A STUDY OF THE PROBLEMS IN THE PRODUCTION OF FOLK FANTASY

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CHAPTER I

DISCOVERING THE PROBLEM

"What prevented the emergence of a native drama more than a century ago in this country was the lack of a true sense of ~~space~~ place." Regions were considered only in a vague physical sense, not as fertile background material for drama. The little bits of legend that were passed from mouth to mouth finally found themselves on the written page, and a consciousness of regional heritage was born. "Native oddities, native manners, native folk-ways became the subject of ballad, of story, and finally, the stage and the play."[1] Native character types were eventually born also with the advent of pageants to celebrate local events.

On the stage evidences of such localizing are to be found as early as 1857, when in Neighbor Jackwood, by J. T. Trowbridge, one of the characters shouts, "Hurrah for old Vermont and our New England manners and customs. . .our people believe in law and order."[2]

In our present century the playwright has begun to draw lines between the plainsman and the mountaineer, the cowboy and the gold prospector. With such an examination he

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[1]Felix Sper, From Native Roots (Caldwell, Idaho: The Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1948), p. 15.

[2]Ibid.

eventually uncovered a truth. "From common physiographic features and common ways of living and thinking is derived the pattern of culture peculiar to a region."[3]

As slowly as man discovered his sense of space in America, so too was the playwright slow, in discovering the American "type." For some time following the announcement of Darwin's theory of evolution in 1859, the playwright still refused to incorporate into drama the promise that the human animal is conditioned by environment. Even though Ibsen had pointed out how character and personality were related to locale, it was not until the first decade of this century that the American playwright understood it, and began to practice it.

Some four decades ago the literary renaissance of Ireland turned into a folk drama renaissance in reality. The Irish turned from literature to drama, giving the world what is generally regarded as the most complete expression of modern folk drama. J. M. Synge, William Butler Yeats, and Lady Gregory and their combined works at the famed Abbey Theatre in Dublin, spread its influence throughout the world. It was 1911 that the Irish players from the Abbey Theatre caused dramatic disturbance in this country, when they presented a series of one-act plays on peasant life in the

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[3]Felix Sper, op. cit., p. 17.

country. The impact of J. M. Synge's Riders to the Sea made him the father of the American folk play.[4] The most prolific results of this influence are probably evidenced with the work of Frederick H. Koch and his efforts in North Dakota and North Carolina.

> The theory of democracy and the rise of the common man in the last century have no doubt given a new literary value to peasant and folk-life, and the dramatists have availed themselves of the rich fields of native wisdom and imagination hitherto unexplored.[5]

Since native folk drama has grown up in America, this country has evolved a sort of folk play that is all its own. It is concerned with themes and people that are unmistakably American, although it differed very little in form from the folk dramas of other countries. At the beginning of the twentieth century Percy Mackaye tried his hand at folk drama and found a rich fund of material for Mater and some of the Yankee Fantasies. But it was not until 1923 that Mackaye brought his first full-length folk play to the stage in This Fine-Pretty World. Unfortunately this piece turned out to be the product of a poet overjoyed with the discovery of a new language, rather than the product of a playwright whose chief concern was with the people.[6]

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[4]Felix Sper, op. cit., p. 19.

[5]Paul Green, "Folk Drama Defined," The Carolina Playbook, XIX (December, 1932), 97-99.

[6]Barrett H. Clark, "Our New American Folk Drama," The English Journal, XVI (December, 1927), 760.

The same year, 1923, brought out several more folk plays in Lula Vollmer's Sun-up and The Shame Woman and Hatcher Hughes' Hell-Bent for Heaven. Vollmer and Hughes were both natives of North Carolina, the same region that three years later was to produce Paul Green.[7] The preservation of the folk idiom and dialect is not the only concern of these playwrights; they are intent on depicting the life of the people they knew in the mountains and the plains.[8]

Lynn Riggs, coming from Oklahoma, had his first play produced at the American Laboratory Theatre. Big Lake is a lyrical tragedy of adolescence, seizing upon the fleeting moments of a young love to make a play. Sumpin' Like Wings and A Lantern to See By are more realistic in treatment. Riggs seems to look at the world from a fresh viewpoint. "He writes as though the small world known to his characters were the only world in the universe."[9]

Paul Green is far more than an exemplar of this form called folk drama. When he received the Pulitzer Prize for his play In Abraham's Bosom a cry arose from Broadway and most of Broadway's critics. They felt the play lacked

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[7]Glenn Hughes, A History of the American Theatre. (New York: Samuel French and Co., 1951), p. 401.

[8]Barrett H. Clark, op. cit., p. 762.

[9]Ibid., p. 765.

"finish." True the play had attracted the attention of the Provincetown Playhouse, way down in the village, but it was not in a class with Saturday's Children. It had a kick, it is true, but not the sort of kick that most people want in the theatre. Besides, the characters had "sweaty bodies," their jokes were "indecent," and one could see their bare toes "entangled among the pea vines."[10] Mr. Green had hit the critics right between the eyes and only a few of them knew they had been hit and were able to tell anything about it. George Jean Nathan wrote never a word about the play, with the exception of a single line in Judge that ran something like, "Oh, Pulitzer, what crimes are committed in thy name!"

Fortunately, Paul Green's art had more than just begun to "compass" the life about him. It was in White Dresses, written in 1920, that he showed unmistakable signs of genius. The theme, concerning a Negro girl in love with a white man, recurs in his later work, notably in The End of the Row. It is also woven into the fabric of his tragedy, In Abraham's Bosom.[11]

A fine sense of comedy prevails in his one-act plays, The Man Who Died at Twelve O'Clock, Unto Such Glory, and Quare Medicine. Here is fun that is rowdy, earthy, and

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[10]Barrett H. Clark, op. cit., p. 767.

[11]Ibid., p. 768.

occasionally of questionable taste. Mr. Green's form of drama is "earth-rooted" in the lives of a struggling humanity.

To finish a discussion of folk drama in America now would be incomplete without some mention of the many contributions of Frederick H. Koch. Koch believed that drama is the most objective of all literary arts--the most vital. The arrival of new playwrights in his time such as Maxwell Anderson, Lynn Riggs, Dan Totheroh, and Paul Green, who to him were theatre poets as well as playwrights, held out great promise for "The Great American Drama" that was in the offing. Koch's particular interest was in locality--and in the making of fresh dramatic forms in playwriting and in acting, for he believed that if a young writer observed locality and interpreted it faithfully, it might show him the way to the universal.[12]

Koch's prairie plays of Dakota were often crude, but they were honest. Simple folk plays, near to the good, strong, wind-swept soil--plays telling of long bitter winters in the little sod shanty. In his own words they were, "plays of the travail and achievement of the prairie people."[13]

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[12]Frederick H. Koch, "Making A Regional Drama," Bulletin of the American Library Association, XXI (August, 1932), 1-8.

[13]Ibid.

With the formation at the University of North Carolina of the Carolina Playmakers, a new era was begun. Barrett Clark indicates that before that time, the entire state was stricken from the Samuel French mailing list. Now there was to be playwriting and acting everywhere in North Carolina, a state-wide Carolina Dramatic Association, and an Annual Dramatic Festival and Tournament, which was to draw people from all over the state. Koch says:

> The rare characters and the homely qualities of these plays linger in one's memory long after some of the more sophisticated plays of Broadway have been forgotten. In fact, each time we witness a program of the Carolina Folk-Plays, we feel for the moment, that we too, are just 'folks'--along with those other folk on the other side of the footlights, who transport us for a brief but happy period back to the hill country, with its rich traditions, legends and folklore.[14]

In studying the production problems involved in folk fantasy it would seem best to begin with a definition of the problem presenting subject--folk fantasy. In surveying the writings of some of the more renowned American folk authors--Lynn Riggs, Frederick Koch, Marc Connelly, and Paul Green--perhaps such a definition can be determined.

Since folk fantasy will be accepted as a form of folk drama by this writer, Paul Green's definition will be applicable. Mr. Green declares folk drama to be a type of drama dealing with "less sophisticated people, usually rural or

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[14]Frederick H. Koch, op. cit., p. 7.

primitive folk."[15] The characters in these plays are almost always depicted as lacking the refinements of a cultured society; they are governed by the rules of the physical world. Their ideas, mores, and religions are promoted by the processes of nature rather than by the societies and institutions of men.

In earlier years the folk dramas were more or less reportorial in nature, concerned chiefly with the life of underprivileged rural people. Samuel Seldon tells us the characters were poor and unhappy. "The picturization of them was dark--sometimes very dark indeed!"[16] In later years playwrights have widened the perspective on such characters and situations. Playwrights have now become more interested in the whole man, giving the audience more than a colorful presentation of his external personality.[17] There have been folk dramas since the time of the Greeks with such plays as Prometheus Bound, King Lear, and Peer Gynt and though a definite line of differentiation cannot always be easily drawn, contrasting these dramas with Antigone, Hamlet

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[15]Paul Green, op. cit., p. 97.

[16]Samuel Seldon, editor, International Folk Plays. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1949), p. viii.

