UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

THE CRAFT OF SCENIC ILLUSION: AN INVESTIGATION INTO HOW THEATRE SPACE AND DRAMATIC GENRE INFLUENCE THE SCENOGRAPHIC PROCESS, WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO GREG KING'S SET DESIGNS FOR *ALADDIN* (2007), *OLEANNA* (2008) AND *THE WIZARD OF OZ* (2008).

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By

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Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is my own work unless specifically referenced within the text. It is being submitted for the Degree of Master of Arts (Coursework) in the School of Arts, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College, Durban 2012.

Signed

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(Susan Jeannette Donaldson-Selby)

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Abstract

This dissertation analyses the influence theatre space and the dramatic genre have on the design process, by examining three designs of Greg King: *Aladdin* (2007), a pantomime presented at the Playhouse Drama Theatre, *Oleanna* (2008) a drama at the Seabrooke's Theatre, and *The Wizard of Oz* (2008), a musical presented at the Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre. Through a semiotic analysis of the productions, the scenographic choices of King are interrogated to ascertain the ways theatre space and dramatic genre affected his design choices. The theories around sign systems in the theatre of Keir Elam (1980), Martin Esslin (1987), and Elaine Aston and George Savona (1991) are examined and used to decode King's designs.

This dissertation theorises that the theatre space has influenced and continues to influence the decisions and choices of the scenographer, and it is this linkage that informs the discussion around the historical development of the proscenium arch theatre and the scenographer. The case studies offered in this dissertation highlight the challenges involved with the physical limitations of the theatre space, as each venue selected differs in size, shape, and the technical equipment available for the designer.

The dramatic text provides the primary basis for both the director and the designer to develop a production concept. However, dramatic texts can be divided into many different genres and the following three genres, namely drama, musical and pantomime, provide the focus for this study. As these three genres have evolved from earlier forms, the historical development of the three genres is examined to ascertain how the genre affects the scenographic process.

A theatre production is the result of a collaboration between many specialists and therefore, the relationship between the designer and other member of the production team is examined. A set design is a visual image of an imagined environment and many designers use symbols, consciously or subconsciously, to communicate their ideas. The work of three international designers, Josef Svoboda, Ming Cho Lee and Ralph Koltai is examined further to understand the influence theatre space and the dramatic genre have on the design process.

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Chapter One
Introduction

The 'craft of scenic illusion' has been practised, in some form, from the earliest theatrical performances. The first illusions consisted of participants wearing masks and costumes both to disguise their identity and to symbolise and honour the deity being worshipped. As these events evolved a need arose to provide designated spaces for the performances and dramatic texts, scenery, costumes, lighting, music, properties and make-up developed to support and enhance the productions.

Aristotle identified "spectacle" (in Converse, 1995:253) as one of six key elements together with "plot, character, idea, language [and] music" (in Converse, 1995:253) that could provide a framework around which a dramatic production could be created. However, the use of spectacle has varied throughout history. The Greek, Roman and Elizabethan theatre gave greater emphasis to the text in a production and spectacle was symbolic and stylised. From the Italian Renaissance (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:174-175) to the Eighteenth century (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:228-229), spectacle and music emerged as dominant forces and the other elements often played a secondary supportive function. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a number of pioneers such as Adolphe Appia, Edward Gordon Craig, Jo Mielziner and Josef Svoboda (McKinney and Butterworth, 2009:9-24, 55-58, 65-73) re-evaluated the use of spectacle within a performance and paved the way for new interpretations of the text in relation to the use or function of scenery. Throughout the development of theatre, there has been a shifting relationship between Aristotle's six elements and this in turn has influenced the shape and layout of the theatrical venues, the dramatic genres and the type of scenery used in a production.

Although the use of scenery can be traced to the earliest theatrical performances it is important to clarify the function scenery plays in a production. Different theorists have sought to define the role or purpose of scenery within a production. Martin Esslin (1987:73) states that scenery "pictures the environment against which the action of the drama unfolds", while Samuel Selden and Hunton Sellman (1959:7) claim that "the duty of scenery, through the use of suggestive and significant surrounding forms, [is] to aid

the actor in translating the spirit of the author's vision in the most effective manner possible". These definitions view scenery as providing a decorative background behind the performer. Robert Edmond Jones also acknowledges the importance of the scenery in a production but, however, states:

> While the scenery of a play is truly important, it should be so important that the audience should forget that it is painted. There should be a fusion between the play and its scenery. Scenery isn't there to be looked at, it's really there to be forgotten. The drama is the fire, the scenery is the air that lifts the fire and makes it bright. If a scene is properly done it should unconsciously 'get' the audience. The audience that is always conscious of the backdrop is paying a doubtful compliment to the painter. It may not be that the scene is bad – the set that they are looking at may be very fine, but it may not fit that particular action of the play. (1976:12-13)

This again relegates scenery to a purely supportive role. However, Pamela Howard (2002:130) sees the role of scenery and the scenographer in a more holistic light and defines scenography as "the seamless synthesis of space, text, research, art, actors, directors and spectators that contributes to an original creation". Howard identifies a production as being reliant on the combined talents of the director, the performers, the playwright, the choreographer, the designers (lighting, sound, costume and scenic) and technical crew working in harmony in order to create a unified image. Unlike a fine art painting, a set design "does not exist as a self-contained art work" (Howard, 2002:xix), and is only complete when the performer steps on-stage. Although Howard uses the term scenography to encompass all aspects of a production, this dissertation limits the definition of scenography and the scenographer to the scenic design and set designer. Similarly Svoboda viewed scenography as "a means towards actualising a play" (in Burian, 1974:15). This is because the "theatrical designers don't create a real atmosphere for those who inhabit the stage; they create the illusion of atmosphere for those who view it from the audience" (Kernodle, Kernodle and Pixley, 1985:366). The set designer's responsibility is, therefore, to create a space for the performer that 'answers' the demands of playwright and director.

To what extent the set designer can mould the stage environment is often influenced by the choice of the venue, the technical equipment available, the budget, the directorial concept, and the text. This dissertation will investigate ways in which theatre space and dramatic genre influence the scenographic process with specific reference to the designs of Greg King of the KickstArt Theatre Company. King is currently one of Durban's

most prolific local scenographers and works in many of Durban's mainly proscenium arch theatres and has designed for a number of different dramatic genres.

Although local indigenous theatre developed in South Africa, theatre was affected by colonisation and apartheid policies. Many British touring companies were imported and they encouraged the development of both amateur and professional companies (Freedley and Reeves, 1972:836-840). This dissertation acknowledges that local indigenous theatre exists in South Africa, but as King's work has predominately been from Western cultures (KickstArt, 2011: Internet) the focus will be on his work in relation to the development of Western theatre.

Chapter two will briefly explore the development of Western theatre space as the size and shape of performance area can or may influence the use of scenery. The early stages thrust out into the auditorium and spectators sat on three sides. Scenery, when used, was positioned behind the action. As spectacle became a more important feature within a production, the architectural structure of the theatre changed to accommodate these new ideas and innovations resulting in special, purpose built "venues [that were constructed] in order to provide appropriate spaces for the performers and, equally important, spaces from which spectators [could] both see and hear" (McAuley, 1999:36). While this dissertation acknowledges all forms of performance space, the focus will be on the proscenium arch layout as the three venues selected as case studies, namely, the Playhouse Drama Theatre, the Seabrooke's Theatre, and the Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre, are in this configuration.

In order to begin his/her design the scenographer has to interrogate the dramatic text as this provides the primary basis for both the director and the designer to develop a production concept. The set designer conducts internal research on the text to extract both its aesthetic information and its physical requirements to develop the design. The text, however, can be divided into different dramatic genres and the many conventions that accompany a given genre may effect the designer's decisions. This dissertation acknowledges that there are many different genres, but will examine the following three Western genres, drama, musical and pantomime, as the productions selected as case studies are written in these genres. As the dramatic genres have developed from earlier

genres, the third chapter will briefly trace the historical development of the three genres and approaches to textural analysis.

Chapter Four will explore the design process, as a designer does not work in isolation to create his/her design. While the theatre space and dramatic genre may impose certain restrictions on the designer's creative process, the designer has to respond to or meet the demands of the director's concept. A good collaborative relationship between the director and the designer is therefore critical for a successful production (Howard, 2002:67). In a production the director is responsible for the stage composition, which can be defined as the "artistic and meaningful arrangement of characters on a stage" (Dietrich and Duckwall, 1983:68). The designer, however, focuses on the scenic composition which is the "artistic and meaningful placement of line, color [sic], form, light, and texture within a real or imagined frame" (Dietrich and Duckwall, 1983:68). This symbiotic relationship between the director and designer is essential for a successful production and will be examined to establish the influence it has on the design process.

Every designer undergoes a developmental process in order to formulate his/her design and uses different scenographic techniques visually to convey his/her design to the director and other members of the production. This can be in the form of scaled models, computer generated visualisations, perspective drawings, and technical drawings. Each object chosen and design decision taken by the designer is not by accident as these choices communicate, consciously or sub-consciously, visual symbols to the spectator (Bellman, 1983:14). The semiotic theories of Keir Elam (1980), Patrice Pavis (1978), Martin Esslin (1987), and Elaine Aston and George Savona's (1991) will be used as a method to interrogate the designs. Lastly the chapter will examine the design processes of three international designers, Ming Cho Lee, Josef Svoboda and Ralph Koltai, to further understand the influence the theatre space, dramatic genre and directorial concept have on the final set design. These three designers have worked in many different theatre venues and designed for a number of genres. They are also representative of Western theatre design as Lee predominantly works in the United States, while Svoboda worked in Europe and Koltai for the British theatre industry.

Finally, in chapter five, these abovementioned areas of investigation are engaged in relation to three set designs of King; namely *Aladdin* (2007), a pantomime presented at the Playhouse Drama Theatre, *Oleanna* (2008), a drama at the Seabrooke's Theatre, and *The Wizard of Oz* (2008), a musical at the Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre. The case studies offered highlight the problems involved with the physical limitations of the theatre space, as each venue selected differs in size, shape, and technical equipment available for the designer. The productions selected are also from different dramatic genres and demonstrate the influence the genre may have on the designer's decisions and choices.

Chapter Two

Development of Western Theatre Buildings

Historically, two main theatre layouts have developed (Mackey and Cooper, 2000:4-5) and the first shape emerged from the informal and later formal gatherings of people who were watching or participating in religious rituals. As these ceremonies expanded into theatrical performances, the spectators either completely surrounded the performance space or sat on three sides and the open or thrust stage evolved (Wickham, 1985:31-33; Brockett and Hildy, 2003:4-5). The second shape, the proscenium arch, appeared during the Italian Renaissance (Ionazzi, 1996:12) when performances moved indoors; the stage became situated at one end of the room and the spectator viewed the action 'end-on' from a single direction.

Although these two shapes were to remain popular until the twentieth century, a number of theatre practitioners such as Antonin Artaud (1974), Richard Schechner (1994), Jerzy Grotowski (1978) and Peter Brook (1968; 1988) proposed alternatives to the traditionally accepted theatrical spaces and advocated creating "black box"[1] theatres (Parker and Wolf, 1996:8), "site-specific"[2] venues (Chambers, 2002:693) or "found spaces"[3] (Schechner, 1994:250). These innovative ideas resulted in the division between the designated performance area and spectator space becoming blurred. This shifting relationship between the performance space and the spectator has often determined the structural plan of the venue and the type of scenery used (Baugh, 2005:4). Howard (2002:6) states that "space for the scenographer is about creating internal dramatic space as well as responding to the external architectural space" and, therefore, a designer often begins his/her design process with an evaluation of the theatrical space, which includes the size and shape of the stage space, the auditorium layout and the technical equipment available.

[1] A flexible venue that allows for a wide variety of actor / audience relationships (Parker and Wolf, 1996:8).
[2] A performance "designed for a specific space or location that is not itself designed for theatrical use" (Chambers, 2002:693).
[3] Spaces that were not originally intended for performance but that could be adapted into a performance space (Schechner, 1994:250).

As the layout of the modern proscenium arch theatre evolved over centuries, this chapter briefly explores the historical development of Western theatrical space and the influence it has had and continues to have on the scenographer. The chapter will also examine three proscenium arch theatres in Durban in which King has worked: the Seabrooke's Theatre, the Playhouse Drama, and the Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre.

2.1 Development of the Open or Thrust Stage

The Greeks, Romans and Elizabethans all used the open or thrust stage theatre layout. The main characteristics of these theatres is that they were all outdoor venues, the spectators viewed the performances from three sides, the structure at the back of the stage was used to support the scenic location and although stage machinery was available, it was not extensively used. The 'text' also played a key role in the entertainment, while 'spectacle' had a secondary supportive function.

