A SCENIC INTERPRETATION OF BEAUMONT'S THE KNIGHT OF THE BURNING PESTLE FOR OSU'S THURBER THEATRE

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

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To My Parents,
your love, support, and belief in me have helped me to believe in myself. None of this would have been possible without you.
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NOTE

A fully illustrated copy of this thesis is available at the Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee Theatre Research Institute, located on The Ohio State University campus, 14th floor, Lincoln Tower. The set design of The Knight of the Burning Pestle, which is the subject of this thesis, was produced by the Department of Theatre of The Ohio State University, November 11 to November 21, 1992, in the Thurber Theatre.
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INTRODUCTION

This thesis contains a documentation of the process that led to the realization of the scene design for The Ohio State University’s Department of Theatre’s production of Francis Beaumont’s The Knight of the Burning Pestle. The production occurred in Thurber Theatre from November 11 - 21, 1992. The text traces the development of the scene design from the initial research, through the design and construction processes, to opening night.

Chapter I provides a history of Pestle’s author, Francis Beaumont, and chronicles a brief production history. The second chapter discusses the production concept as it evolved from the director’s statement. The next chapter follows the development of the design concept and general requirements for the set. The fourth chapter discusses the specific design solutions made, based on the design concept. Chapter V is a production journal which summarizes the entire design process. The final chapter evaluates the process, design choices, and the growth of the designer. This is followed by various supporting materials in the appendices, including
chronologies, examples of research, preliminary sketches, a complete set of plates of the final design drawings, and photographs of both the scale model and the production.
CHAPTER I

PRODUCTION HISTORY

Francis Beaumont was born in 1585, and died thirty-one years later of complications from a stroke on March 6, 1616. His body is buried in The Poets’ Corner of Westminster Abbey. His was a family of lawyers, judges, and members of parliament, many of whom were often in trouble with the authorities because they practiced Catholicism in a markedly Protestant era. While he shunned the family business by becoming a writer, Beaumont was a member of the Inns of Court along with his brothers and other aspiring lawyers. “Beaumont observed London and his colleagues closely, showing the satirist’s eye for telling detail…. (and was mainly) interested in establishing himself as a cynical wit.”¹ He used this satirist’s eye much to his advantage in his writing. Beaumont’s wit seems to have served him very well. Of the plays performed by the King’s Men between 1616 and 1642, those written by Beaumont and his frequent collaborator, John Fletcher, outnumber Shakespeare’s

nearly three to one.

Beaumont began his writing career while at the Inns of Court; at seventeen he wrote a burlesque, *Grammar Lecture*, for a special Inns occasion. He followed that with a narrative poem in 1602, *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*, and a full play in 1606. *The Woman Hater* is a ridicule of events surrounding the Gunpowder Plot of 1605.

Beaumont continued in the slyly witty vein he had developed at the Inns of Court the following year (1607) by writing *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*. This most popular of his works, "a burlesque of contemporary bourgeois drama and chivalric romance," was rejected by its original audience. More specifically, Finkelpearl states that it "experienced the fate of every genuinely avant-garde work: 'the wide world... for want of judgment, or not understanding the privy marke of Ironie about it utterly rejected it'."3

People of the 1630's must have developed a greater sense of awareness of themselves and the theatre, for in that decade the play became popular; its popularity was reaffirmed in the 1660's and 1670's. No record of the production exists from 1682 to 1898, when, on March 28, it was performed at Yale University by a group of

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3 Finkelpearl 82.
graduate students studying Jacobean drama. "Since then it has had a steady, if intermittent and largely academic, stage life."4

The writing team of Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher is one of the most famous in history, in fact, their names became so inextricably linked that historians have had great trouble determining the individual authorship of their plays. Many plays attributed to the duo have only recently been proven to have been penned independently by one or the other. How or when these two men first met is not certain. Some historians believe they met and influenced each other's work as early as 1602. However, historians have determined that shared authorship of plays did not begin until 1608, and continued until Beaumont died in 1611. Although Fletcher in his own right was quite a prolific writer, in the twentieth century *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* is the only play in the Beaumont and Fletcher canon that is widely admired.5

In *Pestle*, Beaumont

explores the imagination and its relation to desire in its institutional home, the playhouse. To examine the ways in which the actors, their play, and the spectators function—or fail to function—together to create a shared imaginative experience, Beaumont introduces an audience in conflict with

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4 Finkelpearl 83.

5 Finkelpearl 83.
the theater to which it has come for entertainment.\textsuperscript{6} Beaumont wrote a play-within-a-play, which embodied both a “dramatic convention and the reality of unruly audiences.”\textsuperscript{7} This convention was that of the prologue and/or the induction. Both prologue and induction serve as an introduction for the audience to the play about to be presented.

Inductions, particularly, mediate between the physical and temporal space of the spectators and the imaginative world they are asked to help create. They expand the prologue’s address into a scripted, though supposedly spontaneous, miniplay; they offer everything from simple exposition, to allegorical figures who watch or direct the action, to literary harangue. . . .\textsuperscript{8}

An induction often became the framing member of a play-within-a-play play construction, its resolution coming after that of the “within play”. The two plays could run simultaneously, with the actors of the induction remaining onstage and commenting on the action contained with the inner play. Some earlier examples of the use of an induction occur in Robert Green’s \textit{James IV}, written for the Queen’s Men around 1591, and Anthony Munday’s 1598 \textit{The Downfall of Robert Earl of Huntingdon} first performed by the Admiral’s Men.\textsuperscript{9}


\textsuperscript{7} Bliss 34.

\textsuperscript{8} Bliss 34.

\textsuperscript{9} Bliss 34.
In the early seventeenth century, Inductions became less popular on the public stage, though private-theater playwrights used them to develop a critical, self-conscious relationship with their audience. Yet whatever their form, Inductions also served a very practical purpose: they allowed time for a noisy, inattentive audience to settle down.10

Beaumont played on the tradition of the induction and its oft-resultant chaos, translating it for use in his The Knight of the Burning Pestle. In Pestle, the children’s company of the Blackfriars is about to begin “The London Merchant” for its seventeenth-century audience, when two of the spectators, a grocer and his wife (George and Nell), climb up onto the stage to sit on the stools provided for the gallants. They insist on creating and seeing their own play, starring their apprentice Rafe. Although the players try to ignore the demands of the couple as much as possible, they cannot prevent scenes of “The Knight of the Burning Pestle” intruding into their own play.