[17]Ibid., p. vix.

and A Doll's House will certainly produce some demarcation.[18]

Today's folk drama is still "earth-rooted," but it is not necessarily always tragic, neither is it restricted by class or locality. Folk plays are now exponents of every kind of mood, light or dark, gay or profound, and in every style from realism to fantasy.[19] The only unchanging requisite for folk drama is that it be concerned chiefly not with smartness, wittiness, or intellectual exercise, but rather "with some fundamental hunger common to all men--a hunger for bread, shelter, affection, elemental beauty, or a little light to illuminate the mind."[20]

Folk drama as an art form has only recently been distinguished as such. When in 1846 W. J. Thomas, an Englishman, described the observances, customs, beliefs, and prejudices of the common people, he had to invent a term to cover his subject. "Folk-lore" as used by Thomas had of course been observed and noted by many writers, but it was not until well into the nineteenth century that the value of folk-lore in the study of the social history of mankind had become apparent to scholars. From Sir Walter Scott's The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border to Cecil Sharp's recent

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[18]Paul Green, op. cit., p. 97.

[19]Samuel Seldon, op. cit., p. viii.

[20]Ibid.

work in the fields of folk-song, ballad, and dance, interest and research in the subject have increased. Today there are so many divisions and ramifications of folk-lore that practically every nation, state, and county on the civilized globe has its folk-lore societies, its folk-festivals, its scholars and specialists in folk literature. The folk-arts--handicrafts, instrumental music, ballad, and dance--have been studied and exploited, and lately much has been made of folk drama. But folk drama is not folk-art and never has been. Only its subject matter is folk. Neither the dramatist nor the actor may in any sense be of the "folk" they create, and their pieces may never be seen or heard of by the type of people it portrays, and yet it is folk drama if its material is such.[21]

Lynn Riggs, who has been one of the most successful of American writers of folk drama, has said:

> What's important to me in drama is what happens to people, or between a man and his inner glowing core. I don't care whether it's happening in Texas or Connecticut. It ought to be telling something about the human heart; if it doesn't do that, there's no wisdom in it, and there's apt not to be much drama.
> . . . . . .
> Most people think of backwoods and small town life as drab and uneventful. It isn't true at all. They're practically exploding with life. . . . Outsiders never seem to se it. . . . The things in their lives are touched, handled, loved, glorified in their language. . . . But a complete and undeviating respect for character

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[21]Paul Green, op. cit., p. 99.

> and speech rhythms, I am aware, is a dangerous devotion. It seems to me that too much realism gets in the way of a play. That is, too much photographic realism. Nearly all my plays by intention, have a slight edge beyond realism. In other words, the little lying beyond realism makes them important to me. Perhaps that's what Art is--a subtle lie, for the sake of telling the truth.[22]

"The drama of the conflict of man with the forces of nature may be termed 'folk drama'."[23] This conflict may not always be apparent on the surface in the immediate action that we classify as "folk," whether the struggle be physical or spiritual, may be found in Man's desperate fight for existence.

So for the purpose of this study the term "folk drama" is used in a new sense, not restricted to the communal folk plays of Medieval times (often attributed to group authorship by scholars) which took the form of Christmas pantomimes by the village mummers, jigs, sword dances, festivals, and various other community celebrations. For the purposes of this study the term "folk drama" designates the work of a single artist dealing consciously with his materials--the ways of our less sophisticated and more elemental people, living simple lives apart from the responsibilities of a

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[22]Lynn Riggs, "When People Say 'Folk Drama'," The Carolina Play-book, IV (June, 1931), 39-41.

[23]Frederick H. Koch, "American Drama In The Making," Commencement Address delivered at the University of North Dakota, June 11, 1935.

highly organized social order. It has nothing whatever to do with folk subject matter. It goes back directly to the dramatic beginnings.

Out of the provinces that furnish our schools with most of their students has come a kind of native drama that can never be killed by even the most desperate attempts toward standardization. Barrett H. Clark says that for want of a better term, a play of this type may be called a folk play. "It is at its best a serious presentment of human beings in situations which are familiar to the inhabitants of a neighborhood or district."[24] As nearly as is possible, the language spoken by the characters in these plays is a reproduction of the idiom and dialect used by them in everyday life.

Perhaps a better way to convey these ideas would be through the use of examples: Sun-up is a folk play, Rip Van Winkle is not. The first is an honest attempt to depict country people as they really are; the second is a highly colored romantic confection in which the locale is only faintly reproduced and the characters are for the most part stock types. Sun-up tells us something about certain mountaineers and their country that is worthwhile; the many adaptations of the Irving story simply tell an interesting

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[24]Barrett H. Clark, op. cit., p. 760.

tale that might have happened anywhere and to anyone.[25]

The existence of Hatcher Highes' Ruint and This Fine-Pretty World gives us proof that there is something besides tragedy in American folk material. In The English Journal, Barret H. Clark cites the example of Mr. E. P. Conkle. Conkle is a dramatist from Nebraska who, at the time of Clark's writing (1927) had never had a play produced on the professional stage. In his one-act "'Lection," Conkle gives us uprourious folk comedy from the West. In the opening lines:

Tolman: Joe. (Silence)
Herman: Asa. (Silence)
Tolman: Jack - Herman.
Herman: Jup.
Tolman: Wur's Joe at?
Herman: Yur.
Tolman: 'Sleep?
Herman: Yuh.
Tolman: Say, Herman (spits) wot time is ut?
Herman: Nigh onto strikin' the hour.
Tolman: Which hour?
Herman: Use your judgement, Tolman.
Tolman: Wall. Whin does this yur 'lection let up?
Herman: Five, sharp.
Tolman: Sharp?
Herman: Sharp. Sharper!
Tolman: How fur is it to five now?
Herman: The long hand's up to that crack in the face, now.

Between the two election judges the ballot box is opened and a ballot altered--for reasons of political expediency--but somebody 'scratched the wrong ticket,' and

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[25]Barret H. Clark, op. cit., p. 760.

Tolman loses.

Herman: Maybe some the voters couldn't read, Tolman.
Tolman: Huh!
Herman: Yup!
Tolman: You comin' over t'night, Herman?
Herman: Looks like a speel a weather, Tolman.
Tolman: Yuh, looks like we're goin' t'have a long dry speel this winter, Herman.
Herman: Yuh, Tolman.
Tolman: Y'don't need t'git yer road iled up next 'lection, Herman.
Herman: No?
Tolman: Herman, I'll meet you again--sometime--sommers.
Herman: Same to you, Tolman.
Tolman: G'by, Herman.
Herman: G'by, Tolman.[26]

There are many representational plays which do not seek to present an image of life in terms of the externals of ordinary existence. Now the subject can be narrowed--not only is it folk drama; it is folk fantasy as well. The characters in these representational styles have obviously never lived except in the mind of the playwright--they have never had form in the real world. The motivations of such characters in such plays are not based on anything that would suggest the actions of everyday life. By the same token, their speech is not constructed to represent real speech. The subject matter of these plays is a figment of imagination and it is presented in the form of an illusion. "Like the realistic play, the fantastic play attempts to create an

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[26]Barret H. Clark, op. cit., p. 764-65.

illusion of life, independent of the theatre and the audience; but this life, instead of being the life of ordinary existence, is the life of the playwright's imagination.[27]

The real and unreal have now been combined for the purposes of defining folk fantasy. It is the aim of the writer to present adequate background material on the subject of folk fantasy, together with an analysis of the technical problems encountered in any play production, so that the reader may have some better understanding of the kind of problems he may expect in producing folk fantasy. This study is an attempt to find what technical problems may be peculiar to folk fantasy. This will be handled by means of separate considerations of lighting, staging, designing, costuming; in fact, all phases of production as encountered by the writer in a production of Howard Richardson and William Berney's Dark of the Moon, a folk fantasy in two acts and nine scenes, as presented at Bowling Green State University in the Main Auditorium, Bowling Green, Ohio, January 14th and 15th, 1953.

Since every play written will eventually involve different kinds of production problems, the problems discussed here will pertain only to the aforementioned production of Dark of the Moon, with an attempt to establish certain general

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[27]Barnard Hewitt, Play Production. (New York: J. B. Lippencott Co., 1940), p. 67-68.

principles that may be applied to any production of folk fantasy.

So often do theatre workers, students, and scholars become entangled in terminology that this writer feels it would be advisable at this point to list the terms that may be expected to appear on the following pages and to define them according to his usage. Most of those who bother to formulate definitions seem to be trying to say what they think the terms mean to others and yet avoid being specific enough to lay themselves open to criticism. While the following definitions are in the words of Richard Corson, they serve this writer's purpose as related to production techniques. If the reader does not agree with a definition of a term such as "realism" he need not hold with them, he need only acknowledge this writer's intended use:

> 1. Naturalism--applies to staging (like that of David Belasco and his conferees) which presents every conceivable item that might be found in real rooms of the period.
> 2. Realism--is the predominant style on and off Broadway. It is selective in that it is functional. Nothing is used on the stage without some definite purpose, whether for action, for atmosphere, or for decoration.
> 3. Selectivism--involves the elimination of non-essentials to simplify staging. Pure selectivism is basically a simplified realism.
> 4. Impressionism--may be defined as the elimination of non-essentials with the intent of intensifying mood and developing and emotional response.
> 5. Expressionism--is distortion with the intent of intensifying the idea and developing an intellectual (and sometimes emotional) response.

6. Stylization--is the application of a particular (usually conventionalized) style of decoration to any setting. Usually it is combined with another form.[28]

Since some background in the field has been established, a more specific survey of the production problems involved in Dark of the Moon, and its presentation at Bowling Green State University, can begin.

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[28]Richard Corson, "A Garland of 'Isms'," Theatre Arts Magazine, XXIX (December, 1945), 729-730.