2.1.1 Greek and Hellenistic Theatre

The Greek theatre (figure 2.1. overleaf) had a large flat circular performance area (orchestra), between twenty and thirty metres in diameter (Wickham, 1985:40). The auditorium, often constructed into a hillside, surrounded the orchestra on three sides (Hartnoll, 1998:21-22). As performances developed a scene building (skene) was built to provide a 'backdrop' to the action on-stage (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:28-29). The skene had three entrances (thyromata) that led onto a long, narrow raised stage, which elevated some of the performers above the orchestra floor (Nicoll, 1966:12-13). The building served a number of functions, such as providing dressing rooms for the performers, storage for properties and a means to support or mask the various types of stage machines that were used to enhance the action of the play (Gillette, 1992:33). During the Hellenistic period, the skene building was divided into two sections; the lower part (proskenion) was three or four metres in height and was constructed from a number of columns that supported a narrow stage above. On the upper section (episkenion) the facade had up to seven entrances, often three metres in width (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:40-41).

Although scenery was limited, some stage devices existed that could produce a variety of scenic effects. These included the ekkyklema, a platform on wheels that was rolled on through the central door of the skene to reveal the 'dead bodies' of the characters that had been 'killed' off-stage (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:30). The mechane was a crane attached to the skene that was used to 'fly' in the gods (Hartnoll, 1998:22; Zarrilli, McConachie, Williams and Sorgenfrei, 2006:88). Scene changes were created by periaktoi, triangular structures that revolved to reveal differently painted facades and pinakes, painted 'flats', that were attached to the skene wall to indicate new locations (Nagler, 1959:8-9; Nicoll, 1966:20-21). Symbolic properties and set pieces were used in preference to recreating realistic illusions on the stage, and specific entrances and exits indicated to the audience where the performer had come from or was going to (Wickham, 1985:40). As Greek theatre originated from religious festivals, a movable property altar was sometimes positioned in the orchestra (Zarrilli *et al.*, 2006:89-90).

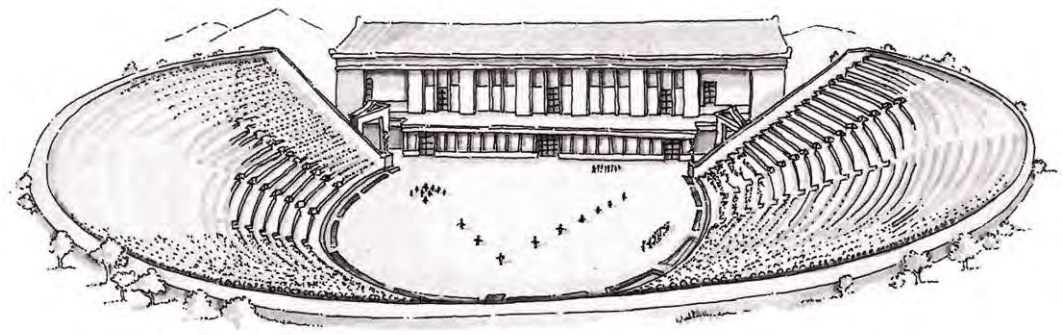


Figure 2.1. A Greek Theatre showing the skene, orchestra, and auditorium (Gillette, 1992:31)

2.1.2 Roman Theatre

The first permanent theatre building in Rome was built around 55 BCE (Brown, 2001:58; Brockett and Hildy, 2003:54) and was based on the Greek layout. The auditorium (cavea) and the orchestra became semi-circular in shape, constructed on level ground, instead of into a hillside (Gillette, 1992:35). The orchestra now provided seating for important guests or as a place for dancing, animal fights, and/or gladiator battles. The stage and main performance space (proscaenium) was raised about one and a half metres above the orchestra and was between thirty and ninety metres in width and

six to twelve metres deep (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:56). The theatre became an enclosed structure (Brown, 2001:59) with the scaenae frons, formerly the Greek skene, becoming joined to the cavae at the same height. A roof/awning was then attached that covered both the cavae and stage area (Nicoll, 1966:41-42), and a front curtain was often added that could be raised and lowered in front of the scaenae frons (Hartnoll, 1998:28-29). The scaenae frons (figure 2.2.) provided the main architectural backdrop for the productions and had a central double door opening with two smaller doors on either side. Periaktoi with three basic designs that included tragedy (painted with columns, pediments and statues), comedy (houses with balconies and windows), and satyr play (a painted landscape) (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:58) were used to indicate the changes in the dramatic genres.

The Romans also enjoyed many other forms of entertainment that included gladiator fights, chariots races, animal fights, and sea battles (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:52-53). Additional buildings such as amphitheatres, arenas and circuses were constructed for these performances (Wickham, 1985:51).

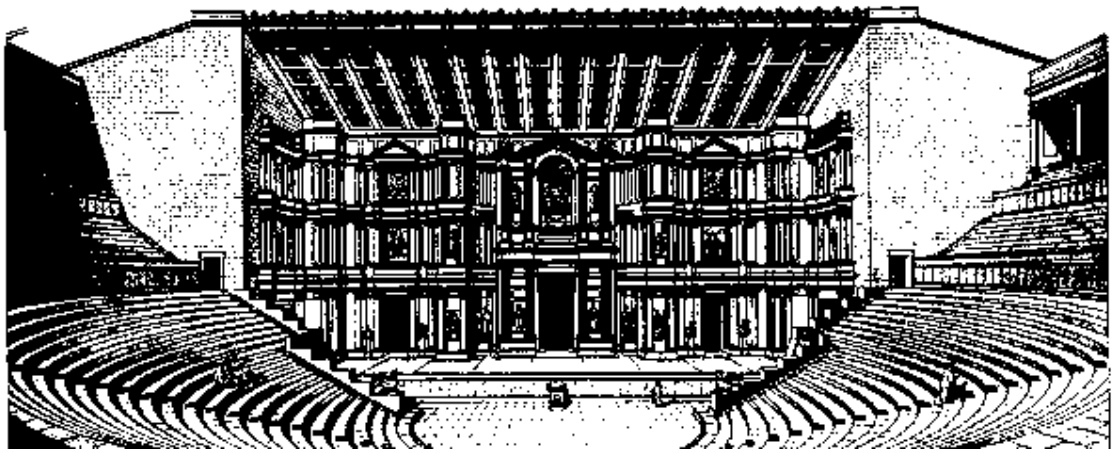


Figure 2.2. Roman Theatre showing the scaenae frons (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:59)

2.1.3 Theatre in the Middle Ages

In the Middle Ages, as a result of an increased animosity towards theatrical entertainments by the Christian church and the collapse of the Western Roman Empire in 476 CE (Freedley and Reeves, 1972:48-50), no theatre buildings were constructed for

nearly five hundred years (Wickham, 1985:56). Travelling players such as mime artists, jugglers and minstrel singers however, kept the tradition of theatre 'alive' (Freedley and Reeves, 1972:48-50).

In the early tenth century, the church introduced short re-enactments of biblical teachings as a means to educate the illiterate population in their religious teachings and ideologies. At first, churches were used as the performance venues, but as the popularity of the productions increased and the subject matter changed the performances moved outside the church building (Oenslager, 1975:20-21; Zarrilli *et al.*, 2006:73-77). The plays, now written in the vernacular of the people (Zarrilli *et al.*, 2006:73-77), were staged on static structures or on moving pageant wagons (figure 2.3.).

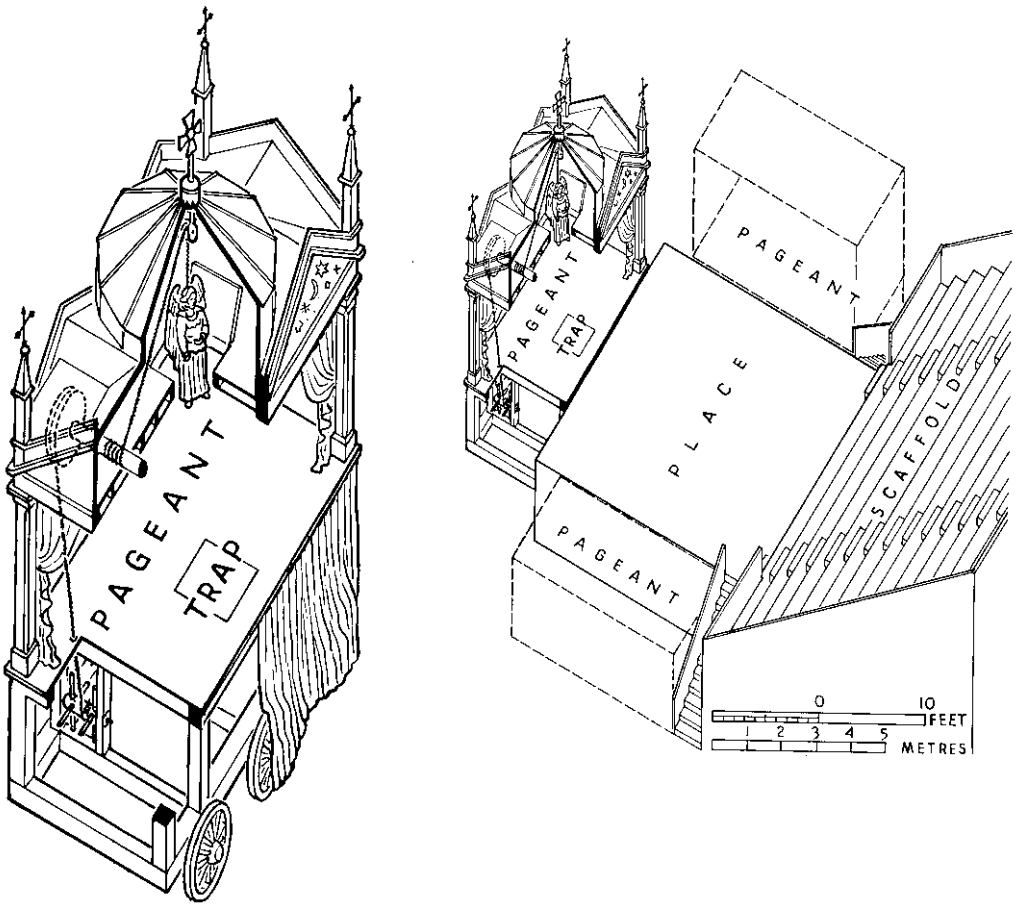


Figure 2.3. Medieval pageant wagons (Leacroft, 1988:8)

Various guilds were responsible for presenting a different play from within a given cycle (Hartnoll, 1998:41-44; Trussler, 2000:40-41). Although many plays were presented within a given pageant cycle, no attempt was made by the individual wagons to create a unified image to the whole event. The settings were mainly symbolic and iconic. Heaven was usually on the stage right and indicated with clouds, while hell was on the left represented by a monster, with a large gaping mouth (Rosenfeld, 1973:1-3).

Although these theatres were not permanent structures the scenery was elaborate and enhanced with special effects and stage machinery (Hartnoll, 1998:46). A scaffold structure was often built in front of the wagon that further extended the performance space. The stages were equipped with pulleys and winches that could raise and lower performers or scenery, and had trapdoors that allowed performers to miraculously appear and disappear (Leacroft, 1988:7-10).

In addition to the pageant cycles, indoor entertainments such as short plays, interludes, disguisings, and mummings were performed by touring players for rulers, noblemen and rich merchants (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:100-103).

2.1.4 Outdoor Elizabethan Theatre

The next distinctive example of the thrust stage was the Elizabethan 'public theatre', built to entertain the general population. The theatre (figure 2.4. overleaf) was polygonal in shape and could accommodate three thousand spectators who either stood in the open courtyard or sat on benches in the three tiers of galleries that surrounded most of the stage (Larque, 2001: Internet). The stage, possibly based on the pageant wagons, was a large platform that extended into the courtyard (Rosenfeld, 1973:8; Hartnoll, 1998:75). At the back of the stage, a tiring house served as dressing rooms and a place to store properties. The tiring house had two or more entrances onto the stage and a gallery above that was used for musicians or as an extra performance space. Extending from the tiring house was a roof supported by two large pillars at the front edge of the stage, which housed the machinery room used for lowering scenic devices and scenery from trapdoors above. The underside of this structure could be painted with clouds, moon and stars that represented the sky or 'heavens' (Leacroft, 1988:24; Brockett and Hildy, 2003:122-125).