The Players’ play, “The London Merchant,” “is usually described as a parody of the prodigal son plays that had been having certain vogue in the Jacobean public theaters.”11 “The London Merchant” presents the attempts of an apprentice, Jasper, to win the hand of Luce, the daughter of his master Venturewell. Venturewell, the character in the title role, wants Luce to marry Humphrey, a wealthy

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10 Bliss 35.

11 Finkelpearl 84.
old gentleman. Jasper uses his wit instead of the usual heroism to eventually trick Venturewell into giving his approval for Jasper's marriage to his lady-love.

The subject of the sub-plot is Jasper's father, Mr. Merrythought. Merrythought spends his days singing and never worrying about anything, having "boundless faith that the universe will take care of him."\(^1\) Merrythought has a wife and another son, Michael, who do not share his view of the world. Attempting to escape the poverty that he will surely suffer, wife and son leave Merrythought, only to return and be forced to sing for re-entry into their home.

Flouting tradition, Beaumont gives the victory to the grasshoppers rather than the ants. Not only does Jasper win Luce, but Merrythought triumphs over his conventional wife and the capitalist Venturewell, both of whom must sing ballads to signify their acquiescence to his way of life.\(^2\)\(^3\)

The victory does not go untempered however. One cannot unquestionably admire Jasper after his testing of Luce's love for him or Merrythought's cold indifference to Venturewell's supposed loss of his daughter. As Finkelpearl points out,

\(^1\) Finkelpearl 84.

\(^2\) Finkelpearl 84.

\(^3\) Finkelpearl 84.
reversing the normal outcome of such plays, the players' play exposes the banality of bourgeois pieties and makes a moral point. Instead of the repentance of the prodigal--actually two, Mr. Merrythought and Jasper--the dutiful, bourgeois characters are converted to a carefree, casual, mirth-filled attitude toward life. Singing triumphs over money-grubbing, the old-fashioned merry-thinking of Mr. Merrythought proves more effective than the careful capitalistic ventures of Venturewell, the London merchant of the original title. But it is characteristic of Beaumont's way that one may also feel when looking at Merrythought that turning all the year into playing holidays may produce a tedious old fool.\textsuperscript{14}

The scenes forced on the players by the citizens make up what they entitle "The Knight of the Burning Pestle". This "play" is made up of the "stock characters, situations, and rhetorical style of (George and Nell's) favorite literature, chivalric romance,"\textsuperscript{15} a form quite popular during this period.\textsuperscript{16} The grocer's apprentice Rafe becomes a knight--the Knight of the Burning Pestle--and acts out several humorous adventures, including an attempt to aid Mrs. Merrythought which fails, a duel with Jasper in which Rafe gets beaten up, a rescue of prisoners from a giant (actually a barber-surgeon), and a fling with a foreign princess.

In all these scenes of slapstick and burlesque, one may note that Beaumont never makes Rafe a simple miles gloriosus like such cowardly braggarts as Jonson's Captain Bobadill. Rafe

\textsuperscript{14} Finkelpearl 88.

\textsuperscript{15} Bliss 34.

\textsuperscript{16} Finkelpearl 89.
always conducts himself with dignity and tries to live up to the
highest ideals of knighthood. Thus it is not accurate to view
him simply as the embodiment of the citizens’ foolish fantasies.
His ingenuous efforts to be a perfect knight make him a rebuke
to the foul-mouthed, extravagant, often immoral men who
swaggered around Jacobean London with their newly gained
titles of ‘knight’ purchased for forty pounds.1 7

This analysis shows that Beaumont was an expert in weaving
current popular and political aspects into the plot of his plays.
However a modern audience may easily miss this wealth of insight
into Jacobean life because the language is rather foreign to its ears.
Luckily, the comedic nature of the play allows an audience to enjoy
the antics of the characters whether or not the allusions are fully
understood. As Sheldon P. Zitner states in his introduction to
Beaumont’s play, “The Knight is apparently almost, though not quite,
actor-proof, accepting variations in acting style and preparation that
would sink most comedies.”1 8

The Ohio State University’s Department of Theatre chose to
produce Francis Beaumont’s The Knight of the Burning Pestle to give
its students experience with a period production. Actors were
exposed to a different style of language and movement. Designers
also had the opportunity to research and execute costumes and

17 Finkelpearl 89.

scenery with a period flavor. This production also exposed all
involved, including audience members, to the work of a famous
English playwright other than Shakespeare.

The production process for *Pestle* began in June of 1992. The
set was designed and built during the summer months. Rehearsals
began in late September and continued for six weeks. The show
opened November 11, ran for two weeks, and closed November 21,
CHAPTER II
PRODUCTION CONCEPT

The ideas contained here were the basis of, and guiding principles for, what was later seen on the stage of Thurber Theatre for the OSU theatre production of The Knight of the Burning Pestle. The concept evolved through the efforts of the entire production team. The realization of the ideas discussed here will be detailed in later chapters.

At the first production meeting the director Dr. Rex McGraw presented a list of musings about the play (Appendix B). His first item stated that as this was a play-within-a-play, we needed a stage-within-a-stage. Along with this, the storyline of the production of The London Merchant should be “period something/a story book approach/Disney/Classic Comics, something romantic... exaggeration.”¹⁹ Dr. McGraw also stated the need to update the dialogue and “period” of the Grocer and Wife. He believed placing the characters in the

1950's or 1960's and having them speak contemporary English would make the play more accessible to audience members. He did not, however, wish to update the entire script.

With these things in mind, the set, lighting, and costume designers met for a "brainstorming" session. The team began by watching videotapes. *The Court Jester* (Paramount, 1956) set the tone for the afternoon with its hilarious "pestle" dialogue. The theatre scene from *Pinocchio* (Disney, 1942) gave an example of a period portal design. Research books with illustrations from Disney movies and books provided a wonderful color scheme of bright red, blue, green, orange and purple watercolor washes with gentle deep shadows and crisp line drawings.

Next the team discussed the "layers of reality" that Beaumont had written, the play-within-a-play aspects, and decided to extend and intensify the layering. Beaumont's play is about what happens when the grocer and wife attend a production of *A London Merchant* in the early seventeenth century. The actors playing both the audience members and the actors in the inner play act as if they are the characters they are playing. Sets and costumes were designed and chosen for use in Beaumont's play -- the reality of the production is
that of *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*.

What the OSU design team chose to do was to add layers. The actors performing the play were to be of a twentieth-century company that often did period plays. The theatre would be one in which period plays are often performed. The sets and costumes would not necessarily be designed for the *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, but for this said troupe of actors; costumes would not try to look like clothes from the early 1600’s, but costumes; and the scenery would look like a theatre set. For example, “real person” John Smith would be acting like “contemporary actor” Johnny Smithton who would have the role of “Pestle actor” Jonathon Smithsonius who is playing the “London character” Jasper. The production’s concept became quite elaborate and convoluted; whether Chrisha Siebert or Chriselde Siebertshire actually designed the set for *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* is unclear.