CHAPTER II

DARK OF THE MOON

Dark of the Moon, a legend with music in two acts by Howard Richardson and William Berney, with incidental music by Walter Hendl, was produced by the Mssrs. Shubert at the 46th Street Theatre in New York City on March 14, 1945.[1] The play is based on a version of the "Barbara Allen" song, and came to New York by an interesting route. Awarded the Maxwell Anderson Prize at Stanford in 1942, it was produced the following year by the drama department of the University of Iowa, where H. D. Sellman directed it, in settings by John Boyt and A. S. Gillette. It came a step closer to the professional stage when it was produced at the Cambridge Summer Theatre in Massachusetts in the summer of 1944. Several producers became interested in due course, after the usual strum und drang of production, it reached New York with the two summer-theatre leads. Carol Stone and Richard Hart played Barbara and her witch-boy lover.[2]

Once again, as in Oklahoma!, Sing Out Sweet Land!, and to a lesser degree in Up In Central Park, American folk

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[1]Burns Mantle, editor, The Best Plays of 1944-45. (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1945), 421.

[2]Rosamond Gilder, "Notions, Foolish and Otherwise," Theatre Arts Magazine, XXIX (June, 1945), 262.

material was drawn on for the substance of the drama. In this case the authors used the actual story told in one of the oldest of the mountain ballads as their plot, but they have woven into it a number of songs and dances, stories and superstitions of the same period. The tune that runs like a liet-motif through the score, arranged for the play by Walter Hendl, is the familiar one brought by the Scottish and English settlers to the Carolinas and from there carried across the country and down through the generations to our own day. But the text they use is different. It is a version which Howard Richardson found while delving into American balladry for a master's thesis. The ballad itself tells the plot of Dark of the Moon inimitably:

A witch-boy from the mountain came,
  A-pinin' to be human.
Fer he had seen the fairest gal,
  The blue-eyed Barbara Allen.

"O Conjur Man, O Conjur Man,
  Please do this thing I'm wantin':
Just change me to a human man,
  Fer Barbara I'd be courtin'."

Now Barbara had a red, red dress,
  And one she had of blue,
And many men did Barbara love,
  But never was she true.

"Oh you can be a man, a man,
  If Barbara will not grieve you,
If she be faithful fer a year,
  Yer eagle he will leave you."

"Oh Barbara, will you marry me,
  And will you leave me never?"
"Oh yes, my love, I'll marry you,
  And live with you ferever."

Ferever is a long, long time,
  But a year is sometimes longer,
The blue dress mighty purty was,
  But the red dress was the stronger.

"Oh witch-boy, had you heeded me,
  Yer eagle would fly higher."
The witch-boy lost his red, red rose,
  His red rose, not the briar.[3]

In the ballad Barbara fails of her promise, but in the play a variant is introduced. After an orgy of revivalistic psalm-singing and mass hysteria, Barbara is forced by the community itself into committing adultery in order to save her immortal soul and to rid the countryside of the presence of a witch.

The treatment the authors have given this strange demon-ridden legend is schematic and external, a succession of picturesque incidents rather than a play. They have set the events of the ballad on the stage and have peopled the scene with characters from the legend and story; yet they have not entirely succeeded in injecting the whole with dramatic life. But in spite of these shortcomings the play is arresting and unusual.

The Shuberts, realizing the play's special qualities, were generous in mounting the production of the New York version. The settings were devised by George Jenkins and made bold use of the large spaces of the musical comedy

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[3]Rosamond Gilder, op. cit., p. 263.

stage and of the resources in lighting and technical effects usually reserved for that type of show. The designer who provided I Remember Mama with some high-flung backdrops and warm inset interiors, again opened the horizon on distant views--on stormcapped mountains where the moon rises behind clouds, on tall timbers against pale skies and jagged trees suggesting a haunted wood. Interiors were sketchily outlined by a piece of roof, an angle of a window, a bit of furniture to give actuality to time and place.

The settings were varied in mood between the fanciful and the real--a shifting problem of emphasis inherent in the script, and one which presented a problem to the director and actor as well as to the designer. Robert Perry, who directed for the Shuberts, was not always successful in achieving these transitions, according to the critics. The production lacked imaginative fusion, as, for instance, in the treatment of the witch-girls whose spangled-ballet costumes and chiffon draperies gave forth a violently discordant note. The modern mind apparently boggles at witches. They have been a problem to directors from Macbeth to Faust and Tannhauser, but according to Rosamond Gilder, "The little seductresses of the Carolina mountains seem more than usually out of place, suggesting the possibility that the last musical comedy had not been entirely cleared out of the

house before Dark of the Moon moved in.[4]

On the other hand, Richard Hart's witch-boy was excellently received. His close-fitting garments made him almost invisible against the jagged cliffs, his stylized movements with their suggestion of spreading wings, dark flights and unearthly wanderings, were highly commendable. Mr. Hart played the witch-boy and his semi-human phase with intensity and strangeness, while Carol Stone as Barbara, was appropriately earthy--varying between passion and bewilderment, loyalty and terror. In several of the scenes the play catches fire, reaching beyond its obvious meaning to larger implications--as when John the witch-boy tries to explain to Barbara his restlessness under the handicaps of ordinary living, his flights back to the mountain-top. "Sometimes I feel that I just can't stand bein' human!", he exclaims in desperation, voicing an age old revolt against the claims of the flesh.[5]

The fact that the co-authors of Dark of the Moon, Howard Richardson and William Berney, are cousins will surprise no one who understands the ramifications of a Southern family tree. The fact that their folk play won the Maxwell

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[4]Rosamond Gilder, op. cit., p. 265.

[5]Howard Richardson and William Berney, "Dark of the Moon," (mimeographed, Century Library Inc., New York), Act II, sc. ii.

Anderson award in 1942 seems natural too-for Dark of the Moon, despite the forgone conclusion of its plot and the tenuous shortcomings of its genre, is also an errie experiment that deserves more than a nod of recognition. But the fact that Dark of the Moon was given a Broadway production by a pair of veteran managers who have seldom been known as innovators, and the fact that a mixed cast of old hands and novices played it with obvious enjoyment of their jobs, is something else again.

In discussing their over-all purpose, the authors are firm in insisting that their story took the form of a folk play only by accident. True enough, it uses a regional technique--from the last sad-sweet twang of Uncle Smelicue's guitar to the flirting of the witch-girls, the last glory-roll at the revival meeting. But the authors used a familiar mountain legend (and mountain music to accent it) simply because this was a part of their own backgrounds.[6]

To Howard Richardson, the play makes its bid to its audience on universal terms. The same story, as he points out, was played for comedy in One Touch of Venus, and Dracula is a familiar demonic example. To William Berney, the play is simply the story of the god on earth, rejected

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[6]William du Bois, "A Couple of Southern Cousins," New York Times, March 17, 1945.

by mankind and banished--by mankind's hatred and suspicions --to his mountain-top again.[7]

Mr. Richardson comes from the hill country near Asheville, North Carolina, and has studied at Chapel Hill with Paul Green and the late Frederick H. Koch. Mr. Berney is a University of Alabama alumnus and a pupil of Hudson Stode's course in drama. Their collaboration began in 1940, when both writers were doing graduate work at the University of Iowa--the first version of the play being presented on the campus there. The usual revising followed and the tryout of the present script took place in August of 1944 in Massachusetts.

Within the fortnight the authors had bids from such assorted masters as the Shuberts, Billy Rose, Eddie Dowling, and Michael Todd; but the Shubert offer gave them control of the casting and the physical production, so the two playwrights came under the wing of the Shuberts. Carol Stone stayed in the cast. So did Richard Hart, whose portrayal of the hag-ridden witch-boy was precisely what the writers wanted. Robert Perry, who directed at Cambridge, went on the road to get the play in shape for Broadway; so did John Huntington, head man at the summer theatre, who acted now as general supervisor of production.

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[7]William du Bois, op. cit.,

The witch-girls grew from two to six on the road tour. Both authors felt that their witches, as played, hit the note they intended; a leggy, lazy-siren note, with pure-evil in their hearts; a note that is best expressed by the Dark Witch's remark that she has nothing against Barbara, but would "jes' as soon have her daid."

Speaking of lines, the authors insist that their script reached New York in its original form; the presentation, they say, merely redirects its dramatic meaning--fitting the scenes to George Jenkin's open-work sets, burnishing the allegory against Esther Junger's choreography; high-lighting the story with Walter Hendl's brooding score, all serving the true purpose of melodrama.

Dark of the Moon is folk drama--folk fantasy--it deals with folk subject matter, with legends, superstitions, customs, environment, and the vernacular of the common people, as it has been established all folk dramas do.

So primitive and unearthly a story allows for the greatest freedom of treatment, but at the same time it demands poetry and intensity. It has the stylized folk quality of such plays as Porgy and Green Pastures. There are times when one is reminded of scenes from Tobacco Road, Oklahoma!, and Sing Out Sweet Land!. There is a rich fund of poetry and theatrical imagery in Dark of the Moon; it has poignancy, gusto, vitality, lusty humor, a natural easy-

going way, color, atmosphere, imagination; there is a swing and spirit to the scenes; and it is picturesque and stirring. Along with all this, the play is potently simple. It can be compared easily with folk-singing itself. It has the magnificent directness, the clarity, and the same directness of appeal that marks this other member of the folk-arts. Dealing successfully with the realistic and fantastic elements of the play presents the greatest problem to the director. All of the adjectives listed above are terms that can easily by applied to Dark of the Moon after only one reading. The writer, now assuming the role of the director, will present a series of considerations taken into account in directing this combination of realistic and fantastic elements.