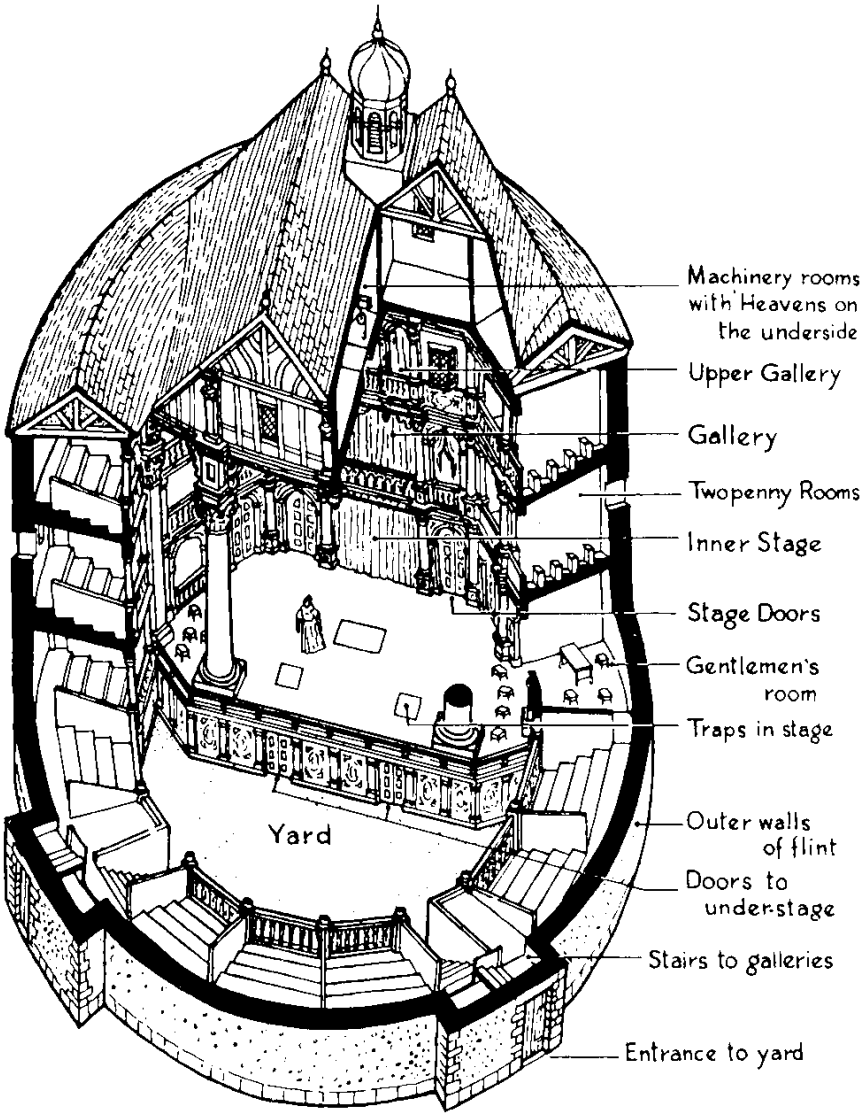


Figure 2.4. Diagram of Elizabethan Theatre (Athanasopulos, 1983:65)

The layout of the theatre ensured that all the spectators were close to the stage and the performer was able to interact directly with the audience. The architectural features of the building provided the visual backdrop to the action on-stage and scenic elements and properties were added where necessary (Rosenfeld, 1973:8-9), as T.J. King's (1599-1642) list indicates:

> tables, chairs, and traverses; thrones; tents and canopies; altars and pulpits; stocks, scaffolds, and gibbets; biers, coffins, dead bodies, and litters; barriers and lists; chariots and vaulting horses; banks and caves; and arbors, trees, bushes, boughs, and flowers. (in Brockett and Hildy, 2003:129)

Theatres were closed in England during the civil war (1642–1651) and only reopened in 1660 with the restoration of King Charles II (1630-1685) to the throne (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:135; Zarrilli *et al.*, 2006:188-189).

2.2 The Development of the Proscenium Arch Theatre

In Italy, during the fifteenth century, classical Roman drama was rediscovered. The plays were unsuitable for the existing outdoor performance style and, therefore, theatre moved into an interior performance space. The theatre architects looked to the Roman theatre layout for inspiration (Hartnoll, 1998:51). The first theatres were designed to fit into existing rooms that were either rectangular or square in shape. The Roman semi-circular auditorium was retained and the stage was moved to one end of the room, providing a single directional view for the spectator. This resulted in a change in the relationship between the performance space and the spectator.

As the interior theatres developed, it became necessary to place a framework around the stage opening. The construction of the proscenium arch "helped both to create the illusion of reality and to mask the mechanisms upon which it depended" (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:172). However, the exact origins of the arch are unknown; but the following theories are proposed as to its development. The first theory is that the doorways in the Roman scaenae frons were expanded and merged into one; this alteration provided an arch behind which the performers could play. The second suggests that the triumphal arches, used in street pageants, were enlarged to provide an opening through which to view the action. Thirdly, the ornate picture frame mounted around the Renaissance perspective paintings was copied and developed into the arch. Lastly, the use of perspective in the new theatrical settings required restricting the spectator's view to a single direction (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:172; Zarrilli *et al.*, 2006:57-60).

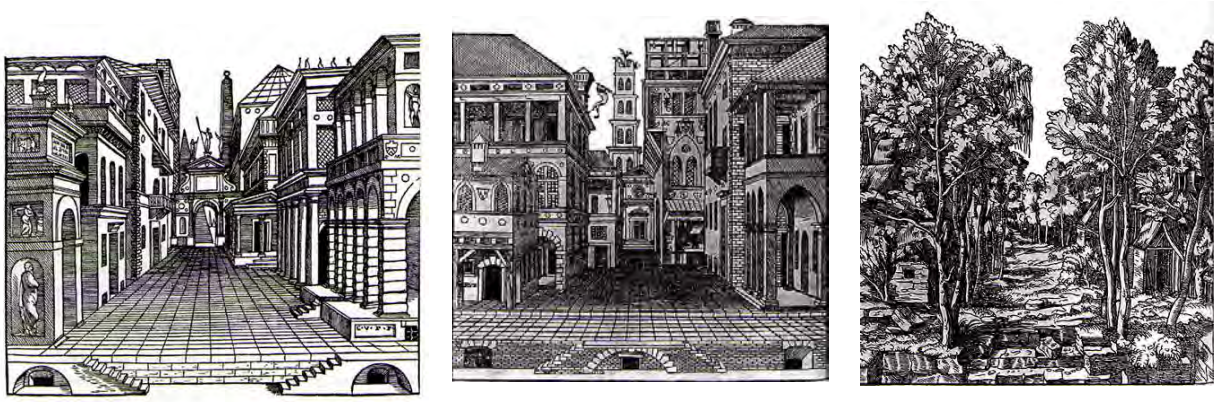
2.2.1 Scenic Innovators of the Italian Renaissance Theatre

Changes in the theatre layout and the development of the proscenium arch venue first appeared in Italy during the Renaissance period (Wickham, 1985:99-103). New forms of entertainment such as the intermezzi, presented before and after the main

entertainment, became popular as they incorporated dance, music, special effects and scenery (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:163), and provided a vehicle by which the scenic artists could experiment. The desire for 'spectacle' resulted in the invention of various methods, by a number of innovative theatre practitioners, that could miraculously change the scenery in front of the spectator often resulting in spectacle overshadowing the text (Brown, 2001:138-139).

2.2.1.1 Sebastiano Serlio 1475-1554

One of the early theatre practitioners, Serlio, in his book *Architecttura* (1545), based on Vitruvius's (first century BCE) book *De Architetura*, described how the ancient Roman architectural principles could be adapted to suit the needs of the Renaissance theatre. Serlio's theatre, built into a rectangular room, had a long, narrow stage at one end of the room and the audience sat on raised seating in a semi circular pattern. His theatre design did not include an arch, but his innovative ideas contributed to the development of the proscenium arch theatre layout (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:166-167). Serlio also created three different scenic designs which were based on Vitruvius's descriptions of the three basic types of settings: tragic (figure 2.5.a.), comic (figure 2.5.b.), and satiric (figure 2.5.c.) (Hartnoll, 1998:57-60).



a b c

Figure 2.5. Serlio's designs based on Vitruvius (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:166)
(a) The Tragic Scene, (b) The Comic Scene, (c) The Satiric Scene

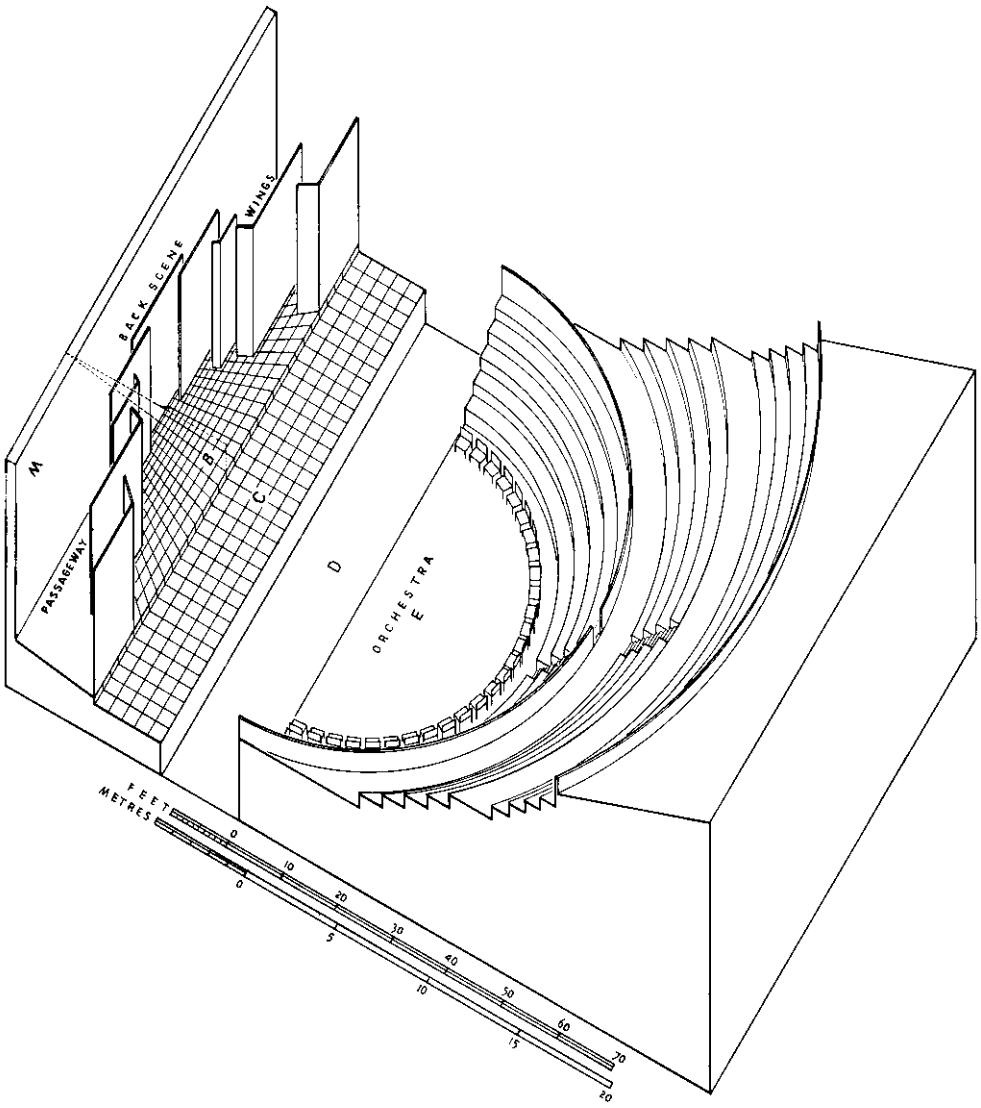


Figure 2.6. Diagram of Serlio's theatre (Leacroft, 1988:17)

In order to recreate his scenes, Serlio had a steeply raked floor with three sets of angled flats (painted in perspective to a single vanishing point) and a painted backdrop (figure 2.6.). Due to the forced perspective and steeply raked stage, the performers were unable to interact directly with the scenery and, therefore, only performed in front of the scenery (Nicoll, 1966:75).

2.2.1.2 Giovan Battista Aleotti 1546-1636

One of the next influential designers was Giovan Battista Aleotti, who was responsible for designing one of the oldest surviving proscenium arch theatres, Teatro Farnese (completed 1618), in Parma (figure 2.7.overleaf). The auditorium, adapted from the

Roman semi-circular shape, was 'stretched' into a U-shape and had stadium type seating that surrounded a large open space or 'pit' in the middle that was used for seating, dancing or other spectacles. The stage was rectangular and extended along the width of the ornately decorated proscenium arch. Two more 'frames' were set further back, to make it possible to increase or decrease the size of the stage (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:171-173). The front section of the stage was left flat for the performers while the up-stage area was raked in order to enhance the visual effects of the scenery and enable spectators to see the 'action' on-stage (Gillette, 1992:39).