The layering aspect of *Pestle*’s concept allowed the members of the production the freedom to interpret information gathered in research to create another, perhaps more self-reflexive, world for the production—a modern interpretation of a modern interpretation of a period play. This allowed for the more contemporary versions of George and Nell
while keeping the script's language for the most part intact, while rendering it accessible to a modern audience. The layering also enabled the actors to play more than one role—an actor and a character. It was hoped the audience would realize and enjoy the added layering. However, this was not necessary for understanding and enjoying the production as a whole.
CHAPTER III

DESIGN CONCEPT

This chapter will discuss the design concept as it relates to the production concept discussed earlier and the physical requirements of the set. While general solutions will be identified in this chapter, more specific solutions will be contained in the chapter entitled Design Solutions.

The set for a contemporary acting troupe that often performs period plays, in a theatre in which period plays are often performed, would need to have the look and/or feel of a period production. Therefore, production styles of the Jacobean period were investigated for ideas and inspiration. *Pestle* was originally performed by the Children of the Queen’s Revels in the Second Blackfriars Theatre.\(^2^0\) James Burbage constructed the theatre in an upstairs hall of the Upper Frater building in 1596.\(^2^1\) No drawings exist that can be directly attributed to Burbage’s theatre, and opinions differ greatly about the actual layout. However, with the

\(^2^0\) Beaumont 12.

information from a passage from James Wright's *Historia Histrionica*, written in 1699, what is known about other private theatres can be interpreted to include Blackfriars. The book describes the development of the English stage; Wright created a narrative involving two characters discussing theatre. At one point, Truman tells Lovewit about the playhouses he once knew:

The *Black-friars*, *Cockpit*, and *Salisbury-court* were called Private Houses, and were very small to what we see now. The *Cockpit* was standing since the Restoration...

*Love*. I have seen that.

*Trum*. Then you have seen the other two, in effect; for they were all three Built almost exactly alike, for Form and Bigness. Here they had Pits for the Gentry, and Acted by Candle-light.²²

Thus, if we accept Wright's account, we can use Inigo Jones' designs for what is thought to be the Cockpit (Phoenix) [Figure 1] as a basis for the Blackfriars.²³ The drawings show an elevated “proscenium-like” stage with seating boxes and stools at either side and a tiring house behind. The tiring house consisted of three doors at stage level and an elevated discovery space and seating galleries. The house is made up of stepped seating and elevated galleries running along the periphery. The aforementioned stools were quite


²³ Sturgess 38.
important; the audience members seated on the stage became part of the production, whether animated or aloof.

Armed with information about how Pestle would probably have been produced in the early 1600's, the designer could set about adapting it for use on a twentieth-century stage. Pestle was to be produced in Thurber Theatre, a theatre with a thirty-five foot wide by twenty-two foot high proscenium stage. The first step was to create a stage arrangement in keeping with Jones' design. A stage platform smaller in width than the proscenium opening and centered within it achieved the desired arrangement, making room for stools on the sides of the stage and confining the action. The platform sat within the downstage-most third of the depth of the stage and ran out to cover two seating rows of the house. The deck also sat at a slight incline. The raked platforms helped create intimacy between the actors and audience; the action was, in a sense, nearly in the laps of the audience members. The size of the deck was large enough to accommodate large groups, while being small enough not to overwhelm intimate scenes between two actors.

The tiring house was also interpreted for use in the production. Whereas it had been part of the theatre architecture in the Cockpit, the tiring house became part of the scenery in Thurber Theatre. The
tiring house developed from being a flat wall, to being a wall whose sections sat at angles to each other to create a more interesting line and to improve sight lines. It consisted of two levels, the lower containing three doors and the upper, having a central opening for actors with a seating gallery to either side. Seating galleries also stood on the stage level behind the stools. A colorful soft portal was designed as a step in the graduation from Thurber’s black proscenium arch to the set’s tiring house.

To enhance the theatricality of the production, footlights would sit at the edge of the stage-within-a-stage (although their invention and popular use did not occur until much after Beaumont’s time), and chandeliers would hang over both the stage and house. The chandelier over the stage would lower to the deck so its “candles,” as well as those in the footlights, could be lit by one of the actors before the show began. They would then be “blown out” after the show had finished.

A lengthy discussion was held concerning the stage-sitters. Suggestions ranged from using actors to actual audience members to cartoon cut-outs. Recalling that the production concept had *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* being performed in a theatre space that regularly offered period plays and by a modern company
interpreting the styles of a period troupe, it was determined to take the most theatrical suggestion, that of using cartoon cut-outs. Cut-outs depicting period audience members in various states of attention were designed to sit in the seating sections, as well as the stools onstage.

With all of the physical needs for the show identified, it was now necessary to find specific solutions for color, texture, and material considerations. The next chapter will discuss these solutions at length.
CHAPTER IV
DESIGN SOLUTIONS

This chapter details resources and particular solutions made in fulfillment of general design choices outlined in the previous chapter. Whereas large set pieces have already been discussed, their components and building materials will be specified herein.

The resources for OSU's production of Pestle were quite ample. The budget for scenery was $2300.00, while the allocation for properties was $1250.00. The labor force for the summer quarter included two graduate teaching associates and fifteen undergraduate students enrolled in Theatre 220 and 205 classes. The labor pool roughly doubled in the fall quarter to encompass four graduate students and about twenty-five students in Theatre 220 and 205. In both quarters, however, Pestle had to share labor, equipment, and space in the Scenic Studio with Stadium II's fall production of Macbush. From June 2 when the director delivered his concept for the show, the designer had five weeks to design the set. Construction was scheduled to begin one week later on July 13. October was the
assigned load-in date, with opening night happening November 11.