CHAPTER III

THE PRODUCTION PROBLEMS

One of the interesting problems to the director in staging a fantasy is the curious relationship which must be maintained between the play and the audience. In the so-called "straight" play which offers the illusion of natural experience, a constant appeal is made to all of the senses. In the effective performance of a fantasy there are some moments when its audience must employ an additional, or "sixth" sense.[1]

Marc Connelly says that this additional sense cannot easily be defined, but it can partly be recognized as a quickening of what the technicians of emotion call empathy, the deep surrender of interest in what one is witnessing.

Of course the director of any play is dealing with the fantastic in the sense that he must stage a series of culminating incidents which will seem plausible when they are performed. The audience going to the theatre free in their minds to enjoy what it might offer, is eager to be participants in a form of hypnotism in which the mass perceptions and mass reactions under a play's spell take the

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[1]Marc Connelly, "Fantasies and Their Audience," The New York Times, September 19, 1948.

place of their own individual perceptions and reactions.[2] They hope to be subjective, not objective participants, not spectators. They might have radically different reflexes to seeing a boy and girl quarreling on a real street. But in the theatre the successful presentation of such a quarrel would be so organized that they would have almost exactly the same feeling about the boy, the girl, and the nature of their quarrel.

The audience would have identical knowledge of the personalities of the quarrelers and extra "god-like" information about the quarrel itself denied the two engaged in it. Moreover, the individual's feelings are shared by every other member of the audience. The audience has been carefully geared and tuned to exactly what the playwright, director, and performers have wanted them to feel at that particular moment. They feel the delicacies of emotion which are subtler and more acute than they would normally experience outside the theatre.

"The unified perceptions of a conditioned audience are many degrees more alert than they would be without the homogenizing influence of the play's illusion."[3] In their hypnoidal excitement they are unaware of any place but here

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[2]Marc Connelly, op. cit.

[3]Ibid.

and any time but now. Psychologically they are in that drawing room, that saloon, that cabin, or whatever is before their eyes.

Few things hold more interest to craftsmen in the theatre than the mesmeric processes that change individuals into an audience. Discounting the members of the house who are seeking only a few hours away from grief, illness, or some other relentless externality, people go to the theatre hoping for diversions, amusement, spiritual enrichment, whatever they hope the play will provide. They take their seats, frequently with an awareness of their neighbors elbow, or the disquieting hats in front of them. The lights go down and the curtain rises. For a moment or happily less, they judge with their own individual tastes the setting and the actors who begin the action.

If all the hazards of production have been met and solved, the actors become people and the scenery becomes the proper background for what is beginning to interest the audience keenly. Imperceptibly they enter a kind of trance--what the Greeks called the "protasis" of the play, the first stimulation of audience participation.[4] If this hypnoidal pleasure continues they are no longer people. Under the tantalizing influence of the theatre they become a part of

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[4]Marc Connelly, op. cit.

an organism. Just as an organ of the body depends for its life on the blood stream of another, those on one side of the curtain line receive sustenance from those on the other. The actors are influenced greatly by the audience's life-giving response to the emotional blood stream they are supplying. "A false line, an obtrusive costume, an awkward piece of stage movement, any of a thousand toxins can enter the stream of mesmeric consciousness and poison the organ now depending upon the play for its life."[5]

What seemed good in rehearsal may now be distractingly bad. An extravagance on the stage which causes the audience to murmur audible approval is really not deserving of approval, because if what had caused the comment had been correct, the audience would only have felt its merit and not expressed approval until the act had ended and released them properly from their trance. A revue or musical comedy does not need so complete an absorption as a play. The audience can laugh and share their gaiety with a companion when, say, Beatrice Lillie delights their risibilities in a song, or a sketch, but when she appears in a play, as she occasionally does, while the laughing may be as loud, they do not emerge so far from their hypnosis.

The ineptitudes mentioned above as toxic are truly

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[5]Marc Connelly, op. cit.

that, they must be quickly remedied by a strong flow of emotion from the play or the audience will become poisoned as an audience, disintegrating into its original chemical properties, individual human beings, who will leave the theatre in various degrees of disappointment.

In Dark of the Moon the onlookers must share an incredible experience, and the writer has chosen the feelings of the audience as one of the most important features to be taken into consideration when directing this type of play. More than any single technical aspect of direction, these "feelings" are of extraordinary importance to the success of a fantasy.

The problem of directing Dark of the Moon begins with the casting. The cast of twenty-six characters must be well chosen for each of them can be said to be just as important as any other member of the cast. One reading of the play will make understandable the fact that the "crowd" in Dark of the Moon is extremely important to the play, both in furthering the action and in bringing about the resolution. All twenty-six parts must be filled with people who have a wide range of ability, or at least people who are suitable "types." After a series of tryouts and call-backs, the director, sometimes sacrificing people who were the "natural" or "perfect type" for people of greater general competence, selected the following cast:

CAST

John	John Maragakes
Conjur Man	Roger Kasten
The Dark Witch	Diana Root
The Fair Witch	Lee Beneke
Conjur Woman	Rebecca Tomlinson
Hank Gudger	Robert Clark
Miss Metcalf	Shiela Taylor
Mr. Jenkins	Roger Phillips
Uncle Smelicue	Robert Kirkwood
Mrs. Summey	Janice Everingham
Mr. Atkins	William McIntyre
Mrs. Bergen	Deloris Lehman
Edna Summey	Nancy Gebhardt
Mr. Bergen	Jack Weigand
Mr. Summey	Ted Potts
Marvin Hudgens	Alan Nichols
Barbara Allen	Carolyn O'Connor
Floyd Allen	King Mathews
Preacher Haggler	Robert Askey
Mrs. Allen	Sally Gearhart
Mr. Allen	Gene Rucker
Greeny Gorman	Carolyn Knepper
Ella Bergen	Norma Moore

These people filled the requirements admirably, almost without exception fitting into exactly what the director had in mind. John the witch-boy needed to be dark and brooding, an air of the evil about him. At the time he must be appealing to the audience--they must sympathize with him. He is a witch, a wild thing, the god on earth, possessing strange powers from another world. He is quick-tempered, high strung, very much in love with Barbara, the outward manifestation of the world he wants to become a part of. His failure to be able to adjust to the new world is back of the resolution of the plot. He is torn between two worlds--his freedom appealing to him from the other

world--his love for Barbara holding him to earth. Barbara is nineteen--a young girl from the valley. She is attractive and desirable, lusty and sensual; very much in love with John. Her outlook of abandon is given up for him and she never regrets this. She wants to be true to him. She holds an upper hand with the villagers until the child is born and her mask is dropped when she is frightened into submitting to Marvin. Marvin Hudgens represents the conflict in the plot. He is big, brawny, bull-headed and always looking for trouble. He is an earthy, flesh-loving individual without much ambition. He cares for Barbara only as a trifle --he is satisfied to be the "strongest man in the county." The witches represent the world from which John has come--complete freedom in a wild sort of existence. They are the force that attempts to pull him back to this nether-world. They are young and attractive. All of their movements are based on modern dance. They are completely heartless individuals representing pure evil. Preacher Haggler is an elderly minister, whose rather warped efforts resolve the outcome of the dramatic action. He is a minister of the Church of God. His incongruities are amusing--liking his corn licker as he does. He is the leader of the valley in his opinion. His intolerance of the situation stems from his lack of intelligence.

In casting the supporting roles, the director looked

for a great variety of people. At the same time, they needed to have certain requirements. The heavy use of folk song in the play demands that almost all of the people know how to sing. They all needed to have the ability to learn and execute folk-dancing. The witches needed to have some background of knowledge in modern dance, since all of their movements were suggestive of this style. The script demanded at least one musician, playing the guitar or accordian, to accompany the singing and dancing. The great variety, mentioned earlier, came in the appearance and vocal ranges of the cast. The director wished to use all shapes and sizes of people, together with great differences in vocal quality. Although there were many problems to be solved in attempting to cast Dark of the Moon perfectly, there were no problems that can be set aside as "peculiar" to the particular form.

The show was prepared in a total of thirty-five rehearsals, each lasting approximately two and one-half to three hours. Generally speaking, the rehearsal schedule was prepared so that scenes were done individually and in sequence. The first two rehearsals were given to reading the play and discussing it. Then on the following evenings the scenes were rehearsed for two nights each; Act One, scene one for two nights in a row, and so on. The cast was required to have lines on the second night each scene was rehearsed.

This was carried through until the entire show had been blocked and gone over in a similar fashion. Then came the ordeal of putting the show together in "run-through" rehearsals, until reaching technical and dress rehearsals, and finally performance. The following is a copy of the rehearsal schedule given to each member of the cast:

REHEARSAL SCHEDULE....DARK OF THE MOON

The cast will be expected to attend all rehearsals for which they have been called. Failure to appear at a scheduled rehearsal will result in replacement. Promptness will be expected also...time is wasted if you are late. Some of the following rehearsals may be cancelled at a later date if the occasion calls. If for any reason you are unable to attend a scheduled rehearsal, you must contact the director at least 24 hours before that rehearsal date.