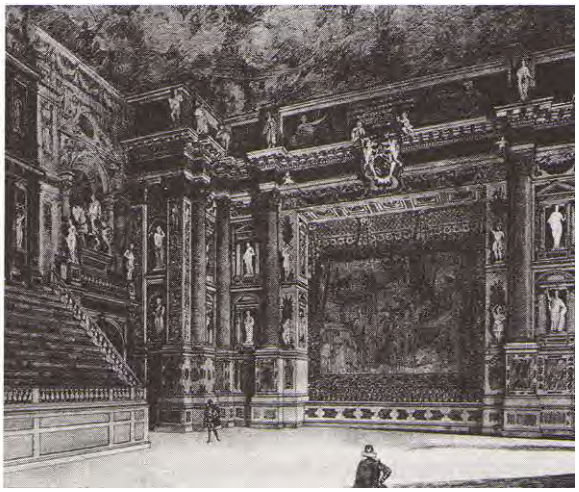


Figure 2.7. Teatro Farnese showing the proscenium arch designed by Aleotti (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:172)

2.2.1.3 Nicola Sabbattini 1574c.–1654

As interest in the new forms of spectacle grew, a need arose for the scenery to be shifted and changed. Sabbattini, in his book *Manual for Constructing Theatrical Scenes and Machines* (1638), described a number of methods that could be used to shift scenery (figure 2.8. overleaf). These included using a version of the Greek periaktoi with three flats joined vertically to form a triangular shape mounted on a turning mechanism that revolved to reveal new scenes to the audience. The flats were painted so that the perspective design continued from one flat to the next. Another method, based on Serlio's angled wings, included moving sets of angled wings in front of one another or by pulling a painted canvas over the angled wings. Sabbattini also described ways of

changing flat wings by sliding them in grooves or by turning them "like pages in a book" (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:167).

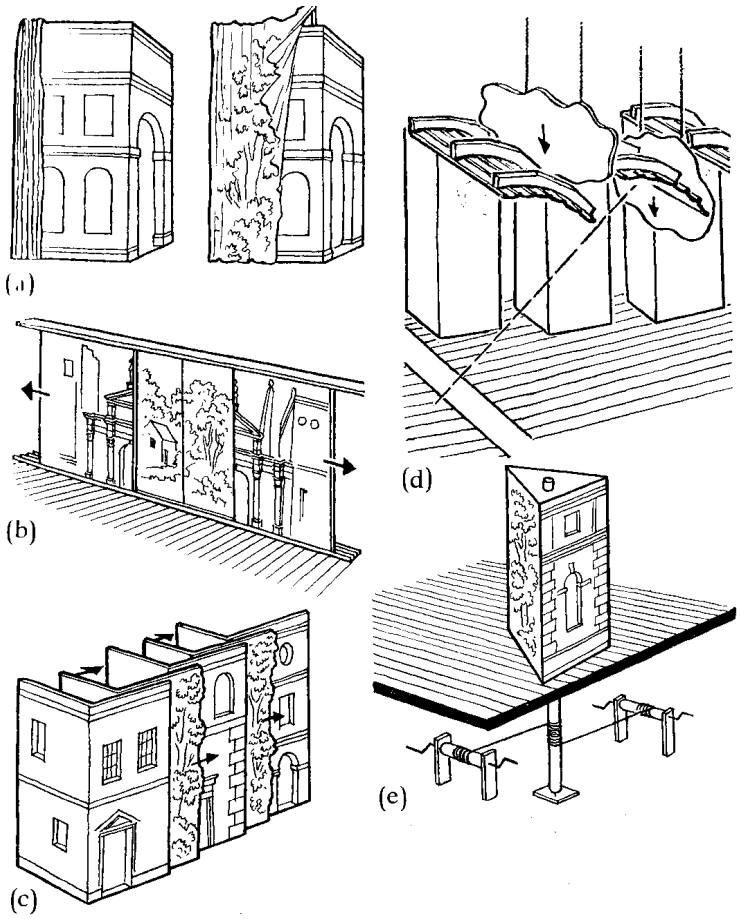


Figure 2.8. Sabbattini's proposed methods for changing scenery (Leacroft, 1988:53)

(a) Painted fabric drawn across flats, (b) Flats at the back opened to show a new scene behind, (c) Additional flats behind the first flats that are shifted into view when required, (d) The overhead borders are separated to allow additional scenery to be flown in, (e) A version of the Greek periaktoi.

2.2.1.4 Giacomo Torelli 1608–1678

Torelli improved on Sabbattini's method of sliding flats by placing them in grooves in the floor that were operated under the stage by a 'chariot-and-pole' or 'carriage-and-frame system'. The painted flats were attached to a wooden framework that extended below the stage and then mounted on a carriage or chariot that ran on a track, with the

frames then linked by a series of ropes to a central winch. By turning a master winch the flats for a new scene could be brought onto the stage while the other scene would be taken out of sight. A new scene could then be attached off-stage for the next change (figure 2.9.) (Oenslager, 1975:43-44; Brockett and Hildy, 2003:168-169). Torelli also introduced scene changes (figure 2.10. overleaf) before the audience, within the action of the scene instead of at the end of a scene (Nicoll, 1966:118-119). He was also instrumental in bringing many of the Italian scenic practices to France when he was invited to work at the Palais Royale, in Paris, in 1645 (Nicoll, 1966:117; Zarrilli *et al.*, 2006:171).

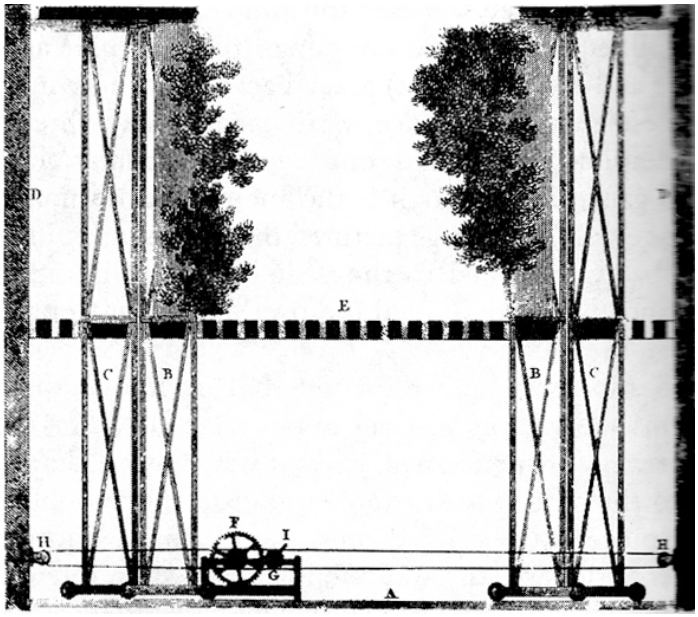


Figure 2.9. Torelli's chariot and pole system (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:168)

2.2.1.5 Additional Scenic Effects

Scenic effects therefore, became an integral part of the performance. Spectators expected entertainment that included spectacular effects of "fire and flame, thunder and smoke, and transformations that took place almost magically before [their] eyes" (Simonson, 1950:10). The early perspective scenic artists at first painted each angled flat as a separate building, thus creating the appearance of a 'street' scene. The introduction of flat wings resulted in the scenery being painted as a unified single interior with columns or architectural features, and replaced the individual buildings.

The 'grander' more 'monumental' settings lead to the development of the baroque style of theatre (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:169).

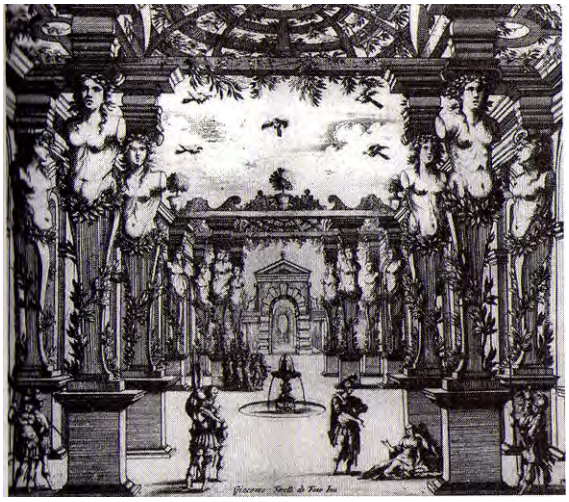


Figure 2.10. Scenic Design by Torelli (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:169)

Scenic devices allowed 'gods' and mythological characters to be lowered from the 'sky' and chariots, clouds and horses, constructed from wood and canvas, could also be 'flown' into place using overhead casters and tracks, fulcrums, ropes, and pulleys at the side of the stage. In some theatres the space above and below the stage was limited so scenery was designed to fold or was hinged. Trapdoors in the stage floor also allowed scenery to be raised or lowered. The performers interacted with the scenery only where necessary, for example when being flown in from the heavens, but generally they were 'out-of-scale' to the perspectively painted scenes. Other effects such as fire and smoke were used to enhance spectacle. Although a roller or draw curtain was sometimes used to hide the scenery, in most cases once the curtain rose the scene changes became an integral part of the entertainment provided (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:173-175).

In addition to the changes in scenery the proscenium arch became more three-dimensional and had carvings and figures, in relief. Some arches became curved across the top. The depth of the stage increased as well as the space above and below the stage so that the venue could accommodate the grandeur and larger baroque scenery (Nicoll, 1966:139, 148).

One notable family, the Bibienas, had eight members who carried the tradition of scenic painting throughout Europe from 1680 to 1780. They were able to explore the use of perspective by painting architecturally detailed buildings at a forty-five degree angle, thus creating a sense of infinite space (figure 2.11.). The buildings were painted on cutout flats that were positioned one behind each other. Candles were placed behind each flat so that it provided an indirect light for the one behind (Bibiena, 1964:v-vi).

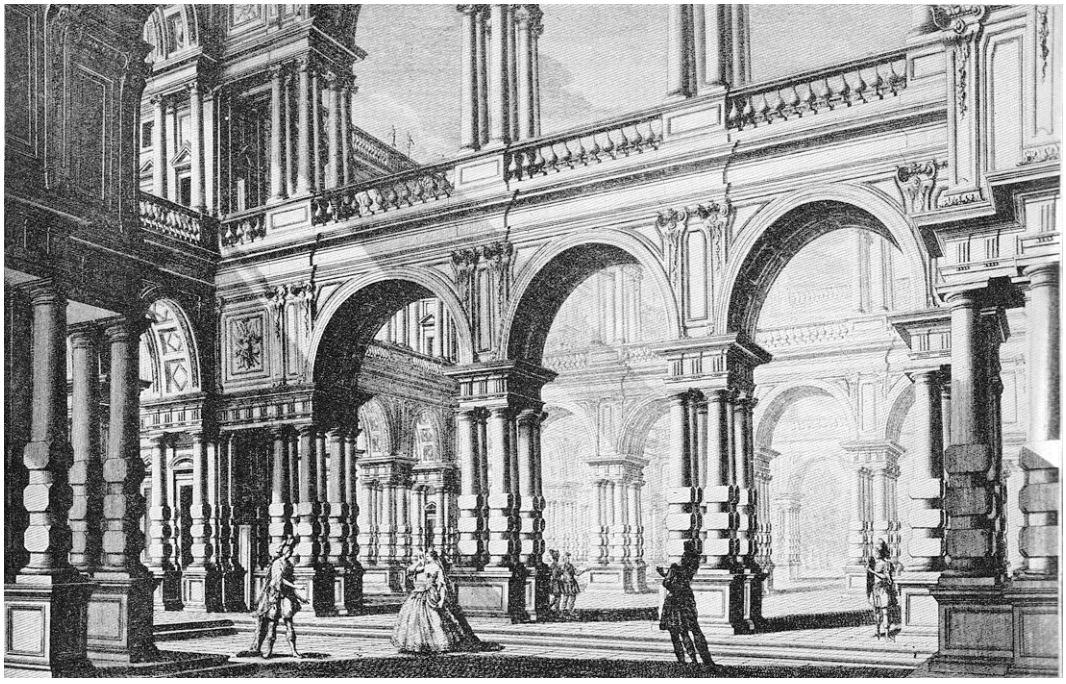


Figure 2.11. Theatrical Design by Giuseppe da Bibiena (Nicoll, 1966:138)

2.3 Indoor or Private Theatres in England

Despite the scenic and architectural developments on the continent, theatre in England remained largely unaffected. The new Italian styles first appeared in the court masque entertainments (Nicoll, 1966:148). During the Elizabethan period, England had a number of indoor or private theatres in addition to the outdoor venues. One of these theatres was the second Blackfriars (1596) (figure 2.12.overleaf) that was constructed into a room that measured fourteen by twenty metres. The audience sat in two or three galleries or seats in the pit; a few private boxes were also available. The stage was raised was about one and a half metres above the pit and was nine metres wide by seven metres deep. Three doors led onto the stage from the tiring house and there was no proscenium arch or front curtain (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:126-127).