With these parameters in mind, the designer began determining how best to fulfill the production’s design concept. Her first concern was to design a playing space whose dimensions would nicely accommodate both large and small scenes. A raised deck was designed with a width of 22’-6” and a length of 27’-10”. These dimensions allowed roughly 500 square feet of playing area on the deck when the placement of the tiring house was taken into consideration. The deck was centered left-to-right within the proscenium opening, which allowed 6’-3” to either side, ample room for stage-sitters’ stools. The upstage edge of the deck sat only 11’-3” above the plaster line. This caused the downstage edge to run about 5’-6” into the auditorium, covering parts of the first two rows of seating. The deck was shaped like a rectangle with its two downstage corners cut off at an angle, much like the shape of OSU’s Stadium II Theatre’s stage. The point at which the deck hung out over the audience was the point of the cut-off corners. This allowed less seating to be lost. The playing area was also raked, from ten inches above stage level at its downstage edge, to twenty-six inches on the upstage edge. The deck was comprised mainly of stock 4’ x 8’ platforms. The downstage edge with its odd footprint had to be specially built. The technical director opted to use a configuration of
stud walls to support the deck, rather than individual legs. This made construction and load-in much quicker. The deck was covered with masonite, masking the platform seams and allowing easier removal and storage of the painted floor. The front edge of the rake was faced with lengths of 1 x 6, routed on the top edge. The facing extended slightly above deck level, creating a lip that kept dropped tools and props from rolling off, gave the actors a better idea of where the edge of the stage was, and gave a more finished look to the stage.

The citizen and his wife would sit on stools on the apron during the performance. After discussion with her adviser, the designer decided to lower the apron elevator fifteen inches. This made it easier for the two actors to mount the stage and created a stepped graduation from the audience level, to the actor-audience level, to the Thurber stage level, to the playing level. The greater separation also made it easier for the lighting designer to light the various areas differently and give focus as needed. A simple black three-step step unit gave access for the actors from the house floor to the stage both stage left and stage right.

The tiring house was composed of five muslin-covered flats that stood at angles to each other. The designer opted for soft-covered rather than hard-covered because she wanted to enhance
the theatricality and self-reflexive nature of the set in support of the production concept by seeing the flats shake when doors are slammed or actors run furiously around the stage. The zig-zag alignment of the flats made for better sight lines. However, with the flats sitting on two different angles, their construction had to be carefully considered.

Research dictated that the lower level of the tiring house contain three doors. The designer decided to make each a different type. The center opening had a rather odd shape; its pair of door shutters had to be specially made of 3/4” plywood and opened upstage. The stage right door utilized a stock shutter and was installed with double-action hinges on its offstage side. The stage left door was a bi-fold shutter, purchased for the show, also hinged on its offstage side.

Originally, the second level platform was to extend the entire length of the tiring house. However, the director determined he would not block the actors in the seating areas with the cut-outs, so the platform was contained within the center section of the wall. The platform was made up of stock units and stood nearly 8'-6” above deck level upon stud walls. The stairs to the upper level were in two parts with a landing half way up. All units except for the railing sections were stock.
Wrapped around the proscenium on either side of the stage stood the seating boxes. They consisted of two soft-covered flats each that formed an L-shape. The longer flat ran from the plaster line, at a angle parallel to that of the proscenium’s thickness, to within a foot of the edge of the stage. The narrower flat connected with the other at its downstage end, and ran parallel to the front of the proscenium. The cut-out audience members “seated” in these side boxes were loose-pin-hinged to the floor and braced with 1 x 4’s. The cut-outs in the tiring house were screwed to a 2 x 4 wooden frame that was attached to the back of the flats above the side doors and supported from below with 2 x 4 legs. At the beginning of the design process, cut-outs were to sit on stools and benches on the stage floor, in the same areas the grocer and his wife were to sit. Upon seeing the actual size of the areas on either side of the raised deck and the action blocked in them, the designer decided to cut those figures and have only the two actors reside there.

A trial load-in was scheduled for late in August. The major structural elements had to be completed by that time so they could be installed and checked for fit and possible problems. It was hoped the set could remain onstage until the director returned. However, due to the summer rental schedule in the space, the set was onstage for only three days. The raked deck and tiring house were installed
in one morning’s work. While the tiring house was dismantled that afternoon, the deck remained so the designer could paint it. Upon completion of the painting, the deck was dismantled and stored. This trial run greatly eased the process of actual load-in. “Bugs” had already been worked out, parts labeled, and the proper sequence had previously been established by the October 26 date.

Originally, the designer wanted the entire look of the proscenium opening to be in keeping with the the world of the fictional theatre company; she had planned to paint the proscenium to look like a period portal. However, this idea was thrown out due to time constraints and the realization that the bare black proscenium was a good place to start the movement into the colorful world of the play. There began with the Thurber proscenium arch a graduation to the production’s tiring house, that ran through the soft portal made of colorful draperies, the tall soft-covered flats, and black masking drapes, both to the sides and above the tiring house. The sides of the soft portal were the theatre’s orange grand drape. The top portion was created from draping stock remnants of green, red, gold, and wine colored velour. These were arranged on a batten and then transferred to the bottom of the hard teaser for convenient operation. Light green velour drapes were also attached to the front edge of the raked deck where it extended over the audience
seating to mask the understructure. The sides of the deck were masked with black duvetyne.

When the set was first designed, the detailing of the tiring house in Inigo Jones' drawings was going to be adhered to closely. However, the design was too stately and grandiose for Beaumont's comedy. The designer proceeded to research Tudor-style buildings whose rough wooden frames were more in keeping with the style of the production. A framing pattern was designed for the tiring house, working around the door and box openings and arrangement of the flats. For a time, the designer was at a loss as to what type of pattern should go between the framing members. The solution was found on the side of a building on the OSU campus. On the back side of the Honors House on Twelfth Avenue in a section of a stucco wall is a patch of bricks etched into the cement. The bricks run on a diagonal and are inconsistent in size. This "brick" pattern was freely adapted for use on the set. The tiring house and boxes could not be taken for anything but a theatre set with bricks running at a multitude of crazy angles with no standard size. This quality was further enhanced by outlining the bricks and wood framing with black markers, which flattened out the design and created the look of a coloring book drawing.
As mentioned earlier, the director wanted the set to be quite colorful. With ample money in the budget, the technical director suggested the designer have the experience of using only scenic paint. The designer painted the model with a sample kit of Rosco Super-saturated® paint, and decided to paint the set with Super-saturated as well. The floor was painted while it was still onstage for the trial load-in. The masonite was first given a base coat of warm beige mixed from white and burnt umber. Watered-down mixtures of red, yellow ochre, orange, and pthalo blue were then freely brushed on in various-sized patches and wet-blended together. The final layer was a very watery burnt umber wash. The next day planks were drawn in with black marker with the aid of a straight-edge. The planks followed the slope of the rake from upstage to downstage, and were of varying widths and lengths. The overall effect was of a worn wooden floor, but the suggestions of red, yellow, orange, and blue made it more interesting and festive.