DATE	TIME	PLACE	ASSIGNMENT
Nov. 6,	7:00	Gate 9	reading
Nov. 10,	7:00	Gate 7	reading
Nov. 11,	7:00	Gate 7	Act I, scene 1
Nov. 12,	7:00	Gate 7	Act I, scene 1
Nov. 13,	8:00	Gate 9	Act I, scene 2
Nov. 14,	7:00	Gate 7	Act I, scene 2
Nov. 17,	7:00	Gate 7	Act I, scene 3
Nov. 18,	7:00	Gate 7	Act I, scene 3
Nov. 19,	7:00	Gate 7	Act I, scene 4
Nov. 20,	8:00	Gate 9	Act I, scene 4
Nov. 21,	7:00	Gate 7	Run Act I
Nov. 24,	7:00	Main Aud.	Run Act I
Nov. 25,	7:00	Main Aud.	Run Act I
Dec. 1,	7:00	Gate 7	Act II, scenes 1 & 2
Dec. 2,	7:00	Gate 7	Act II, scenes 1 & 2
Dec. 3,	7:00	Gate 7	Act II, scenes 2 & 3
Dec. 4,	8:00	Gate 9	Act II, scenes 1, 2 & 3
Dec. 5,	7:00	Gate 7	Run Act I and II
Dec. 8,	7:00	Gate 7	Act II, scene 4
Dec. 9,	7:00	Gate 7	Act II, scenes 4 & 5
Dec. 10,	7:00	Gate 7	Run Act II

Dec. 11,	8:00	Gate 9	Run Act II
Dec. 12,	7:00	Gate 7	Run Act I and Act II

CHRISTMAS VACATION

Dec. 15,	7:00	Main Aud.	Run Act I
Dec. 16,	7:00	Main Aud.	Run Act II
Dec. 17,	7:00	Main Aud.	Run Act I and Act II
Dec. 18,	8:00	Main Aud.	Run Act I and Act II
Dec. 19,	7:00	Main Aud.	Complete run through
Jan. 5,	7:00	Main Aud.	Complete run through
Jan. 6,	7:00	Main Aud.	Complete run through
Jan. 7,	7:00	Main Aud.	First Technical
Jan. 8,	7:00	Main Aud.	Second Technical
Jan. 9,	7:00	Main Aud.	Third Technical
Jan. 11,	7:00	Main Aud.	First Dress
Jan. 12,	7:00	Main Aud.	Second Dress
Jan. 13,	7:00	Main Aud.	Third Dress
Jan. 14,	8:30	Main Aud.	PERFORMANCE
Jan. 15,	8:30	Main Aud.	PERFORMANCE

The singing of the many folk songs, humorous and religious, that is a part of the script presented another problem. These songs were treated as dialogue in the script, rather than as individual numbers. Since the songs are as much a part of the people as the very words they speak, they were rehearsed along with the dialogue, and looked upon as furthering the action of the play. On several occasions there were additional rehearsals for singing alone, but the purpose behind these was the same that a director would hope to accomplish with "line-rehearsals." By handling them as such, the director hoped that they would become an integral part of the play, rather than musical numbers, merely inserted into the show for the sake of adding color. The dialect of the people was another obstacle that appeared throughout the entire script. Amazingly enough, this presented very

few problems. The director believes that this is due to the excellent writing of the dialogue. The dialect is written into the lines in such a way as to make mistakes and misunderstandings impossible. There is more than a suggestion of dialect in the dialogue, it is written in word for word. The cast had very little trouble learning the dialect and after a week or two of rehearsal, the language of the play became the language of the actor, off stage as well as on. Perhaps more than any other two features of the script and its production, the contribution of the music and dialect injected the spirit of the "folk" into the cast, and this it did with great ease. The problem of the rhythms involved was something else again. Many of the scenes of the play--for example, those in the general store and at the revival--are written in chant form. The rhythm is pronounced and as written adds greatly to the effectiveness of the scenes. Some members of the cast had trouble in incorporating this rhythm into their lines. In directing, therefore, it seemed best to "pound" the rhythm into these people, by conducting the tempo for them at all rehearsals, until it became so natural to them that it was no longer necessary to clap hands and snap fingers.

Act One, scene one presents the problem of beginning the show as well as introducing the witches and their element in a purely fantastic scene. The audience was put in

the proper frame of mind by means of using recorded "mood" music before the curtain rose. The "Hallowe'en Ballet" from A Tree Grows in Brooklyn seemed to give just the right flavor to what was called the "overture." The curtain went up on a stage void of players, and it was not until the music faded that any actor appeared. This gave the audience a chance to accustom themselves to the surroundings. The setting was designed in such a way as to inform the audience that what they were about to witness was going to be unusual. By slowing down much of the beginning movement and speech, the audience became used to and accepted the two witches and the witch-boy. Once this idea had been established, the scene could increase in tempo, as indeed the script demands, and the unnatural features of lighting and movement, for example, could become more exaggerated as the action of the play progressed.

In scene two of Act One the audience is introduced to the realistic elements of the play. They meet the people of the valley at a square dance. The problem here was to establish some sort of relationship between what the audience was seeing and what had gone before in the previous scene. This was accomplished by using stage pictures and groupings which were pleasing to watch, but at the same time, not quite realistic and natural. Another important problem of the scene is the one involving the crowd. The crowd must be set

immediately as an individual one. The characters must appear as individuals and at the same time the audience must recognize their power as a group. This is handled in the script when John, come to earth as a human now, fights with Marvin and strikes him down with a bolt of lightning. The movement of the crowd was directed so that they were perfectly motionless while one person was speaking, their attention being strongly focused on what was happening. When a member of the crowd had a line, he moved into focus, and delivered it alone. This action was quickly followed by a mass movement from the rest of the crowd, thus establishing the individual as well as his relation to the group. The audience learned then that these people were people to be reckoned with as the real force of the community.

Scene three brought a problem which is characteristic of many folk plays. The use of language, in its coarseness and earthiness, may offend an audience. In scene three we are introduced to the Allen family. Mr. Allen's language and attitudes throughout the play are often questionable, and yet the audience must not dislike him. The character of Mr. Allen was developed to insure a pleasing empathic response. Perhaps this was established in the scene with Mr. Allen's first entrance. Seen in context with the rest of the scene, his entrance, made with a slow dejected shuffle across the width of the stage, without a word being spoken,

insured his acceptance by the audience. They knew they were to like Barbara's father. The scene combines elements of the realistic with elements of fantasy. After proposing to Barbara, John is accosted by the two witches, who appear over the roof and around the side of the cabin. This was one of the two scenes in which the fantastic characters appeared on the stage at the same time as the human characters. In this instance it was accomplished by halting the realistic action, having Barbara freeze in her position, and carrying the action away from the central playing area of the realistic action into the void of blackness on the left side of the stage. It helped establish John's conflict when he was torn from the warmness of the cabin scene, into the darkness with the two witch-girls.

The problem in scene four was to focus the attention of the audience as well as the crowd on John's strange behavior. Two fantastic elements are introduced through the script with the use of the barrel and the ring with the green stone. Here is the presentation of further evidence the crowd can use in condemning John as a witch. The audience must see this suspicion and fear growing in the crowd. This was accomplished in much the same way as it had been in scene two, with the intense focusing of the attention of the crowd on what was happening. This time, however, their reactions and attitudes were exhibited more vehemently so that

the audience could see their contempt rising.

Act Two, scene one, began with the dance of the witches and John, which actually did not contribute to the furthering of the action, but merely acted as an Entr' act returning the audience to the proper frame of mind after the intermission. The dance simply re-emphasized the struggle in John, constantly torn between earth and the free world of the witches. The scene also introduces a strengthening of position for Marvin Hudgens in a triangle scene with John and Barbara. This was accomplished in blocking the scene in a circular fashion. Whoever happened to be holding the upper hand in the situation was always at the upstage peak of the circle or triangle, the other two members being in weaker downstage positions. There was constant circular movement, emphasizing John's frustration at seeing Barbara accompanied home by Marvin.

Scene three again was important in showing the crowd's growing displeasure with what was happening in their village. Barbara's baby is born a witch. Preacher Haggler injects the first visual note of religion into the play by praying for her soul; up to this time there have been references made to religion, and now the audience sees it as an actual force. The village wives become frightened and are convinced of John's guilt. The intensity of playing on the part of the women in the scene contributed greatly to this thought.

By having them sink to their knees in prayer, we can see how easily they are taken by religion and led by a man who is not altogether understanding of the situation. Late in the scene we are introduced to fantasy once again. The witches appear when John is left alone with Barbara, coming from out of no where as they had previously. Their scene with John was once again blocked away from the center of the realistic action, in blackness on stage left.

There were few problems in directing scene three. Here is another scene of pure fantasy. It is short and only serves the purpose of setting up the bargain between the witches and the Conjur Man which will determine the outcome of the action. The freedom of bodily movement, aiding in the fantastic illusion, was achieved by giving the witches full stage area for their scene. Their extreme cruelty and evil was accomplished by contrasting their thoughts and the sharpness of their dialogue with the ease and subtlety of their movements.