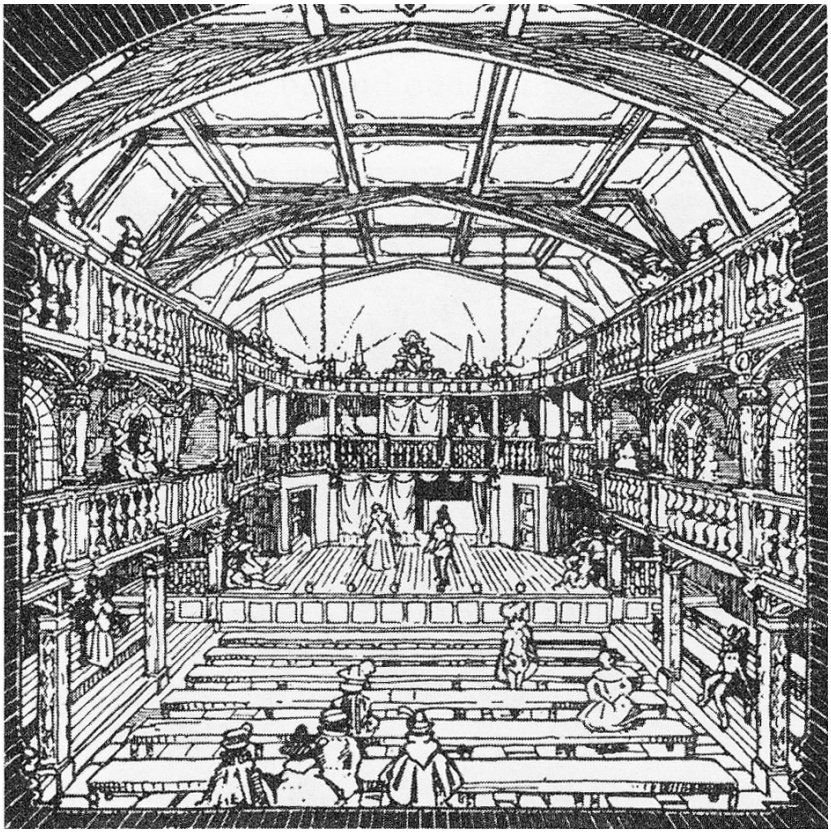


Figure 2.12. Second Blackfriars Theatre (1597) (reconstruction) (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:126)

The earliest evidence of a proscenium arch was a structure at a wedding masque in 1606 that had "two golden statues at each side of the stage [that] were linked by a curtain hung from the roof" (Rosenfeld, 1973:19). One of England's first scenic designers, Inigio Jones (1573-1652), studied briefly in Italy and brought back many of the Italian scenic practices to England (figure 2.13. overleaf) (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:134-135).

2.3.1 English Restoration Theatre

As mentioned, in 1660 Charles II was restored to the throne in England and as many of the returning exiles had watched theatre performances in Europe, they encouraged the introduction of the French and Italian theatrical styles and concepts into the English theatre. Charles II granted two patents to Thomas Killigrew (1612-1683) and William Davenant (1606-1668) and they became the only people who could operate theatres in London (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:213 - 214).

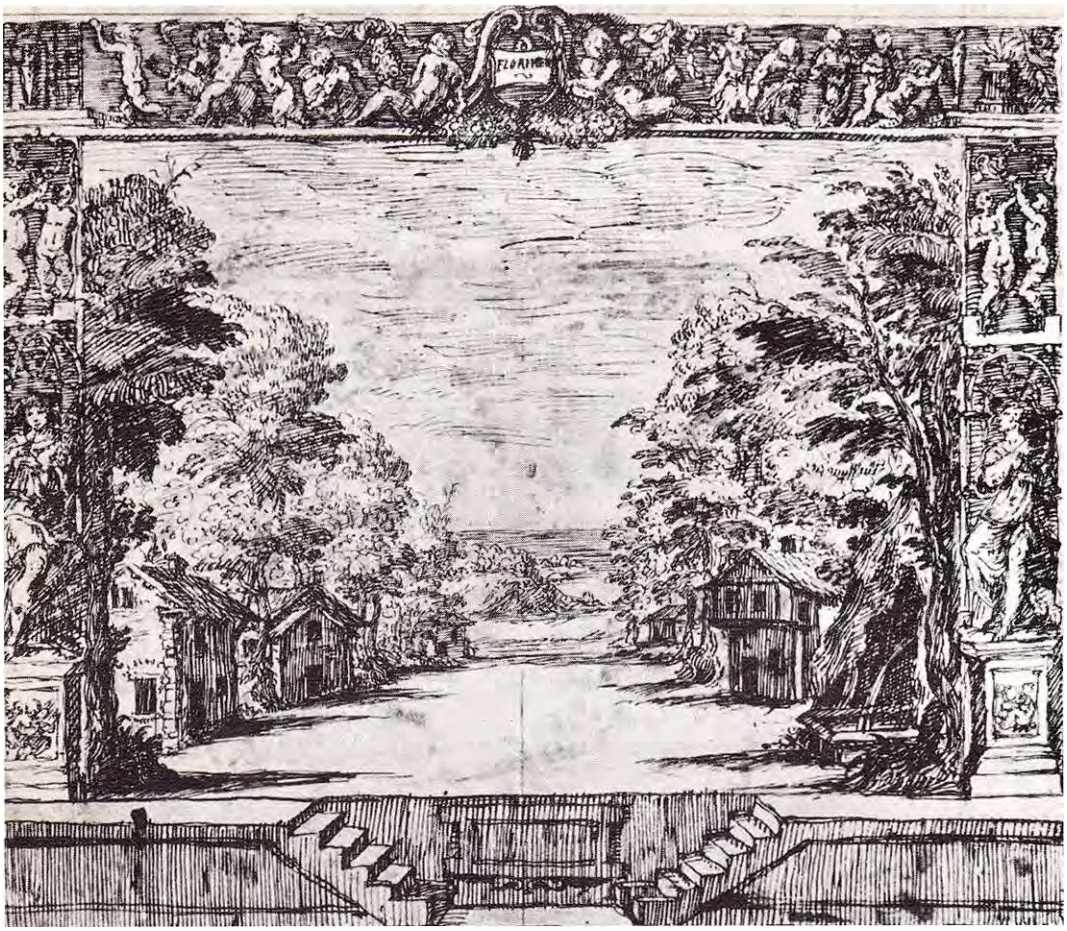


Figure 2.13. Inigo Jones, pastoral scene for *Florimène* (Rosenfeld, 1973:28)

The existing theatres in London however, were unsuitable for the Italianate scenic practices and a number of venues had to be converted or adapted such as Lincoln's Inn Field (1661) and Drury Lane (1674) (figure 2.14.overleaf). The English theatres retained a deep forestage and had two doors, for the performers' entrances, on each side of the stage with balconies above for spectators. This layout enabled the English performer to continue to interact with the spectators (Rosenfeld, 1973:41). The proscenium arch was constructed about half-way down the total stage length. The stage was equipped with grooves and mechanical devices suitable for the elaborate scene changes (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:225-226). The wings and shutters could now operate independently of each other, which allowed the shutters to open and reveal a scene or close and provide a new background for the performers. This meant scenery was now being used for a dramatic purpose as well as a decorative function (Rosenfeld, 1973:41).

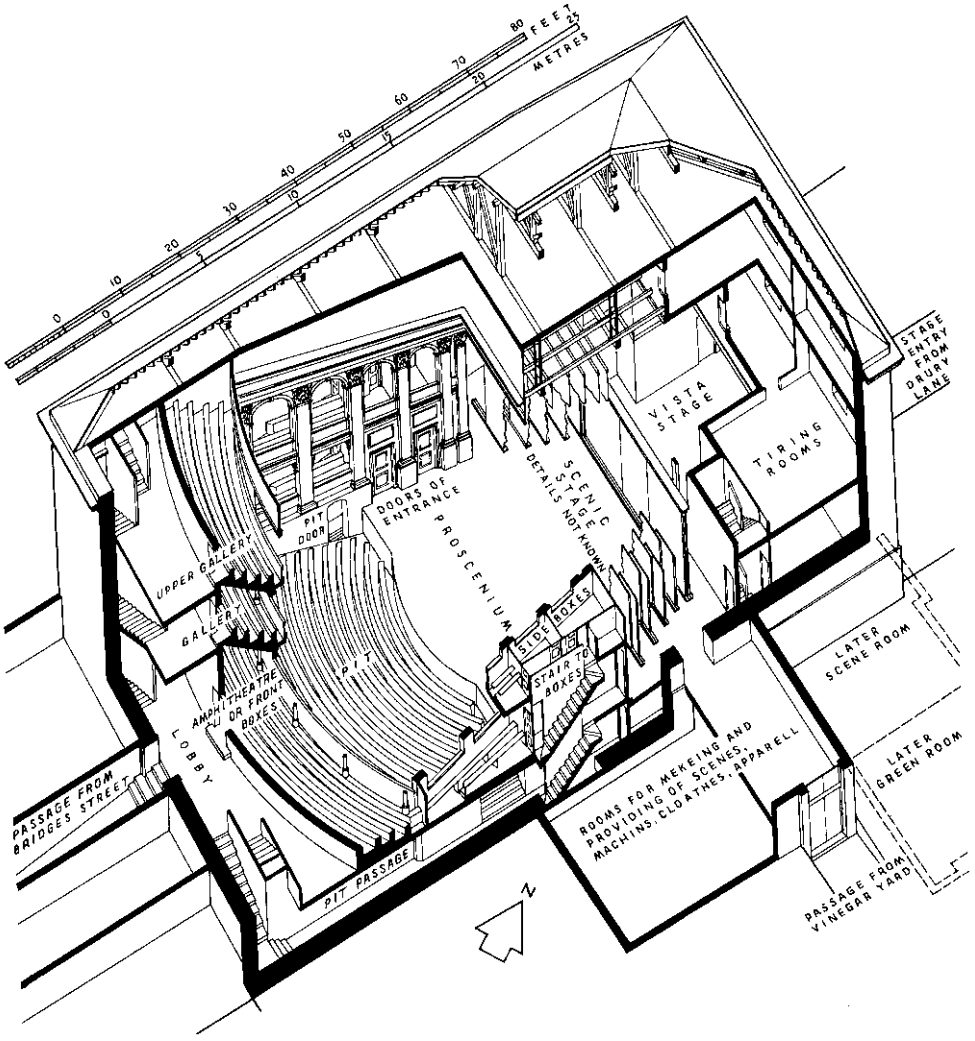


Figure 2.14. Drury Lane (1674) (Leacroft, 1988:95)

Despite the popularity of the theatre, productions did not enjoy long runs (eight or nine performances was considered a success) and it was, therefore, not economically viable to create new scenery for every show (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:228). Various artists were commissioned to create stock scenery and most theatres had, as part of their scenic repertoire, the following scenic units: "a classical set, a tomb, a city wall (with gate), a palace (interior and exterior), a street an interior chamber, a prison, a formal garden, and a rural scene" (Pickering, 1978:321). By 1735 scenic artists had become part of the permanent English theatre staff (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:228). However, scenery still did not support the action on-stage (Baugh, 2005:13).

2.4 Theatre in the Eighteenth Century

During the eighteenth century actor-managers administered many of the theatres and only a few attempted to integrate the text, action and scenery. David Garrick (1717-1779), artistic manager of the Drury Lane Theatre (1741-1776), introduced a more realistic style of acting to the stage and paid more attention to casting and rehearsal. He encouraged his designers to create more realistic settings and discontinued the custom of spectators sitting on the side of the stage (Trussler, 2000:176-191; Brockett and Hildy, 2003:227). Garrick employed Philippe Jacques de Loutherbourg (1740–1812), who explored new ideas for stage settings (figure 2.15.) and created models so he could convey his ideas for the design to the scenic artists. In addition to scenery, he studied sound effects and developed a machine that could project clouds onto a landscape (Rosenfeld, 1973:87-93).

Figure 2.15. De Loutherbourg, *A Christmas Tale* (Rosenfeld, 1973:89)

2.5 Theatre in the Nineteenth Century

Towards the end of the eighteenth century more theatre managers and scenic artists began evaluating the existing scenic practices. The antiquarianism movement started researching past histories and incorporated their findings into their set designs. However, their desire for spectacular effects often resulted in a number of texts, such as Shakespeare's, being altered to suit the spectacle of the setting (Nicoll, 1966:191; Brockett and Hildy, 2003:321-323). This exploration into more historically accurate settings lead to a demand for different or new designs for each production, which resulted in the demise of stock scenery (Rosenfeld, 1973:100; Wickham, 1985:182). Another group of artists began the Romantic Movement (figure 2.16.) that sought to create picturesque images by exploiting colour, perspective, light and shade. They produced many of their designs on transparencies, gauzes and cut cloths. Their settings included scenes for "mountains and torrents, ruins by moonlight, burning forests, oriental temples and palaces, Gothic abbeys, and illuminated cities, gardens and ballrooms" (Rosenfeld, 1973:103).