The flats were painted after the trial load-in. The flats were laid out on the stage floor on plastic sheets. They were cartooned with markers after the beige base coat was dry. The intricate pattern of wooden framing and brickwork took several days to complete. The next step was to apply the color washes as indicated in the parts of the model. This procedure went quickly as the paint
was applied in large graduated washes; no complex detailing was desired from the paint. There was the problem of containing the watery paint within the drawn lines. This was done with both the paint brush and paper towels. Once the washes were sufficiently dry, burnt umber was painted in the areas of the wooden framing. This was followed with the shadows. Linear shadows were arranged underneath and to the right of the framing pieces, assuming the sun was high on the stage left side. The shadows were painted in two layers, one purple, and one green. The layering of the two colors created a grey that was more lively than one comprised of black and white. The final step was to spatter areas of the flats with brown, green, and purple paint. Spattering made the set look aged and worn.

The cartooning of the door shutters differed from the model. The model's central pair of shutters looked too ornate and high-class. Their look was simplified by drawing narrow vertical planks, with horizontal members above and below the window openings and toward the bottom edge of the shutters. The double-action door altered only in the width of the planks which widened immensely. The large ornate painted hinges remained, but were painted black instead of gold, as was the simple cartooned handle. The bi-fold shutter in the model was drawn as a contemporary bi-fold louvered
door. Upon reflection, the designer decided to have the shutter’s vertical seam dutchmanned and paint the shutter like a normal-action door, with wide vertical planks, large nail heads and three small windows. With the true nature of the door camouflaged, the audience was surprised upon its first use.

The painting of the cut-out figures followed the same process as that of the flats. They were first covered with the base coat and cartooned. They were then painted with the same washes used in the tiring house, with the addition of the green, purple, and brown of the shadows and framing. White was also used to paint the lace collars and cuffs of the period costumes. Sparing use was also made of black. Care was taken to paint the figures that “sat” together in the boxes in different color combinations.

To break up the linear look of the set’s profile, the designer designed four-inch circles to sit atop the the walls. They were positioned as extensions of the vertical framing pieces painted on the flats. A profile chicken also sat on the top of the tiring house at its extreme outside edges. The impetus for these additions was photographs of Julia Trevelyan Oman’s set for *A Man for All Seasons* \(^{24}\) and Chris Dyer’s *The Roaring Girl* \(^{25}\) in the book *British"*
Theatre Design [Figure 16]. Both sets had intricate profiles; Oman achieved this by having creatures sitting on top of pillars and walls. These creatures took the form of chickens on Pestle’s set. A further adaptation of Oman’s creatures could be seen in the ducks painted on the flats on the downstage seating boxes. The addition of colorful 1/4” plywood flags to the central peak of the tiring house and the ends and intersection of the flats of the seating boxes shortly before opening furthered the break-up of the set’s profile and greatly increased the festiveness of the look of the production.

Footlights for the stage were found in the theatre’s storage. Six were spaced along the downstage-most edge of the raked deck. They were wired by the electrics crew to light up in sequence and equipped with A-lamps. A light fixture found in the trap room of Thurber Theatre served as the chandelier hanging over the stage. Four other chandeliers were built based on its design. These were dead hung in the house, allowing the world of the play to invade what is traditionally the domain of the audience.

The set designed for OSU’s production of The Knight of the Burning Pestle provided a wonderfully comic environment in which the actors could relate the play to its audience. However, it was only one aspect of a tightly integrated production. The union of the set, lights, costumes, and acting styles was what made the world of the
play cohesive, and the production a success.
CHAPTER V

PRODUCTION JOURNAL

This chapter is a record of the design process from the initial drawings to the opening performance.

Rex McGraw presented a list of musings concerning his view of the show in the production meeting held June 2, 1992. Budgets for the various areas were also identified. That weekend, the designers had their creative session in which ideas were exchanged and a concept began to develop. The following week when the preliminary set design was due, initial sketches and a rough ground plan were presented to the director along with a detailed description of the concept developed by the team of designers as to the multiple layers of the production. The director liked what he saw and heard; the set designer was allowed to proceed developing the final drawings.

While Dr. McGraw was away for the last half of the month of June, the ground plan was drafted, along with front elevations of the flats. Upon his return on July 1, the director saw a white model of the set and the ground plan. He approved the design, asked that the
paint be very colorful, and left town for the rest of the summer quarter.

Both design and construction drawings were completed on time; construction began the third week of July. Several walls could be pieced together from stock flats. The floor also utilized few new platform sections; stock 4' x 8' 's made up most of the configuration. Stud walls for the rake were constructed.

By late August, all flats and platforms were built; and a trial load-in was successfully accomplished. The deck was installed and the masonite laid on top and cut to fit. The five flats that formed the tiring house were put up to make sure they fit together properly. Platforms for the center upper level were found. The staircase leading to the upper level was built in sections to allow storage until the actual load-in. The flats were taken down the same day, but the deck remained so the floor could be painted. The painting and cartooning took two days to complete, after which the masonite was removed, labeled, and stacked in order to be ready for the actual load-in.

During this same time, the cartoon figures were projected onto masonite and luan using an opaque-projector, traced, and cut-out. The profiles were then attached to 1 x 3 "popsicle sticks" and covered with muslin. Their cartooning took place about a week later
Soon after the trial load-in, the five tiring house flats were cartooned with markers. Cartooning was quite tedious as the scene designer was also the scenic artist. Painting went much faster as it was loose watercolor washes over a beige base coat. The brick areas were washes of blue, red, yellow, and orange; woodwork was brown; and shadows were layered green on purple. Spattering areas with brown, green, and purple was the final step. These flats and the cartoon figures were completed by the last week of September. The flats for the seating boxes and the tall side flats were worked on and completed in October.

Details for the flats were made at this time also. Students working in the Scenic Studio cut eighty spindles out of 1/4” plywood for the railings. Four inch diameter 1/2” plywood circles were also cut out to go on the tops of the flats. Both the spindles and the circles were sealed and painted brown.

Shortly before load-in on October 26, the designer created the soft portal. Stock velour draperies were found in deep red and green, wine, and gold. These materials were draped and intertwined on a batten. Once the arrangement was finalized, the portal was transferred to the hard teaser and flown to its trim position.

Soon after the director returned to town, set props were discussed. Two profile trees and a dimensional rock were built for
use in the forest scenes. They were designed as obvious set props, keeping with the concept for the rest of the set. The trees were constructed from a 4' x 8' sheet of 1/4” plywood each, cartooned and painted. They were easily moved by an actor. Needing to seat two people and be easily carried, the rock was constructed of plywood and chicken wire and had two levels. It was loosely covered with muslin and painted with washes.