Scene four of Act Two is the most difficult in the play to direct. The revival scene in the Church of God could be more offensive than all of the other scenes together. In the earlier part of the scene the director felt that much of the dialogue and chanting were definitely comic in their aspect. There seemed no way to keep them from appearing humorous to an audience. If these earlier lines

of the scene were "played" for the laugh, rather than seriously, it would keep the audience from being embarrassed as a result of laughing at something that was really not funny. The director felt that if the audience was embarrassed in laughter early in the scene, they would reject the climax--the forced adultery of Barbara. By playing the frenzy and excitement lightly in the beginning of the scene, and then dropping to a serious intensity with the entrance of Barbara, the performers were able to lead the audience to accept the last of the scene in a more serious light. By beginning the scene on such a high pitch and by dropping the intensity with Barbara's entrance, the crowd was able to begin building to the climax on an entirely different and more serious level. It was decided that the end of the scene, when Barbara and Marvin drop to the floor, should be reblocked, to keep it from appearing in bad taste. The scene was re-worked so that Marvin carried Barbara off, upstage. They were silhouetted against the cyclorama for the close of the scene.

The final scene of the play called for rapid-fire playing, since the climactic excitement of the revival scene must not spoil the final, tender moments between John and Barbara. To achieve the effect of the two lovers being torn apart, the scene was blocked so that they were on opposite sides of the stage. They played the scene to each other,

motionless, until they could not stand being apart any longer and met in center stage for Barbara's death. The final problem was to block the scene so that John could change back into a witch before the eyes of the audience. This was accomplished by having John play the scene in the shadows upstage with the two witch-girls. He was kept in silhouette until he climbed to the peak of the mountain and the moonlight broke through on him. His bodily movements in reaction to the moonlight allowed the audience to know he was a witch once again, lifting his arms in flight just as the final curtain came down.

Scenery, complimented by lighting, on the stage is commonly defined as the background before which a play is performed. One of the leading American designers has offered a more expressive definition. Scenery (and within this term he includes lighting), he says, is an environment.[6] A stage setting, from his viewpoint, not only provides a decorative space for the action of the scene, but also creates, by means of carefully selected surrounding symbols, an emotional attitude toward the situation enfolded within it which partakes of the spirit of the play itself. The stage setting is not simply a receptacle for the drama, but a

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[6]Samuel Seldon, "Scenery, An Environment," The Carolina Play-book, II (September, 1929), p. 8.

moving influence on it as well.

This idea that scenery may be an active, spiritual element in the theatre is of rather recent birth. Not too many years ago artists believed that scenery's only function, beyond that of marking the scene, was purely ornamental. When a stage setting of that particular period stated a theatric locality in a handsome, often thoroughly artificial manner, it was considered to have performed its duty. The scenic artist of that day was considered, by himself, a painter not a dramatist. His work was, more often than not, impersonal, since he held nothing but the greatest contempt for the interpretative director and actor. Frequently he designed settings with no knowledge what so ever of the play --his reputation depended solely in his ability to turn out good canvasses. Lighting, to him, was nothing more than the simplest illumination--scenery was reproduced only in terms of his paint frame.

Today's artist has changed in attitude. To him, the scenic elements must be vital and dramatic. Every detail of his designs are limited directly to the thought and spirit of the play. "Through a significant arrangement of the forms (in both scenery and lighting) surrounding an action he attempts to contribute a very vital sense to the interpretation of ideas and the building up of emotion in the

action."[7] Mr. Lee Simonson has defined modern scenic art as the "creation of plastic forms and spaces that are an integral part of the acting and project its meaning."[8]

The setting of a play, seen in this light, is an element of great importance in production. The artist today must be careful that he never occupies the place of chief honor. He must be careful to maintain the proper perspective of himself and his work. The implication is not that scenery must be undistinguished--forcible effects are often appropriate and even necessary--but that it should recognize its place as a contribution rather than a central element.

In following the principle just presented, the attempted design for Dark of the Moon was handled in a way which may prove successful for more than one particular folk drama. Stage houses and their equipment are quite likely to determine the forms of scenery that can be placed on the stage and shown to best advantage. Budgets and limited backstage areas, as well as the script, frequently dictate the use of some sort of minimum scenery. These forms adapt particularly well to non-realistic plays and multi-set productions, since other forms may seem too expensive to handle. Small irregularly shaped sections of full settings have been

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[7]Samuel Seldon, op. cit.

[8]Ibid.

classified by Herbert Philippi as "fragmentary." This kind of scenery is more easily painted than built.

> Fragmentary scenery may show a number of walls and will probably not be normal in height. Although the fragment may be sketchy, the designer gives considerable attention to the shape of the units so that the irregularities will help to define and point up the locale and mood. Basic architectural structure can often be emphasized in scenery of this type, since, when a fragment of a wall is removed, the remaining section must necessarily reveal this construction.
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> Dark of the Moon is a good example of a play which might use this type of scenery to good advantage. The production requires many settings and scene shifts must be fast and silent. Small settings are thus indicated and the very plot of the play suggests non-realistic fragments. Both the University of Iowa and the Broadway production of the play took full advantage of this form of scenery with effective results.[9]

Furniture, draperies, paintings and like objects make a much greater impression on the audience than the actual painted flats. This forces the designer with a responsibility to control the emphasis of these design elements in the hope that they will take no more individual indentity than is necessary. A poor choice of properties may result in the wrong sort of emphasis.

> Since all the furnishings of a stage setting must usually appear to belong there rather than arbitrarily to have been placed there, such questions as quality, type, color, and scale must also be considered in relation to every single item in the room.[10]

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[9]Herbert Philippi, Stagecraft and Scene Design. (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1953), p. 33.

[10]Ibid., p. 214.

As every experienced property man--or woman--knows, the great American "five and ten" stores are often very helpful in the selection of properties. They not only offer inexpensive items, they offer suggestions as well. A few inexpensive purchases--wire, lumber or canvas--together with an idea, will often allow the construction of what would have cost dollars to hire, many more to purchase. Well selected properties are of the greatest importance.[11]

Set properties, as distinguished from hand properties, must be handled in the same general treatment as the scenery. In Dark of the Moon the scenery was fragmentary and suggestive. Properties too, then, must follow this same general principle in their selection and appropriateness.

In dealing with scenery and properties in the production of Dark of the Moon, the problem again was to combine the elements of fantasy and realism. Since one of the major criticisms of the play has been that it fails to hold together from scene to scene, it seemed wise to take this into consideration when designing the show. An attempt was made to unify the play to as great a degree as possible through the design of scenery. Generally this was done by defining the limits of the stage for the scenes done

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[11]John Dolman, Jr., The Art of Play Production. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1946), p. 373.

realistically and by using full stage space for the scenes involving fantasy. Sometimes these two elements were combined and by discussing each scene individually, it will become easier to understand how problems of this nature were handled. The list of scenes appearing in the program are as follows:

ACT I

Scene 1. The Peak of a ridge in the Smoky Mountains.
Scene 2. The Central Square of Buck Creek.
Scene 3. The Allen cabin on Chunky Gal Mountain.
Scene 4. The general store of Buck Creek.

ACT II

Scene 1. A clearing in the woods near Barbara and John's cabin.
Scene 2. Barbara and John's cabin.
Scene 3. Same as scene 1, Act I.
Scene 4. The Church of God in Buck Creek.
Scene 5. Same as scene 1, Act I.

Act One, scene one made use of the full stage area. From the darkness on the peak of the ridge could be seen the silhouette of a large tree rising, gnarled and knotted, against a windswept, cloudy sky. This is the only setting that is repeated in the play and it was decided therefore, to make it a permanent stage feature that would remain on the stage throughout the entire show. The setting was constructed with a series of platforms and levels which crossed the entire rear area of the stage. The side facing the house was covered with wall-board and cut into the irregular shapes of the jutting rocks. Center stage on top of the

platforms was the tree which was flown and also cut out in silhouette fashion. The rocks and the tree were painted black since they were out of the lighted areas. Most of the scenes played in this area were in silhouette against the cyclorama. The forestage area was left open for the witch scenes and could also be filled with the set pieces for the scenes of realism. The tree remained in the background throughout the play, with the exception of one scene, serving as a constant reminder of the world of fantasy from which the witch-boy had come.

Scene two was laid in the central square of Buck Creek. It is one of two realistic scenes in the play which are laid in an exterior setting. The general stage area needed to be large to allow for the square-dancing. At the same time, the area was confined by the use of a large hay wagon on stage left and a fence on stage right. A string of Japanese lanterns was dropped in from the fly loft to add a festive note to the setting. Stools, boxes and crates were placed around the stage for the actors to sit on.

Scene three took place in the Allen cabin and was the first scene to make use of the two-fold flat piece which served as a background for all of the interior scenes in the play. One long wall and one short wall gave the effect of looking into a corner of the room. This two-fold unit was changed for each of the following scenes by adding large and

small set pieces which would distinguish it from the scenes that had gone before. For the Allen cabin, there was a large stone fireplace unit that appeared on the shorter right wall. There was a window in the center of the larger left flat, hung with dirty, torn curtains on a string. There was a table with wooden benches, which supposedly served for eating purposes. There were rocking chairs and straight chairs for the actors to sit on. The flats were painted to resemble the flat-board wooden structure of the cabin.

For scene four of this act, the same unit was used, this time to represent the general store of Buck Creek. This time the unit was placed in center stage, whereas before it had been to the right side. The fireplace, curtains and all the furniture were removed. Now on the short right wall there was a "pot-bellied" stove. The window in the right wall was concealed by hanging units of shelves which were filled with grocery stock. In front of the shelves there was now a large counter. The men sat on stools around the stove, and on crates and boxes in front of the counter. As usual, always present in the background behind the store was the silhouette of the tree. This effect seemed to help tie together the elements of fantasy and realism, keeping one in the background, while the other was taking focus. The arrangement of the two-fold piece allowed for entrances to be made around the side, from behind the

longer left wall. In the general store scene it made the trick of raising the apple barrel quite simple. The barrel was placed against the edge of the two-fold's left wall. A stage crew member behind the flat could attach the pipe into a fitting already on the barrel and lifting it from offstage, give the illusion that John was possessed of supernatural powers.