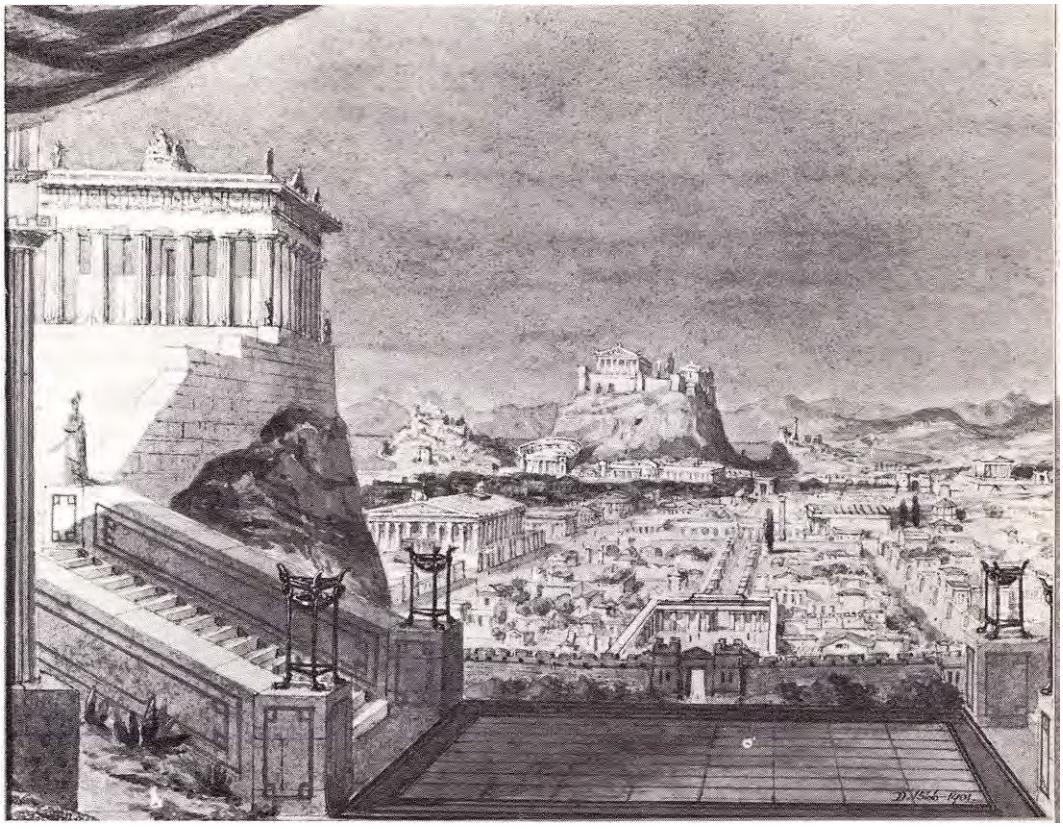


Figure 2.16. Design for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Rosenfeld, 1973:123)

In 1804 permission was granted to a number of companies that allowed them to open new theatres in London, on condition that they did not infringe on the rights of the patent houses. They were not authorized to perform dramas, so alternative forms of entertainment, such as the burletta and melodrama, became popular (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:318-319).

2.5.1 Changes to the Stage

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the stage underwent some changes: the forestage reduced in size, but a single entrance was retained on either side of the apron (Leacroft, 1988:197-200) (figure 2.17.). In order to meet the demands for spectacle, the stage floor was divided into segments that allowed scenic units, often stored in the basement, to be raised or lowered. The area above the stage also increased in height and a fly tower was built that had a fly gallery, grid and a counterweight system from which the painted scenic cloths and the gas lighting could be suspended (Wickham, 1985:182).

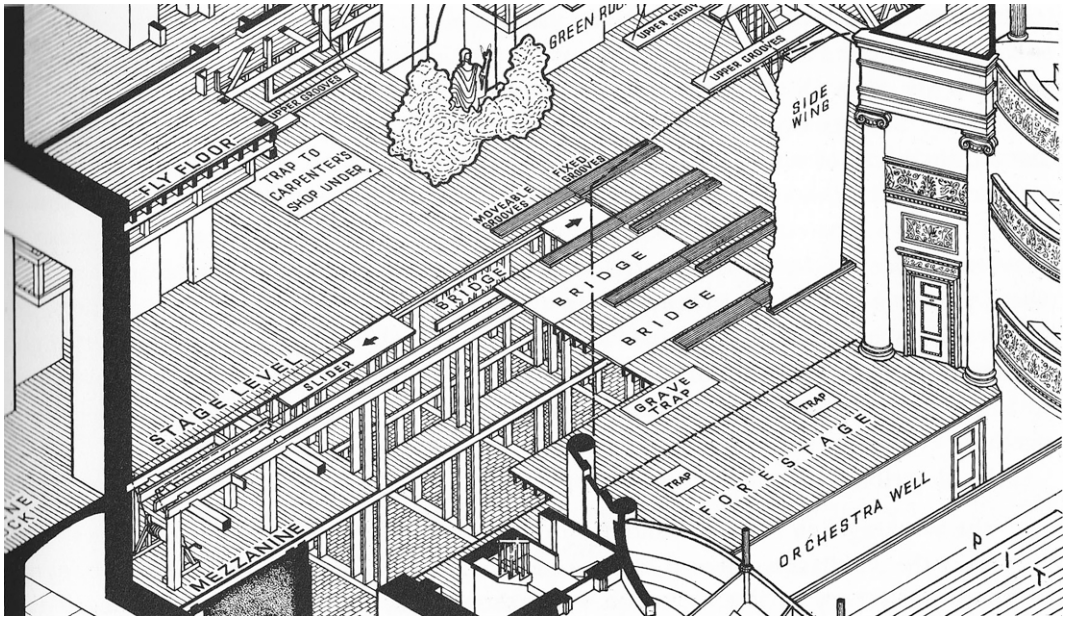


Figure 2.17. Stage detail of the Theatre Royal, Plymouth (1811). Diagram illustrates the machinery available in the theatre and the reduced forestage (Leacroft, 1988:199)

Most settings still followed the wing and drop system, and properties or furniture were painted onto the flats, with the 'real' item only added when necessary. Other scenic devices such as the panorama and the diorama, were also introduced that created

moving three-dimensional backgrounds. This type of scenery however, suited a palatial setting (Rosenfeld, 1973:106-111) and as the texts changed and focused on 'real-life' events there was a demand for more "intimate interior scenes" (Hartnoll, 1998:240).

At first doors and/or windows were positioned between the parallel wings until the performance space became completely enclosed. Lucia Elizabetta Vestris (1797-1856), manager at the Olympic Theatre (1831-1839), was one of the first to introduce a box set (figure 2.18.) and her setting had "rugs laid on the floor, knobs attached to doors, and bookcases, books, and bric-a-brac" (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:327).

Figure 2.18. Early box set by Vestris (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:327)

2.5.2 Changes in Scenic Styles

As the layout of the scenery changed, a number of new scenic styles evolved with some theatre practitioners looking towards creating a naturalistic or realistic environment, while others explored an abstract and more symbolic representation.

2.5.2.1 Naturalism

André Antoine (1858–1943), in his Théâtre Libre, in Paris, began creating naturalistic environments for his productions by replicating 'real-life' situations exactly on-stage. In rehearsal he arranged the room in a realist configuration and only selected the 'wall' to be removed later (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:395), thereby creating a sense of the proscenium arch as an imaginary "fourth wall" (Zarrilli *et al.*, 2006:291).

2.5.2.2 Realism

The Realist style developed out of the naturalist movement as it was recognised that an exact replica of the real environment was not always practical. A process of "selection and distillation" and a "detailed observation of everyday life" (Mackey and Cooper, 2000:235) resulted in the creation of a setting that appeared real but was more practical in use.

2.5.2.3 Symbolism

Developing parallel to the naturalistic and realistic movements was the symbolist movement. They rejected the realistic settings, and adopted a simplified scenery that was more representational and suggestive of a location rather than a photographic replica. At the turn of the twentieth century two theatre visionaries, Adolphe Appia (1862-1928) and Edward Gordon Craig (1872-1966), began "lay[ing] the theoretical foundations of modern nonillusionistic [sic] theatrical practice[s]" (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:413).

Appia rejected the realistic settings with their painted false doors and windows and recommended replacing this with two-dimensional scenery (figure 2.19. overleaf) consisting of "steps, platforms, vertical columns and other non-realist, three-dimensional units for scenery" (Zarrilli *et al.*, 2006:297). He explored the use of light, and removed the fixed foot and border lights, and replaced them with movable overhead lights. He believed that light should primarily illuminate the performer (Rosenfeld, 1973:145). Appia aimed "to establish a fusion of the actor and the settings, with the actor a part of the scene but prominent" (Oenslager, 1975:186).

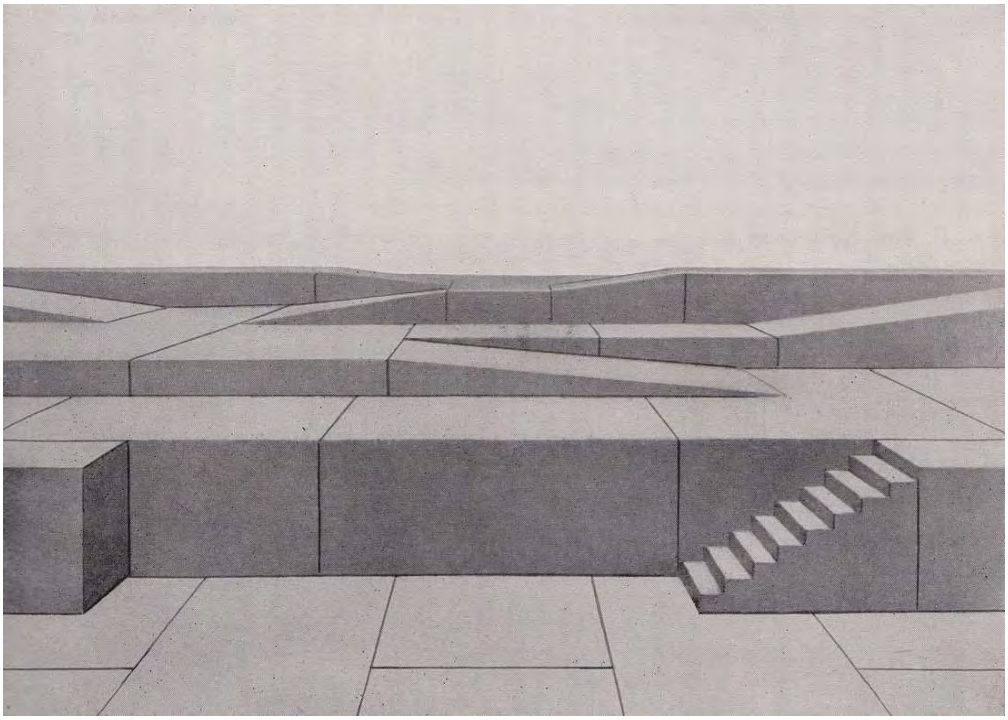


Figure 2.19. Adolphe Appia design *Das Rheingold* 1892 (Nicoll, 1966:209)

Craig took this idea further and argued for the use of a single setting for a production with only minor changes. He saw the potential of strong directional lighting to change the mood of a production (Mackey and Cooper, 2000:192 -223). For a production of *Hamlet* (1910) (figure 2.20. overleaf), Craig designed a system of screens that could move and fold into a number of different configurations; these ideas were to influence future designers. Appia and Craig's work was abstract and symbolic (Rosenfeld, 1973:147-153) and their designs relied on a combination of line, mass and colour rather than detailed historically accurate ornamentation (Brockett, 1979:362). Both Craig and Appia sought to unify all the "arts of the theatre" (Rosenfeld, 1973:147).

2.5.3 Influence of the Director

Despite the changes in the scenery, theatre performances often remained disjointed spectacles as the various artistic elements in the production (the action on-stage, acting style, scenery, costume, lighting and text) were treated as separate units and not as part of a unified whole. Some actor-managers had worked towards unifying a production but it was not until the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen's (1826-1914) productions of

Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and *Julius Caesar* (Carlson, 1961:245) in Berlin in 1874 that the theatre world saw the results of this unity.