Load-in successfully occurred the week of October 26. The lift area of the apron had been lowered to the appropriate level several days before so it would sufficiently settle. Even so, supports had to be installed under the lift to maintain the necessary level. Load-in followed the same process as that of the trial run--first the rake and masonite decking were installed and then the tiring house. Installation of the upper level and its escape stairs happened next. The three door shutters were also installed so the actors could get used to working with them. The bi-fold door occasionally jumped its track when it was moved too quickly or with too much force. Once the track was straightened and the actors were warned to take care, the door worked properly. The central pair of doors had to be removed and have holes for windows cut into them.

The following week the seating boxes were installed and reinforced so the actors could lean against them. Frames were
installed over both single doors in the main wall to which the cut-out figures could be attached. Some of their "popsicle sticks" had to be trimmed so the actors would not run into them as they entered or exited the stage. The large side flats were installed by dead-hanging them to the grid and screwing them to the stage floor, allowing for upstage entrances by the actors. The footlights were added to the front edge of the stage and were wired by the electrics crew to light up independently.

The main chandelier was hung at this time also. It was rigged and wired to lower to the deck to be lit and "blown out" by an actor as if he were lighting and dowsing candles. The chandelier was an old fixture that had been left at the theatre. Its original wiring was in a series circuit. The sixteen new candle-shaped lamps were re-wired by the master electrician into a parallel circuit. The candles had to be "lit" in the proper order; the starter candle was clearly marked so the actor could find it easily.

During this time, the eleven scene-placing signs were cut out as well. They were made of 1/4" plywood and painted beige, with brown trim. The words were in the color scheme of the set and in script letters. Originally, the design team discussed having the titles of *The London Merchant* scenes be painted on placards and placed on a stand downstage right near the proscenium. *The Knight of the
Burning *Pesile* scene titles were to be hand-written on different placards and placed in front of the others. However, as the design evolved, no place near the proscenium seemed suitable due to foot traffic and sight-lines. The best place for the signs became on hooks next to the doorways in the side walls of the tiring house. This arrangement allowed one sign next to one door to place the both the particular door and the whole stage at a specific place and allow for quick changes. For example, the sign labeled “The Merrythoughts” was consistently placed on the hook next to the bi-fold door. This set up the notion that when that particular sign was in place, anyone using the bi-fold door was either entering or leaving the Merrythought house.

The creation of the pestle for Rafe was rather involved. The handle was a length of 4 x 4 turned on a lathe. The large end was built up of layers of 1 x 10’s glued and clamped together and subsequently turned. The small end was a ball finnial. The parts were glued and screwed together.

Other properties included the coffin, bread, syringe, and three horses. The coffin had to carry both a man and a woman separately. It was constructed of 1 x 10 white pine slats, with U-shaped 2 x 2 framing supports lag-bolted together. Rope handles were added to both sides and both ends as the arrangement of pall bearers was
altered. The diet bread was sculpted out of white bead board, sealed and painted. The over-size syringe was shaped on the band saw and belt sander out of a two inch diameter wooden pole. The “rubber stopper” was of 1 x 4. Painted black, white and silver, the syringe looked very real from the house.

The director had requested the use of three horses for Rafe and his men. The horses—one white, two brown—had been built for a production of Indians several years earlier. They had been designed to be worn by an actor, supported with a harness over the shoulders. The horses had been loaned to another university, and their return was delayed due to travel difficulties. However, they arrived in ample time for the actors to get accustomed to them. All three horses needed some refurbishing. One had to be enlarged and reinforced with metal bands to accommodate the largest of the three actors.

The four chandeliers designed to hang over the house were completed and installed just before the opening date. The chandeliers were modeled on the original hanging over the stage. The base of each was a 3/4” plywood hollow circle, 2’-10” in diameter and 4 1/2” wide. The spokes were shaped from 1 1/2” wide strap steel. Several thicknesses were tried before one was found malleable enough to form the intricate design. The spokes
were attached to the base on the bottom and a nine inch circle of 2 x 10 at the top. A nine inch diameter plastic bowl sat upside down on the wooden circle. It was painted with alternating brown and black stripes so that the spokes appeared to continue. Fourteen "candles" were wired to each chandelier hanging over the house. These did not require that the candles light independently, the chandeliers were used to reinforce and motivate the house lights. All five chandeliers were suspended from the house ceiling by lengths of hemp.

Plywood flags were added to the top central peak of the set and the ends and intersections of flats on both seating boxes breaking the profile and making the set more festive. Wine colored drapes and blacks were hung in the upper central opening. The drapes were for decoration while the blacks served as masking and gave Merrythought some stage business.

The set was completed in good time for opening and within budget. There was little for the scene designer to do at tech and dress rehearsals. Some of the properties needed finishing details -- adding ribbons to the musical instruments, fixing the ears on the horses, and finalizing the order of the signs. The budget for Pestle's scenery and props was $3550.00. Less than half of the money was spent in the realization of the design.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter is a summary of the effectiveness of design choices. The designer's artistic development and fulfillment of production responsibilities will also be evaluated.

The assessment of three issues was the means by which the relative success or failure of Pestle's scene design was judged. The first issue was whether the scene designer was able to visually fulfill the production concept. The second criteria was the designer's ability to provide the physical elements necessary to the play. The final major issue was the designer’s ability to complete tasks on time.

The production concept was developed easily by the design team. The idea of creating a theatre in which a contemporary acting troupe performs period plays as the world in which The Knight of the Burning Pestle was being produced was accepted immediately by the production team. The designer’s choice to adapt the interior architecture of a
seventeenth-century theatre for use as the scenery for the production fulfilled the production’s concept quite well. The colorful palette enhanced the comic nature of the play as well. The use of the scene titles, while being a period convention, also greatly aided the audience in following the action. The director seemed quite pleased with the choices made by the scene designer.

While the members of the production team seemed to interpret the layering concept differently, the overall quality of the production did not seem overly compromised. However, the preshow bit of action may have worked more as intended if there had been other business happening as the audience entered as well. Early in the process, the team had discussed having the acting troupe adjusting scenery, props, and costumes, and warming up voices and instruments in view and hearing of the audience. If this other business were happening during pre- and postshow, the audience would probably not have immediately quieted upon the entrance of the candle-lighter.