The opening scene of Act Two involved the use of the full stage area for the witches' dance with John. This was simply the stage as it had appeared in scene one of Act One. Later in the scene, the confined area representing the clearing near the cabin was produced by fitting the small area, stage left, with a fence and a log. John, Barbara, and Marvin could play their triangular scene around the log, using the upstage side of the fence for entrances and exits.

Scenes three and five of Act Two need no further description, since they appeared the same as Act One, scene one. Scene four of Act Two took place in the Church of God. For this scene the stage was cleared of the two-fold unit and rows of benches were inserted in space, making use of the full stage area. Four benches were arranged on stage right. There was a lantern and a podium for Preacher Haggler just right of center. The tree was removed from the back platforms for this scene and in its place was set the

large silhouetted cut-out of the church. This cut-out followed the same general lines and idea as the one used in the New York production. By using this method, the one realistic scene in the play which came closer than any other to approaching fantasy was set apart from the rest of the realistic action. The cut-out of the church now took on the same symbolic value as the tree.

The chief purpose of the properties used in the play was to create the difference in locale of each setting. By changing the significant property pieces, the two-fold fragment of a cabin was used three different times to represent different rooms. The omnipresent tree held the realistic and fantastic elements of the play together. Scenery then, played its most important part in helping to unify the action of the play.

Stage lighting must be considered also, since it is an integral part of the stage picture. "If a scene design is to be successfully translated to the stage, the designer needs to know what instruments must supply the light, the intensities of the light sources, and the light colors that are to be represented."[12] Visibility is the chief concern of the lighting technician, but equally important is the consideration of lighting refinements that will unify and

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[12]Herbert Philippi, op. cit., p. 307.

define the stage picture. This second requirement seeks to symbolize the meanings of the play. In folk fantasy the lighting must not only accompany the action of the play, it must provide the background, the "atmosphere" and reinforce the pyschological expression of the play. The intensity, direction, form, quality, movement, and color--particularly color--should all contribute to the harmonious unity that will achieve the desired psychological effect on the mind of the audience. Visual sensations of light and shade seem to arouse little emotional response--"the production of mood, atmosphere, and feeling is chiefly dependent on color."[13] Music, of course, will prove a possible exception, but since sound is often restricted, the use of color becomes even more important.

Symbolic and emotive light can be produced by the technician with an infinite combination of color associations. We have determined that the form of folk fantasy must allow the audience to become emotionally involved in the play. In such a play, where realism has been dispensed with, and where lighting is depended upon for reinforcing the mood of the play, the cyclorama is invaluable as the chief means of presenting mobile color and light to the

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[13]Theodore Fuchs, Stage Lighting. (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1929), p. 104.

audience.[14] The cyclorama, while providing a large surface upon which color may be applied with light, also, by virtue of its position, surrounds and envelops, serving literally as the background for the action of the play, although it seldom interferes with it. "The greater the area of color, and the purer the color, the more pronounced will be its emotive effect."[15] The use of highlights, along with shade and shadows, cannot be underrated, since when used properly, they add greatly to the effect of colored light alone.

This pyschological approach to lighting is based on the idea that color affects an audience by association; that red is exciting because it is the color of blood and the symbol of danger; that blue is pleasing because it is the color of the sky, and green because it is the color of living vegitation; that black is the color of night, and fear, and sadness, and so on. Color symbolism has been a part of the Chinese theatre for such a long period of years that it has become a means of language on the stage.

In considering the psychological effect of light by color, a director should remember that there are certain associations connected with the theatre itself which are especially apt to hold influence with an audience. Real

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[14]Theodore Fuchs, op. cit., p. 145.

[15]Ibid.

moonlight is yellow, but in the theatre moonlight has been blue for so long that an audience would fail to recognize it in any other color. Amber light outdoors in the daytime may foretell a sudden storm, but amber light on the stage symbolizes sunshine or the glow of indoor lamps. There is great opportunity in the theatre to use color for visual beauty, but a technician should remember that the important thing is not what is actually seen, but what it does to the imagination through suggestion.[16]

The physical properties of light and its use can be learned from many textbooks. As a result of the work accomplished with Dark of the Moon, it becomes apparent that the most important feature of light that can be heeded in producing folk fantasy is its use with color to suggest mood and atmosphere and to symbolize the action of the play.

The lighting problem throughout Dark of the Moon was to create the mood and atmosphere as well as to help define the realistic and fantastic elements of the play. The directors chief aim was to force the audience to be constantly aware of these two elements, even though one might be holding precedence over the other at certain momonts. The acting areas for both fantastic and realistic scenes were lighted in the same manner. All of the areas were cross-

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[16]John Dolman, Jr., op. cit., p. 347.

spotted with pure amber and steel blue. The amber gave an intensified warmness to the actors, including the fantasy characters, at the same time there were sharpely contrasting shadows of blue. This combination was intended to symbolize the attitudes and emotions of all the characters. It was chiefly character lighting in this respect.

Just as the cross-spotting symbolized the character reaction, the lighting of the cyclorama symbolized the mood, atmosphere and feeling of the locale. In general terms the cyclorama was lighted with pure color shades, rather than in subtle distinctions. This was done primarily in keeping with what the director calls the "simplicity" of the play. In deciding on a color for the mountain-top scenes, where the witches played their moments of pure fantasy, the director decided on an eerie green for lighting the cyclorama. This seemed to be not quite so pleasing as blue and contained a more distant coldness. The color, of course, was a completely unrealistic one, and when repeated throughout all the fantasy scenes on top of the mountain, helped to establish immediately the mood of the scene. Throughout the rest of the scenes, especially those that were primarily realistic, various shades of blue were used on the cyclorama to emphasize the time of day or night. In these scenes the cyclorama became representative of the sky, but the varying degrees of shade and color always underscored the mood of the scene.

The only other time when the cyclorama was lighted in a strongly symbolic fashion was in the revival scene. Here, to give the illusion of evening, the cyclorama was lighted in blue at the beginning of the scene. From the time the curtain went up on the scene more and more red began to creep into the lighting, until with Barbara's entrance the sky was a rage of purple shades. From this point on the blue began to fade out, leaving the red as a growing symbol of Barbara's danger. As the end of the scene approached all of the blue had been removed, and as Barbara was carried off, the acting area lights were faded, leaving the congregation, the preacher, the church, and Barbara and Marvin silhouetted against a flaming red sky.

There were only three special effects required of the lighting department throughout the performance. The first of these came in the first two scenes of the play, when lightning flashed during a storm. This was handled by using an overhead borderlight, that was flashed amidst the claps of thunder, throwing an intense white light on the actors in the scenes. In scene three of Act One a special spotlight was rigged for the entrance of the Dark Witch. She appeared over the top edge of the two-fold unit, as if coming from nowhere. The light was cued in, picking her up just as she appeared from the black void above the cabin roof. In the final scene of the play, a special spot was hung offstage

left at the rear to catch the witch-boy in an intense blue-white light, as he spread his wings and prepared for flight into the moonlight.

A clear sight in motivation is essential in the selection of costumes and make-up. A costume may be realistically representative of a character, a type, a social caste, a race, a country, or a period in history, or it may be stylistic, expressionistic, or symbolic, or merely decorative. Some of these motives can be combined, but others are inconsistent when used together. The motives should be determined first, and determined for the whole play, before any thought is given to costume design. Since Dark of the Moon consisted of realism and fantasy, the motives could be combined. If a general principle must be evolved for plays of this nature, let it be that literal accuracy is seldom necessary. Effective stylization or intelligible symbolism is usually better. To capture both the flavor of a period and mood, in costume, requires both knowledge and judgment.[17]

It is exceedingly important, as in the case of lighting, to choose colors wisely. The costume should be appropriate in color, as well as in design, to the character. It should fit as an integral part of the complete stage picture. Generally speaking, it is better to have costumes ready well

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[17]John Dolman, Jr., op. cit., p. 376.

before the production date, so that they may be tried out under the lights, in their stage groupings--and as often as not--changed if they are not correct.

In Dark of the Moon all of the fantastic characters, the two witch-girls and John, were dressed in black at all times. This color seemed best to present the darkness of their character, their brooding, their belonging to another world. Only one other character, Preacher Haggler, was dressed in black consistently, serving the purpose of drawing a parallel between his earthly activities and those of the other-world witches. In carrying over the idea of symbolism into the realistic characters of the play, color played the most important role. Barbara, as the ballad demands, wore a red, red dress in her first scene. Later she wore green in the wedding scene, and at the revival she wore her blue, also called for in the ballad. It seemed best to wait for the revival before using the blue, since by contrast, it pointed up the irony of what was about to happen to her. In the opening scene another symbolic color was used when Edna Summey, Barbara's rival for Marvin Hudgens, appeared in blue. Marvin wore red in the revival scene, to point up the lust and excitement of his desire for Barbara.

Generally the crowd scenes used a great variety of color, although they were never permitted to conflict with the symbolic colors of one of the other characters. Barbara

was the only person on the stage wearing red in the square dance scene. No one else wore her blue in the revival scene. Scene two of Act Two made bold use of shades of black and grey to emphasize the sadness and cruelty of the birth of Barbara's baby. All of the women were in black, along with Preacher Haggler. Barbara was in white, giving full sympathy to her.