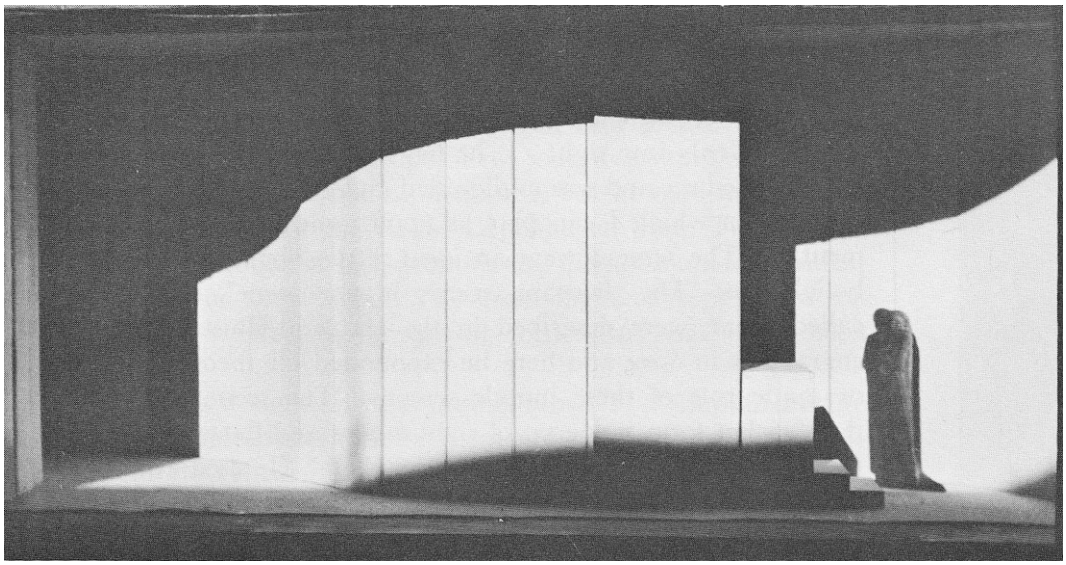


Figure 2.20. Edward Gordon Craig's design for *Hamlet* (1910) (Rosenfeld, 1973:151)

Saxe-Meiningen focused on all aspects pertaining to a production and spent intensive time rehearsing the plays and is usually regarded as the first "artistic creator of [a] production" owing to his approach of "interpret[ing] the script through the medium of all the theatrical arts" (Chinoy, 1963:22). He ensured that the action on-stage and the settings related to each other and great care was taken that the geographic location, mood of the play and period were accurate. He designed the scenery for his productions and avoided symmetrically balanced sets. The stage floor was also included as part of the design and he broke it up "with fallen trees, rocks, hillocks, steps, and platforms" (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:389). His ideas were to influence a number of theatre practitioners and helped establish the role of the director within a production.

Another early director was Konstantin Stanislavsky (1863–1938), who together with Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko (1858-1943), explored new approaches to the total vision of a production, at the Moscow Art Theatre (Zarrilli *et al.*, 2006). He viewed the text as the starting point of his directorial approach (Chinoy, 1963:31) and sought to attain total realism in his productions by planning the actors' moves in minute detail. He was also responsible for "laying down a method and approach" to acting that was suitable for both the director and the designer (Warre, 1968:37).

2.5.4 Changes to the Auditorium

In addition to the input of the director and the changes to the scenic styles, the auditorium also underwent a number of alterations. In some theatres the tiered galleries were replaced with cantilevered balconies and spectators in the boxes were no longer able to see the people in the pit, which assisted in focusing every spectator's attention on the action on-stage (Trussler, 2000:220-221). Other theatre practitioners also sought to change the theatre layout.

2.5.4.1 Wilhelm Richard Wagner 1813-1883

Theatre practitioner and opera composer Wilhelm Richard Wagner (1813-1883) rejected the move towards realism in the theatre and strove to combine drama and music into one unified production, a "Gesamtkunstwerk, or 'master art work'" (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:410). This term is most often translated to mean 'total work of art'. In order to achieve this ideal he redesigned the auditorium for the Bayreuth festival theatre so that it did not separate the classes. The result was a theatre that sat one thousand seven hundred and forty-five spectators in rows of stepped seating that radiated out in a fan shape from the front to the back, eliminating the traditional galleries, boxes and pit (figure 2.21.).

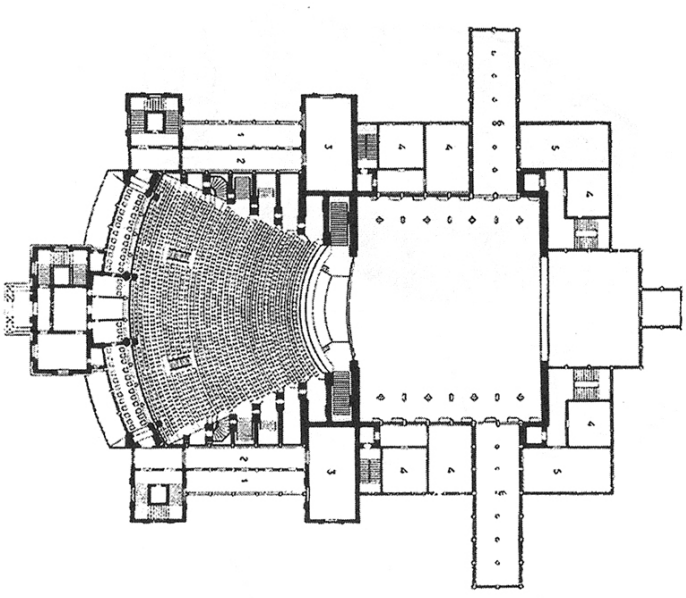


Figure 2.21. Ground plan for Bayreuth Festival Theatre (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:410)

Each row of seating led to its own exit and the central aisle was taken away (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:410). Wagner demanded that "every seat in the auditorium had to have an unobstructed view of the entire stage, without hindrance from other members of the audience or architecture" (Izenour, 1996:76). This layout allowed the same price to be charged for all seats (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:410). The orchestra pit was constructed under the stage, thus removing the visual distraction of the orchestra from the audience (Izenour, 1996:76). Although the design of the auditorium was revolutionary, the proscenium arch stage space remained relatively unchanged and retained a raked stage floor and a chariot-and-pole system for changing scenery (figure 2.22.) (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:410).

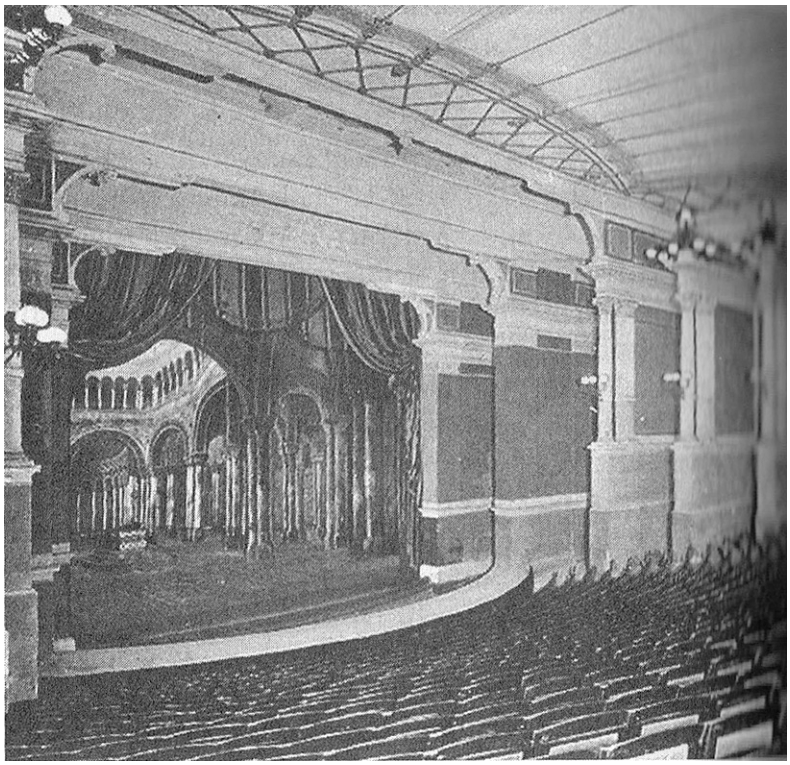


Figure 2.22. Auditorium and stage of Bayreuth Festival Theatre (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:410)

2.5.5 Technological Developments in the Nineteenth Century

In addition to the other changes, there were a number of technological advancements in the theatre that had an impact on scenic design. Gas lighting was installed at the Lyceum, in London, in 1817 and was followed a year later by the Olympic and Drury Lane (Trussler, 2000:221-222). The brighter gas lighting allowed the auditorium to be

darkened and the focus was now on the performers on-stage. The lighting was more controllable and the performers could be illuminated separately from the scenery. The use of gas lighting, however, resulted in an increased risk of fire which led to the introduction of the fire curtain (Nicoll, 1966: 204).

The first theatre and public building to have electric lighting installed was the Savoy Theatre in London in 1881 (Ambassador Theatre Group, 2011: Internet) and proved to be a safer form of lighting. Unfortunately, the 'brightness' of the electric lighting made the painted illusions appear artificial and false. Some scenic artists continued to use the old scenic styles by adapting them to suit the new technologies while others rejected the past styles and created innovative designs that embraced the new technologies. These ideas were to have an impact on twentieth century theatre design and performance (Baugh, 2005:23-35).

The shutter and groove scenery was slowly replaced by realist three-dimensional and structurally larger scenery, which was more difficult to move quickly in front of the audience and many directors wanted scene changes to occur behind the curtain. As a result, new methods of shifting scenery were explored (Nicoll, 1966:202-204). One of these was the stage revolve, devised by Karl Lautenschläger (1843–1906), which was first installed at the Residenz Theatre in Munich in 1896. Another method was a large rolling platform invented by Fritz Brandt (1846–1927) in 1901. The platform could take an entire setting and, through a combination of rollers and tracks, the set could be shifted on- and off-stage. Elevators or stage lifts were also fitted to some theatres that enabled scenery to be raised and lowered from below the stage floor. In some theatres, a large plaster dome that curved around the back of the stage and above the stage was constructed so that it eliminated the need for legs and borders. This all-encompassing curved dome proved impractical and instead a large white cloth, cyclorama, was hung on a pipe and curved around the back of the stage (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:406-407), and variations of this are still used in theatres today.

2.6 Twentieth century theatres

The developments in the previous century were to influence the theatre industry in the twentieth century, although some of the innovative ideas were slow to be accepted, and

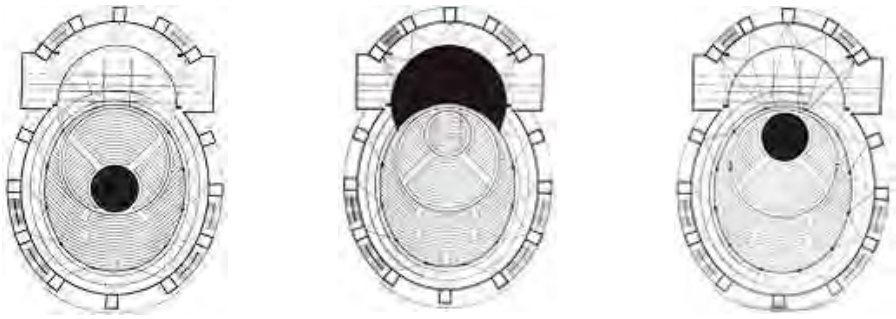
'spectacle' within a production remained popular. Many directors found the existing theatre structures unsuitable for their artistic concepts and there became an increasing realization that one single theatre building was not necessarily suitable for all forms of theatrical entertainment (Baugh, 2005:34-45). Traditional theatre was also receiving competition from the growing film industry that enabled spectators to view real live events, as they happened, and locations could change from interiors to panoramic vistas instantaneously (Wickham, 1985:212-213). This led a number of theatre practitioners to explore new concepts for both the performance and the theatre building.

2.6.1 Changes to the Theatre Building

One of the first practitioners to move away from the proscenium arch arrangement was Max Reinhart (1873–1943) who introduced "the use of technology on-stage" (Athanasopulos, 1983:125). He broke away from realism and was able to put the theories of Appia and Craig into practice. One of his early ideas was to open a small three hundred-seat venue, the Kammerspielhaus (1906), next to the main Deutsches Theatre in Berlin, in order to provide flexibility in the productions he could present. He realized "that no single approach is appropriate to the staging of all plays" (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:418). This combination of a large theatre and a smaller performance space within a single venue became a popular layout in a number of theatre complexes around the world.

Walter Gropius (1883-1969), a member of the Bauhaus movement, also explored new concepts for a theatre building and designed the "Total Theatre" in 1927 for director Erwin Piscator (1893–1966) (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:437-438). The idea behind the theatre was to combine all three basic stage shapes – proscenium arch, thrust and arena - into one 'total theatre'. He accomplished this by mounting a section of the seating and a performance space onto a large revolving disc and by changing the configurations, the venue could morph into each of the three basic stage shapes (figure 2.23. overleaf). He also added a platform around the outside of the audience seating area that provided additional places for the performer to act and interact with the spectators. Unfortunately the theatre was never built, but his innovative ideas, with regard to the auditorium

layout and the stage, were to influence a number of later twentieth century theatre designs (Baugh, 2005:160-161).



a b c

Figure 2.23. Gropius's 'Total Theatre' (Athanasopulos, 1983:141)

(a) theatre in the round or arena stage, (b) proscenium arch layout, (c) thrust stage or open stage

Another theatre practitioner, Terence Gray, working at the Cambridge Festival Theatre (1926-1933), removed the proscenium arch and constructed a thrust stage in front with stairs leading into the auditorium (Rosenfeld, 1973:182-183). The stage had a five metre hand operated revolve and a thirteen metre high curved cyclorama at the back. No attempt was made to mask the side stage areas or hide any of the machinery. The settings were simple and functional and consisted of ramps, platforms, stairs and columns (figure 2.24. overleaf). Many of the sets were painted in an aluminium paint that helped reflect the lighting (Baugh, 2005:156-157). Despite his innovations with the stage layout, Gray viewed the text as "an excuse for a directors' improvisations" (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:455), and often changed the text to suit his productions.

