience's attention downstage. Since the gondola cannot be closed off from the
square, whatever is used must be able to allow passengers to enter the square easily. Something which allows this openness, but still evokes the ambience of Venice, would be a series of arches, abutting the canal, parallel to the front of the stage, and in the style of eighteenth century Venice.

Second, the forecourt needs definition. The director surely will want to bring the actors forward to address their business to the audience. In order to enliven this part of the stage, a facade of buildings, one on each side, will be added, adjacent to the proscenium. This will not only enable the apron of the stage to be used, but will also add to the environment of the square, giving it more dimension, and bringing the play closer to the audience. These facades can be decorated to add to the color, texture, and charm of the Venetian landscape.

With the structural elements of the set selected, it is necessary to deal with its finish. Fortunately, the look of eighteenth century Venice has been well preserved in the work of the painter Giovanni Antonio Canal, better known as Canaletto. Canaletto was a contemporary of Goldoni and a fellow citizen of Venice. His marvelous record of Venice, which survives in many paintings and sketches, provides a prime source of architectural detail, color, texture, as well as images of everyday life.

Using Canaletto as an inspiration for the visual details of this set is a bit ironic since the artist started
his career as a painter working on stage settings. His father, Bernardo Canal, was a scene painter, and Canaletto spent his early working years painting for the theatre. He soon, however, was in demand as a "view painter" for his reproductions of various scenes of the Venetian landscape, and this was to be his life's work. He painted mostly on commission, often for English patrons, and much of his work has settled in English collections. Because of this patronage he travelled several times to England and painted many views of London, Windsor, and other locations. The work for which he is most remembered, though, are his views of Venice, and it is from these that the setting of The Liar will be derived.

Canaletto's best work is generally recognized as that of his early years, the 1720's and 1730's. In these paintings the brushstrokes are free, the details fresh, and the light warm, with many contrasts. As Canaletto matured, the demands of increasing commissions caused him to simplify his work, making it more literal and flat with less of the flourish and depth of detail that is seen in his earlier work. Among the paintings referred to for purposes of design in this project are: "SS Giovanni e Paolo and the Scuola di San Marco" for color and texture; the marvelous


\(^3\)Ibid., 15-16.
work "The Grand Canal: "The Stonemason's Yard" for architectural details, color, texture, and a sense of everyday ambience; "The Campo San Stefano" for architectural treatments, including rooflines and windows, as well as some informal details; "The Bucintoro Returning to the Molo on Ascension Day," particularly for gondola details; and Campo San Polo," a later work, for color. Other paintings were perused at random for bits of color, texture, and images of daily life.

In addition to the general shapes and arrangements of buildings, many specific details have been gleaned from these paintings. The roofs of the major buildings are seen to be almost all tiles, so tiled roofs have been simulated on all four buildings in the set. The chimneys of Venice, as seen in Canaletto's paintings, are quite distinctive in design and add a picturesque detail to the rooflines, although on this set they must be regulated in height so as not to stretch the top sightlines too far. The eaves which trim the roofs are also fairly consistent in design with some subtle variations which help to distinguish the different structures.

The windows show a few simple styles, most being rectangular but many having a simple arch at the top. Some of the windows have a raised exterior frame while many of the others are flush with the stuccoed walls. Normally, the first floor windows are longer with less detail in the
upper floors, but this varies. Panes differ in style between rectangular and diamond-shaped, and are small, with none being more than ten or twelve inches in height. Most, but not all, of the windows are sited by shutters, with the obvious purpose to close them off during bad weather. Often the ground floor may not have shutters on the windows and occasionally the upper floors may be devoid of them as well, particularly in public buildings. Some of the windows on the set will be shown with shutters and some without, to provide variety. The Doctor's house will not have shutters, giving it a richer look, and distinguishing it from the other buildings, especially the tavern.

Balconies adorn many of the upper windows, often being used at all upper level windows on certain buildings. These balconies vary in style somewhat, most having stone balusters of similar design and a rectilinear shape overall. The balcony on the Doctor's house must, of necessity, differ somewhat from the predominant design of those illustrated by Canaletto. Due to the position of the Doctor's house, dictated by the use of forced perspective in conjunction with the placement of the turntable to allow a good view of the interior, the balcony cannot be located on the front wall of the house as it should be. Doing so would prevent a good view of much of the action taking place on the balcony and seriously detract from the enjoyment of the play. By placing the balcony on the corner of the building, it is
much easier to direct the action toward the audience. The style of the balcony otherwise will be consistent with the majority of those seen in Canaletto's works. 

Quite a few of the windows have canvas awnings, often with broad stripes of alternating color. Some are shown with one support pole set higher than the other to catch the breeze. Awnings of this style will be used as a decorative element on the set. Most of the windows have curtains which Canaletto has frequently shown hanging outside the windows, blown by the breeze, and providing a cheerful touch of bright color. The brick walls of the buildings have almost all been covered with stucco. Many are scarred at the base with decay caused by the high water table of this lagoon city which allows the brick underneath to show through. This detail, characteristic of Venice, will be used to break up the flat walls in the set and to add to the sense of realism. Archways have been chosen to separate the square from the canal in this design for The Liar, but none are shown as freestanding structures in Canaletto's paintings. There are, however, many arches attached to public buildings, churches, and the like, from which the overall design of the needed arches can be derived. Canaletto has included gondolas in most of his scenes of the canals with some showing more detail than others. The unique design of these boats is easily recognized as well as their scale. The pavement of the squares and public
areas is shown as being mostly functional and therefore rather simple in design. Other bits of everyday life such as benches, signs, and plants have also been used where needed or convenient to add to the sense of realism.