In style, the costumes of the realistic characters were basically authentic. The women's dresses, the men's over-alls, and shirts were probably what one would expect to find these people wearing; it was the use of color that gave the impression of the unreal to them. The two witch-girls were dressed in black leotards, with ragged, flowing, filmy skirts that trailed behind them whenever they ran. The leotards accented their seductiveness and at the same time aided in establishing them as creatures from another world. The Conjur people were dressed in a fashion that more closely resembled the fantastic. These people are neither witch or human. They wore long ragged robes with hoods to designate them as people dealing with witchcraft and possessors of special powers.

In using make-up, the realistic characters were done as they might be in any play, according the their age, health, and so on. The two-witch-girls made use of stylized make-up throughout the play. To add, and not detract, from their

attractiveness, they used normal make-up procedures, allowing their eyebrows to be carried up toward the hairline rather than following the normal outline. Their eyes were shadowed with green and sprinkled with silver dust, which was also brushed through their hair, adding to the unnatural and fantastic aspects of their characters.

The use of the dance medium is something not to be overlooked in discussing the problems of production in Dark of the Moon. All of the movement of the witch-girls was based on modern dance patterns. For description here, it would seem best to say that these movements were in the realm of sharp and angular positions, emphasizing the otherworld quality of the two girls. Their movement was always large and sweeping. Their gestures accompanied their speech and helped to illustrate it. The idea behind all of their movement was aimed to present them as quick and light, but at the same time, cruel and evil. Sudden turns, leaps from the rocks, writhing on the floor, all went together to make them extremely sensual individuals. They never seemed to be still. They were always after John, teasing and tormenting him. In such things as their soft reactions to the noise of thunder, they were clutching, cruel, and heartless.

The dance medium appeared realistically in scene two of Act One. Here was presented the square dance by all the members of the community. Making this dance seem to be a

part of the people presented a real problem. Many authentic dance patterns were tried and all to no avail, for they were either too difficult, or the cast appeared awkward in executing them. Finally it was decided that the best way to get the actors to be at home in their dancing was to let them conceive the dance patterns themselves. This they did and with good results. The movements they worked out together, immediately put them at ease in the scene, and while not actually so, appeared authentic to the audience. This seemed, to the director, to be a better idea than forcing a dance pattern on the cast, when they could not feel at ease doing it. The result was all of the proper abandon and excitement coming across the footlights, instead of the awkard attempts of people who would have obviously not "been at home" in what they were doing.

The purpose behind the ballet at the opening of Act Two has already been described--it served merely as a restatement of the witch-girl-John relationship and as an entr' act. One of the members of the cast happened to be an accomplished dancer and spent many hours working with the two witches and John in creating the dance. John had had practically no experience as a dancer, but the results were excellent. None of the dancing seemed obtrusive as it was used as a definite part of the show. It served its true

purpose, underscoring the dramatic action of the play and emphasizing the mood and thought behind many of the scenes.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

If any real or lasting value is to come from a study of this kind, perhaps it is through a statement of general procedures, which will serve as a guide to other directors of other folk fantasies. In summarizing what has been discussed in the previous chapters, the writer will outline such procedures in the hope that they may serve for others.

In selecting the script for folk fantasy, the director must make certain that he has chosen a true product. Regional drama does not exploit the idiosyncrasies of a locality without attempting to examine or express their causes. The real value of regionalism in the art of a vast country like the United States lies in its ability to interpret one part of the people to the rest of the population. The play should be a part of the drama that is as many sided and as multi-colored as are the peoples of the American states--a drama that has its roots in every state, which will interpret in interestingness and the rich variety of our American life--a drama worthy of the struggles, the achievements, and the common vision of our people.

If the script is not being given its first performance, an examination into its history as a play will be of great value to the director. Many of the comments of

Rosamond Gilder and other critics were helpful to the director of Dark of the Moon. Whatever someone else has said about the play can help the director to determine what obstacles he might have to overcome. In delving into critical analyses of Dark of the Moon, the director learned that the chief problem lay in the shifting emphasis from reality to fantasy, a problem inherent in the script, which, to be successfully overcome, needed to be considered in every phase of the production.

In directing the script, the director of Dark of the Moon had his responsibility to the audience foremost in mind at all times. Too much attention cannot be given to this detail. If the audience is to learn from a play of this nature, they must not be offended or allowed to drop out of their participation. Above all, the audience must remain subjective in looking at the piece. It is only after they have been removed from their trance properly at the end of the play, that they can begin thinking about what they have seen and relating it to their own experience. In casting the play, the director felt that a wide variety of people would best portray whatever universality may be derived from the writing. Differences in sizes, shapes, types, and qualities will provide greater opportunity for the audience to find "themselves" in what is happening on the stage. The rehearsals were arranged so that they were of the greatest

benefit to the actor. In working scene by scene, the actor became unavoidably aware of what his relation to the whole demanded of him. Disregarding the size of the role, he became more and more aware of his individual importance to the production as a complete unit. The introduction of dialect and music into the script presents its own individual problems, but if looked upon as an aid rather than as a barrier, they can become the most important method of instilling flavor, locale, and a spirit of the "folk" into the cast. Once these factors have become a part of the actor, he becomes a part of the play. This may be accomplished in many ways it is supposed, but by using the language of Dark of the Moon off stage as well as on, and by using the music at the beginning rehearsals to infuse the cast with spirit, the music and the dialect became almost as natural to the members of the cast as they were to the characters they were portraying.

In picturing the stage with scenery for folk fantasy, the designer must attempt to translate the locale of the play successfully to the stage. In Dark of the Moon, where so many different settings occur, the director found the best solution was to recreate locale through selectivity and suggestion which took the form of fragmentary settings. The policy of selection and suggestion was then followed in the use of stage properties, to be in keeping with the atmosphere

of the play. The stage area needed to be defined according to the type of scene that was to be played in it. This was always either fantastic or realistic, sometimes a combination of both. For the scenes involving fantasy, if the full playing area could be used, it was, otherwise, the action was blocked away from the center of the realistic action in the space surrounding the two-fold set unit in a void of blackness. In defining the ares of the realistic action, the stage was always limited by some means, in one scene a fence and a wagon, in other scenes the two-fold cabin unit. This unit was transformed by using different properties to create different locations. Symbolic units may often be used. In Dark of the Moon, the presence of the gnarled and knotted tree to the rear of the stage area was a constant reminder of the fantastic elements in the play, even when realistic scenes were being played in front of it. When seen alone for fantasy scenes, the tree was used for movement and business such as entrances and exits for the witch-girls. They could appear as if from nowhere. By using fragmentary set pieces throughout the play, the mood, atmosphere and locale were all preserved economically as well as effectively.

In lighting the stage for Dark of the Moon, two general principles were followed. By cross-spotting the acting areas with two different colors, one warm, one cool,

the character of the people was symbolized. By lighting the cyclorama with different colors and hues, the mood of the scene and the atmosphere of the locale was projected to the audience. As a general rule, colors were used in their pure form, rather than in shades and variations. This was done in keeping with the simplicity of the play. It served to make the directness of the play's appeal symbolized in the lighting of the stage areas. The psychological expression and emotive qualities of colored light were used to underscore the meanings of the play.

Symbolization became the primary concern in costuming and make-up as well. When colors were used, they were used to symbolize the character. If no symbolization seemed necessary, the colors were used to help relate the fantastic elements of the play to the realistic. In realistic characters the costumes were styled conventionally. In fantastic characters they were styled to best convey the conception of the character. The sensuality of the witch-girls was emphasized by their black leotards. Character motivation determined the costumes in many instances. If there seemed to be no motivation from character, the mood of the scene was considered as next important.

Not overlooking the part played by dance in the production, the writer will say that it was treated as an incorporated part of the play, like the singing, rather

than as a separate unit, which would have appeared as such to any audience. If folk fantasy, in this case, Dark of the Moon, is a part of a native drama, a part of American theatre, expressive of our strength as are our skyscrapers, railroads, industries, and machines, then all the elements--painting, sculpture, architecture, music, dance, religious ritual, and spectacle must be drawn upon and fused together in a drama which only the savage and up-boiling fertility of America could provide. Then this theatre will be an imaginative, poetic and musical theatre wherein the true heart and soul of the nation can find worthy and adequate dramatic state.

The greatest problem seems to be in finding the form of folk drama or fantasy in a pure state. Dark of the Moon may fail to fulfill the requirements prescribed by many critics, but to this writer and director it presented many of the problems which will occur in that "true state." The point to be remembered is that true folk art can guide and warn us, nourish and console us, teach and mature us, shape our vision of the world and inspire us to face and master it. If Dark of the Moon fails to be true folk fantasy, it can still be said to be a worthy experiment in production, and can stand alone on that ground, if on no other. From the lines of the play the reader can gather the importance of Dark of the Moon as an experiment. Barbara Allen is dying,

and John will become a witch again when the moon breaks through the clouds:

> John: Remember yer ballad? You said it wouldn't be sad. You allus liked the gay ones best.
>
> Barbara: I'm sorry, I'm sorry I spiled the ballad.
>
> John: Hit ain't spiled. Hit jes' ends sad. What matters is the singin', and hit still a good song.[1]

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[1]Howard Richardson and William Berney, op. cit., Act II, sc. v.

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