The set had several physical requirements to fulfill. The action needed an open stage, versatile enough to accommodate both large and small scenes. This was accomplished by the use
of the raised raked deck. The small areas to the sides of the
deck were well designed for use by the grocer and wife. These
peripheral areas were also utilized by musicians. The
multitude and variety of entrances and exits were distributed
well about the set, creating both ease and comic effect. The
pace of the play was facilitated by the use of the scene-title
signs and the minimal set pieces quickly shifted by actors.

The final criterion was the issue of time-management.
During the design process, the designer completed the drawings
by the date specified. Construction began as scheduled and a
trial load-in was successfully completed. The construction
period went well due to both the planning of the technical
director and the hard work of the student crew. The scene
designer was also the scenic artist and properties manager.
These multiple roles occasionally created a slight back-log in
either area, but none that could not be quickly remedied.
Except for some detailing, the painting was finished long before
load-in. Everything ran so smoothly that during tech week,
both the scene designer and technical director were reduced to
nit-picking during notes sessions.

The experience of working on The Knight of the Burning
Pestle was a very positive one for the scene designer, and a
catalyst for growth for the scene designer in many ways. Collaboration was quite strong among members of the design team; ideas flowed quite easily between members and allowed designs to develop quickly. The seeming effortless process and great unity of designs was a wonderful experience for the scene designer, the extent of which she had never before encountered. In part, this may have due to the extensive research the scene designer had done for a paper on the probable original production practices for Pestle in the Spring quarter of 1992, and shared with the rest of the production team. To be honest, the scene designer probably would not have researched the play to such a depth had it not been required for the paper. As it happened, the prior research gave the design (and the designer) a strong focus that aided in the quick execution of both choices and drawings.

Due to Pestle's process and product, the scene designer's confidence was bolstered immensely. She proved to herself and her instructors that she could work in a professional manner, meeting time and budget limitations and communicating with others involved in the production. Both the designer's skill and confidence grew in her artistic ability to both design and paint a set and a model. This was furthered
by the production's wonderful reception by audiences and the favorable critique by an American College Theatre Festival adjudicator.

Professor Harlene Marley of Kenyon College attended the show the night of November 13. Afterwards, she met with the scene and costume designers to give feedback. Professor Marley was quite pleased with the designs and thoroughly enjoyed the play. She formally recommended the costume and scene designs enter the American College Theatre Festival Region III Design Competition, held in Carbondale, Illinois, in January 1993. Professor Marley's comments are contained in Appendix E. Both of Pestle's entries received Honorable Mention in the competition. Without question, the scene designer's belief in herself and her work has grown enormously because of OSU's production of The Knight of the Burning Pestle.
APPENDIX A

CHRONOLOGIES
BEAUMONT CHRONOLOGY

1584-1585  Beaumont born at Grace-Dieu
1597 4  February, enters Broadgates Hall, Oxford
1600  November, enters Inner Temple
1600-1605 Grammar Lecture
1602 Salmacis and Hermaphroditus (narrative poem)
1606 The Woman Hater
1607 The Knight of the Burning Pestle
1608 Cupid’s Revenge *
1609 “An Elegy on the Lady Markham”
   The Coxcomb *
   Philaster *
1610 The Scornful Lady *
   The Maid’s Tragedy *
1611 A King and No King
1613 The Masque of the Inner Temple and Gray’s Inn
   Elegy for Lady Penelope Clifton
   Marries Ursula Isley, leaves London for Kent
1616 Dies March 6; buried in “Poets’ Corner”

* with John Fletcher

28 Bliss, n. pag.
March 1901--American Academy of Dramatic Art at NY Empire Theatre

March 1903--Stanford University

November 1904--Mermaid Society at Royalty Theatre, London

December 1905--Chicago Musical Theatre at the Studebaker Theatre

1908--Gaiety in Manchester

August 1919--Birmingham Repertory

April 1923--Barnard College--all-female production

March 1942--London, Raynes Park County School junior boys' class

January 1932--Old Vic

October 1953--Off-Broadway Theatre de Lys, Greenwich Village

March 1971--Theatre Ouvert at the Maison de la Culture de Bourges

May 1972--University of Illinois, the Depot--sick actor playing Rafe replaced by director reading from script

April 1981--Royal Shakespeare Company at the Aldwych

August 1990--Third Stage, Stratford

---Beaumont 44-46.
APPENDIX B

DIRECTOR’S STATEMENT
MISCELLANEOUS MUSINGS
about
THE KNIGHT OF THE BURNING PEDESTAL

This is not a concept statement because I haven't figured out yet what the hell this play is all about. Having read it twelve times, I am still reading certain scenes and saying to myself, "What was that all about?" So here are a few reactions/reflections about the play which may or may not help the designers.

1. The play is a play within a play, so we need a stage within a stage and a false proscenium and two sets of box seats on each side.

2. The scenes with the Grocer and his wife, plus others will be re-written into contemporary dialogue. We now have the address of Elliot Hayes, dramaturg and playwright for the Stratford Festival in Ontario. He adapted the play and we are waiting to get a copy of the play. Anyway, it would help the audience if the Grocer and Wife spoke in understandable English so they would have some help in deciphering the action of the play within the play. Therefore, these two people plus Fare at the beginning need to be dressed in 1950's, 60's, some funny era close to 1990's. They cannot be 90's because they are from another generation.

3. The play-within-the-play (KBP) should be period something/ story book approach/Disney/Classic Comics, something romantic. Exaggeration would be helpful. I.e., a large puppet giant to fight the knight (or one man on the shoulders of another or a man on stilts): Waltham Forest could be dark and scary like Snow White or Hansel and Gretel: the mystical land of Moldavia could come out of the Arabian Nights. Etc. There are rapid and many scene changes. Locales that I have guessed at:

Induction: In the Theatre/Before A Curtain
Act I-I: The Merchant's Place
1: Fare and friends at a Grocer's/On stage
3: The Merrythought's Home
Interlude: The Stage
Act II-I: The Merchant's
1: On the Road--Waltham Forest
3: Further on Down the Road
4: Town's End, In Front of Bell Inn
5: Merchant's
6: Merrythought's Home
Interlude: The Stage
Act III-I: Another Part of the Forest
1: Inside the Inn
3: Outside the Giant's Cave on a cliff? a pole?
4: Outside the Merrythought's (A door/a window)
Interlude: The Stage
Act IV - 1. The Theatre/Stage????
  2. Court of the King of Moldavia
  3. Merchant 3
  4. Merrythought's or Theatre
Interlude: The Stage
Act V - 1. Merchant's (a ghost appears)
  2. Soldier Scene - where?
  3. Merchant's (door needed)
  4. Open stage ??