The choices of color will be realistic in all parts of the set. The roofs are a somewhat uniform burnt sienna in color throughout, with bits of ochre and occasional deeper shadings here and there. The buildings are generally pastel in tone; many of Canaletto's vistas show them nearly all white. To ensure variety in the overall stage picture and to separate the identities of the buildings, different hues have been selected for each structure. The overall feeling will be of warmth and light. This same quality will be carried over into the pavement of the square although the texture here will have more variation to mask footprints. The gondola will be painted as those seen in Canaletto's paintings, black and silver. Shutters, woodwork and other details will also closely follow the forms found in Canaletto, with an eye to contrast and variety. The windows themselves will take on much of the reflected blue of Canaletto's skies to give contrast to the warmer tones of the rest of the set. Overall there will be an attempt to sustain the feeling of realism so important to the concept of the production, and to provide contrast and variety to add interest and to enliven the mood.
Canaletto's work is, unfortunately, not helpful in designing the interior scenes since all of his views are of the outdoors. For the interior scenes, paintings from Mario Praz's books on period style decoration show that the bourgeois homes of the eighteenth century were sparsely furnished.\(^4\) This is also corroborated by other sources.\(^5\)

This fact if fortunate because the interiors to be used for this production of *The Liar* must, of necessity, be sparsely furnished due to the limited space allowed by the turntables being used to change the scenes. Very little furniture—only a chair—is needed in either interior scene; it would not be a suitably realistic set, however, if there were only a single chair in each interior. Other additional furnishings will be necessary to make the interiors seem truly liveable, but without crowding the action.

The decorative style of eighteenth century Italy is in transition from the baroque to the rococo, and many of the baroque furnishings remained in even the finest Italian households. The evocative style of the period was rococo, a style largely derived from the French but with distinctive touches added by the Italian craftsmen. A popular item in many rooms of this period is the settee. This item

\(^4\)Mario Praz, *An Illustrated History of Interior Design* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1982), 159-177 passim

is often shown as much larger than is needed in the Doctor's home, but a small version will neatly fill a space in the room, providing more interest than a single chair, and giving Rosaura, who is in a swoon when the scene begins, more room to emote. The style should be in the mode of Louis XV, perhaps a little more exaggerated and with a higher back. There is really no more space for furniture in the Doctor's interior, but a chandelier, realistically practical as well as decorative and out of the way, and a mirror on the wall, could be added.

In the villas and palaces the walls were often adorned with sumptuous coverings of fabric or paper, or they were detailed with intricate painting. This was usually done in the rooms used to impress and entertain guests, but was not carried into the private quarters. The homes in The Liar are not to be considered palatial, and the rooms are certainly domestic, so the wall treatment should be more modest, simply painted in a single color. To break up this plain treatment, the lower part of the wall will be dressed in more detail. In the Doctor's room, marble will be simulated up to a chair rail height. This is somewhat rich, perhaps, but marble was a common building material in Italy at the time. Its use flatters the Doctor's position in society, and it is an attractive way to fill the space. The same marble design will carry over onto the floor.
In the room at Pantalone's, the need for furniture is similar to that of the Doctor's room—a single chair.
The scene at Pantalone's has fewer participants, however, and so there is room for more real furniture. One element of furniture which was quite common in Venice of this period and also had details distinctively Venetian was the bombe chest or commode. The style of the chest, which was derived from French design, was exaggerated by the Venetian furniture craftsmen so that the characteristic swell at the top was much larger than that of the French. The pieces were usually covered with *laccia*, a technique whereby cutout prints were pasted to the surface of the furniture and then covered with clear lacquer. This was then often detailed with additional embellishments of gilt rococo trim. While the look of the *laccia* will be simulated, the gold trim is too rich for this prosperous but modest merchant, so it will be necessary to settle for the shape and the *laccia*. A chair of simple design with a splat back will be used here, again decorated with the *laccia* finish. A chandelier would be repetitious, so a wall sconce will serve as a light source. Another mirror over the commode, in a different configuration than the one in the Doctor's, will complete the furnishings. Panelled wainscoting will trim the lower portion of the walls. The floor will be tiled, a more common treatment than the Doctor's, but attractive nonetheless, in alternating black and white squares.
In conclusion, the set will be selectively realistic with explicit detail, executed three-dimensionally whenever practical and necessary. An overall sense of "playfulness" will accompany the reality, using perspective as a source of contrast and comic irony. The colors will be warm and gay, with touches of contrast to make them sparkle. The ultimate intent is to make the performance as effortless and pleasant as a trip into the eighteenth century theatre could be.
Figure 2. Design groundplan, the interiors, 1/2" = 1'-0", reduced.
Figure 3. Design section on center line, 1/2", 1'-0", reduced
Figure 4. The Tavern exterior and Pantalone's interior, 1/2" = 1'-0", reduced.
Figure 8. Side masking and furniture, 1/2" = 1'-0", reduced
Plate I. The Venetian Square.
Plate II. The Doctor's Interior: Act 2, scene 1.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