4. Costumes:
   Again. Disney/romantic/Snow White.
   Solid colors, bright, idealized fairy tale
   Some double casting possible:
      Tapster/Greengoose
      Host/Hamerton
   We do need boys, servants, soldiers, coffin carriers

5. Music:
   There are 35 songs plus other musical things within the
   text. They suggest a live orchestra. I have some document-
   tation of songs, mostly John Dowland. But we will need
   help here. Mr. Merrythought has to sing and sing a lot.

6. Lighting:
   Colorful and theatrical. The boxes, if we go that way will
   have to be lighted throughout. There are so many inter-
   jections by the Grocer and Wife.

7. Length:
   The script really has to be cut, which I will do after I
   see the Hayes version. It should not last more than two
   hours--nobody could take it.

So that's where I am and I am mused out.
APPENDIX C

FIGURES
Figure 1. Inigo Jones' Drawing of a Playhouse.\footnote{Sturgess 36.}
Figure 2. Groundplan Based on Jones' Drawings.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{39} Sturgess 40.
Figure 8. Front Elevations.
Figure 12. Detail - Trees and Rock.
Figure 16. Profile Research Ideas.
Plate I. Photograph of Model.
Plate III. Set Photograph - The Forest.
Plate IV. Set Photograph - The Final Tableau.
Plate V. Set Photograph - Seating Boxes.
Plate VI. Photograph of Signs.
Plate VII. Photograph of Shield and Pestle.
APPENDIX E

ACTF CRITIQUE
American College Theatre Festival  Region III
Production Critique

Send original to director of production. Send copy to:

Tom Oosting, Chair Region III ACTF  (517) 629-0346; FAX 517-629-0509
Department of Theatre
Albion College
Albion, Michigan  49224

Please have the original and the copy in the mail no later than 72 hours after seeing the production.

Production Type: X Associate ___ Participating ___ Original Play ___ Student written
___ Costume Design Entry ___ Scenery Design Entry

Date critique written  11/13/92   Adjudicator  Harlene Marley

Producing college/university  Ohio State

Title of production  Knight of the Burning Pestle

Date production seen  11/12/92   Director  Rex McGraw

Stage Manager  Terri McKean   Scenic Designer  Chrisha Siebert

Make-up Designer  XX   Lighting Designer  Jim Knapp

Costume Designer  Damita C. Peace   Musical Director  Holly Huprich

Technical Director  Mark Shanda  Props  ***

Other Key Personnel  Voice Coach: Philip Thompson; Assistant Director: Dallas Dan Hessler

Running time of Production  (Include intermission)  2½ hours

Irene Ryan Acting Award Nominee(s): The director may nominate only one (1) candidate. If you feel extremely strongly about one or two additional performers, you and any other adjudicators on the team may nominate a total of two more performers. Include all names on this form.

Tony Manzo; Andrea Biggs

For Associate entries only: Recommended for the Evening of Scenes ___ Yes ___ No

Nominations for Certificate of Merit: Please identify any particular performance or production element which deserves particular recognition:
This was a successful and entertaining production of a very difficult play. Much of its success can be attributed to its visual production. The setting suggested a cartoon version of an Elizabethan playhouse, complete with cartoon pop-up people watching from the painted galleries (well, some of them were sleeping or ogling a neighbor’s cleavage). The cartoon feeling was enhanced by obviously two dimensional cross timbering and iron work, as well as a pastel color wash over crazy painted masonry which clearly wasn’t meant to fool anybody. The chickens on the finials helped too. The painted platform extended several feet beyond the theatre’s proscenium arch, and together with chandeliers hung well out into the house, the set melded the living audience and the painted one in a fictional world in which crazy things could happen. And because the design made full use of the architecture and was skillfully painted, this was an environment in which actors and audience could interact, rather than a backdrop that they acted in front of. In this visual world, it was entirely believable that the citizen, his wife, and Rafe could be emissaries from the contemporary world, watching, participating in, and sometimes interfering with a Jacobean acting company performing a romance called THE LONDON MERCHANT.

The set was skillfully painted, so that it “read” but didn’t call attention to itself, and well constructed, a necessity since it had to take a lot of wear and tear from the stage business. The cartoon forest (moved three feet, the trees became another part of the forest), and especially the hoop-skirt horses were particularly effective. The lighting gave plenty of illumination with sparkle rather than glare; color choices complemented both set and costumes, and the obvious bumed up cues underlined the comedy.

The costumes of the play within the play were a fine example of good research used in a theatrically effective way. The “costume” which cost the clothes in the play within the play made clear that these were actors in costumes; while historically accurate in both silhouette and detail, the pantaloons were just a little too wide, the collars a little too lacy, Mrs. Merrythought a little too upholstered. The choice of strong colors, echoed by the drapery of the “heavens” above the acting platform, further enhanced the costumes’ theatricality, as did the “pulled” pieces worn by Rafe and the actors in his play within the play within the play, e.g., the Monster Barbarossa and the “army” whose “uniforms,” consisting of vivid blue sashes, were especially effective. Moreover, color choice and control helped to clarify who, among the characters, was on whose side and which play each belonged to. In short, the costumes not only helped to clarify the script’s complex levels of reality and—for want of a better term—plot, but also underlined the romance in THE LONDON MERCHANT and enhanced the comedy of all the plays.

My only quibbles were with the Prologue and the Boy That Singeth and Danceth, whose costumes and makeup didn’t quite blend with
the other LONDON MERCHANT actors, and the Citizen, whose suit and sideburns suggested an Edwardian merchant rather than the refugee from Ameriflora suggested by his wife's wonderfully dowdy dress. Like the scenery, the clothes were very well cut and constructed (and they had to take even more wear and tear). They were complemented by good wigs and wonderful boots.

Director and actors are to be congratulated for making the play's complexities crystal clear and very funny. The choice to make Mr. and Mrs. Citizen contemporaries, with skillful adaptation of the script, was a wise one because it gave the contemporary audience a way into the play and also provided lots of comic opportunities, of which director and actors took full advantage. The production was characterized by a consistently interesting and lively stage picture, inventive and funny stage business, and a good brisk pace with a strong rhythmic control. The actors did a fine job of playing in the large scale demanded by the action, while maintaining their commitment to the characters' realities; in other words, while the scale of the acting was large and the strokes broad, it was wholly believable in context and consistently entertaining. The ensemble playing was strong. Rafe, Jasper, Humphrey, Mrs. Citizen, and Mrs. Merrythought gave especially good performances. The whole cast benefited from good vocal work.

The production was enlivened by live music and sound effects capably performed by the actors.
LIST OF REFERENCES