In Russia, Vsevolod Meyerhold (1874–1940) explored biomechanics as a means to train performers and applied constructivism to his settings by arranging "nonrepresentational platforms, ramps, turning wheels, trapezes, and other objects to create a 'machine for acting', more practicable than decorative" (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:429). He removed all the decorative plasterwork from the proscenium arch and the mechanics and side stage areas were visible to the spectators (Baugh, 2005:71-72). Meyerhold was able to expand on Appia and Craig's scenic theories and provide a functional setting that allowed the spectator to use his/her own imagination to interpret the environment for the production.

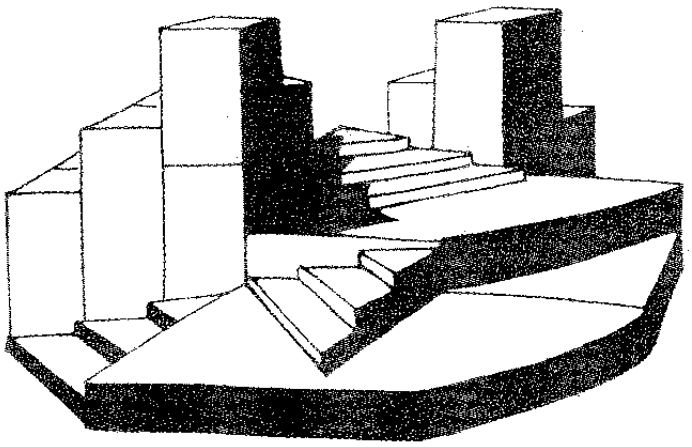


Figure 2.24. Designs for Terence Gray Cambridge Festival Theatre (Baugh, 2005:156)

In France, Antonin Artaud (1896-1948) felt "the role of theatre [was] not to mirror everyday life but to bring out in the spectator all that is most primitive that culture and civilization have submerged" and recommended a "theatre of Cruelty" that would 'shock' the audience out of their complacent attitude to theatre (Chambers, 2002:42).

After the Second World War a number of theatre groups and individuals explored new ways of performance that again rejected the 'traditional' forms of theatre. These included Richard Schechner who proposed an 'environmental theatre' where all parts of the theatre, both where the audience was seated and the stage, were intertwined and seen as a whole. Jerzy Grotowski (1933-1999) also rejected all forms of illusion and special effects and explored the pivotal role of the performer in relation to the text (Baugh, 2005:167-169). He believed that "by the controlled use of gesture, actors could turn anything or nothing into that which they wish an audience to perceive" (Pickering, 1978b:126). In his production of *Kordian* (1962) (figure 2.25. overleaf), set in a mental hospital, the audience was seated on sections of the scenery and the actors performed amongst them (Baugh, 2005:168).

In the latter half of the twentieth century many theatre architects, often because of financial constraints, moved towards creating flexible performance spaces that could suit a number of different purposes such as a concert hall, sports facility and civic auditorium. Inspired by Gropius's vision, these venues are able to be reconfigured using engineering and electronic technologies to move the seating and stages. In most cases

the traditional proscenium arch was eliminated and lighting equipment, formerly hidden from view, was rigged so that it can accommodate the different layouts. In addition to these large flexible venues a number of smaller experimental or studio theatres were built to provide a more intimate space for the director and the designer to work in (Baugh, 2005:163-166).

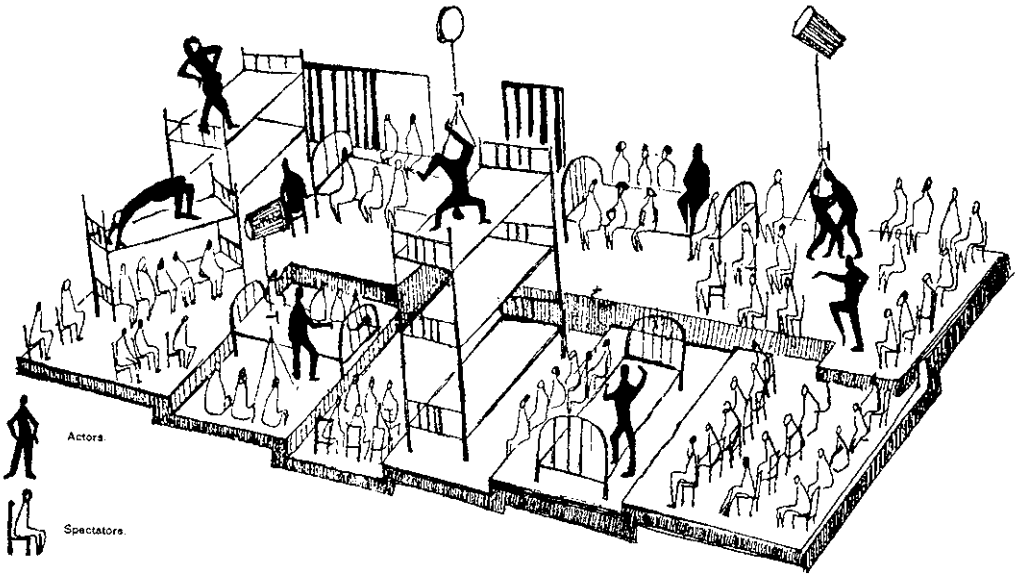


Figure 2.25. A sketch of the setting for *Kordian* (1962) (Mackey and Cooper, 2000:341)

In England, the Royal Shakespeare Company was founded in 1961. At first they performed at Stratford and the Aldwych theatre in London (Trussler, 2000:234-235). In 1982 the Barbican Theatre was built to accommodate the company. The building has a small flexible space that sits two hundred people and a larger theatre for just over a thousand spectators. In 1997 the New Globe Theatre (figure 2.26. overleaf), based on the first Globe theatre of 1599, opened and provides a venue for people to watch Shakespeare as close as possible to how his plays were historically performed (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:531, 562).

Figure 2.26. New Globe Theatre (The Shakespeare's Globe Trust, 2012: Internet)

2.6.2 Changes to Scenery

In the twentieth century with the development of a number of new materials such as plastics, polystyrene and polyurethane, designers were and are able to combine these products to create visually stimulating designs. Steel or aluminium often replaces the more traditional timber construction, which allows for stronger, sometimes lighter and less bulky settings.

Lighting and projections can now be used to create scenic backgrounds instead of the 'old-fashioned' painted scene (Rosenfeld, 1973:193-195). The invention of new technologies such as miniaturised hydraulics and below stage tracking has created a new form of spectacle where scenery can be 'magically' manipulated without using the conventional methods of lifting, pulling or pushing. In addition the personal computer has enabled complex lighting, scenic and multi-media presentations to be saved and replicated in theatres across the world (Baugh, 2005:209-211). Scenic backdrops can now be computer-printed onto banner paper using software such as Adobe Photoshop and Corel's Painter. The process is quick and not as time-consuming as the hand-painted designs, as the images or designs can be quickly altered. The result may have a slight plastic artificial appearance and the print inks, applied by using tiny dots of

primary or secondary colour, may react differently under light than paint pigments (Allison and Boyer, 2002:14-22). Some of the first designers to experiment with these new technologies were Svoboda, whose work, together with the designs of Lee and Koltai will be discussed in a later chapter.

2.7 Brief overview of Western Theatre Development in South Africa

Although a performance tradition existed, amongst the indigenous population before the arrival of the Europeans (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:602-603), this dissertation will focus on Western theatre architecture and traditions as the three theatres selected as case studies are proscenium arch venues. The origins of Western theatre can be traced to a performance of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in 1608 onboard a Dutch East India ship off Cape Town. After the Dutch settled at the Cape in 1652, the living conditions were very harsh and at first there was little time for theatrical entertainment (Fletcher, 1994:11-13).

In the beginning the control of the Cape colony was affected by the political situation in Europe and as more settlers arrived the theatrical productions presented often reflected the scenic practices of the country in control of the colony at the time (Fletcher, 1994:15-16, 22-23, 30-34; Brockett and Hildy, 2003:602-603). One of the earliest theatres to open in Cape Town was The Barracks Theatre in 1781c. (Worden, Van Heyningen and Bickford-Smith, 2004:81) and was followed by The African Theatre (1801 -1839) (figure 2.27. overleaf) (Fletcher, 1994:27, 67; Gould, 2010: Internet).

As settlers moved away from the Cape Colony they brought their theatre traditions into the new settlements. The earliest Western theatre performances in Natal were presented by the military in Pietermaritzburg in 1846 (Fletcher, 1994:81). The first theatre in Durban, a converted hall at the Trafalgar Hotel, opened in 1876. This venue had a proscenium arch and an audience capacity of six hundred. In 1882, the Theatre Royal opened; it was gas lit and could seat a thousand people. The theatre was used by both amateur and professional companies (Woolfson, 1986:3-4). Electric lighting was first installed in The Opera House (1893-1937) in Cape Town (Fletcher, 1994:119-121) and a number of other venues around the country soon followed. As a theatre culture developed in Durban, other theatres such as The Criterion, King's Hall, The Arthur

Smith Hall, St. John's 'Theatre' and the Jewish Club became popular performance venues (Woolfson, 1986:3-9).

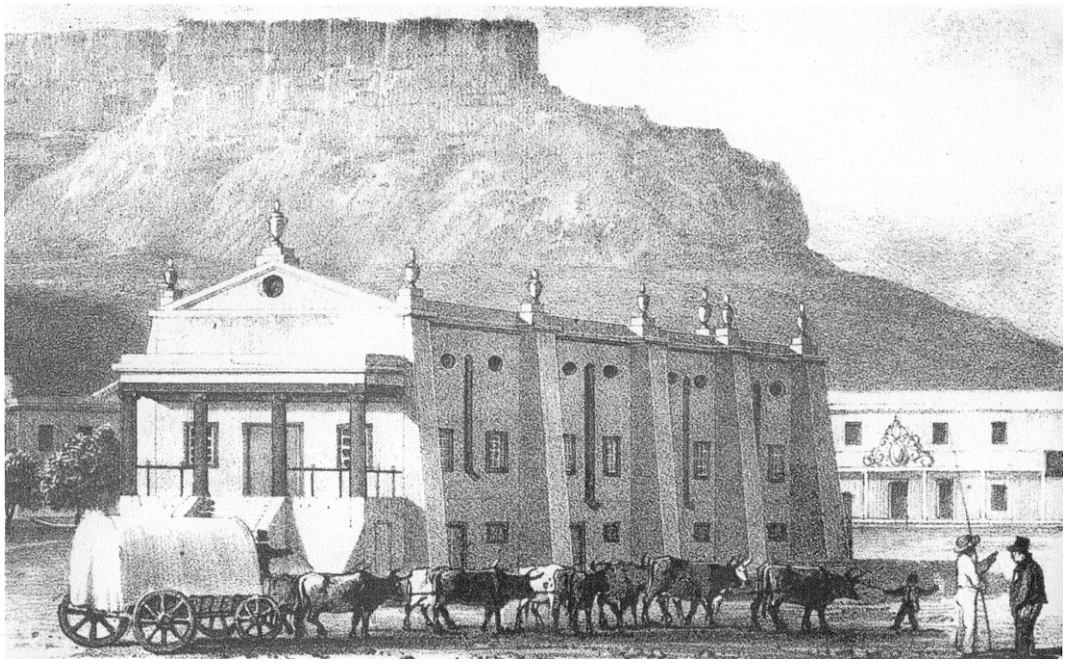


Figure 2.27. The African Theatre (Fletcher, 1994:26)

In 1963, the Performing Arts Councils were created so that each province had its own arts body that was responsible for producing opera, ballet, drama and music (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:603-604). The Natal Performing Arts Council (NAPAC) purchased the Alhambra Theatre in Durban in 1970 in order to provide a permanent home for its theatrical performances. However, the stage was too small for large operas and ballets, and the auditorium lacked the intimacy required for drama productions. It was, therefore, decided that a new location should be found that could accommodate all forms of theatrical entertainment. Two cinemas, the Playhouse (1935) and the Colosseum (old Prince's Theatre, 1926), built adjacent to each other in the centre of Durban, were purchased (Woolfson, 1986:15, 19, 22, 47-49). The buildings were adapted into a new performing arts centre that opened in 1985 and was called the Natal Playhouse. It provided NAPAC with a number of different venues that were suitable for a variety of theatre genres of which the Drama Theatre (figure 2.28. overleaf) is one. After the demise of the Performing Arts Councils as a result of the first democratic elections in 1994, the venue was renamed The Playhouse and is now run by the Playhouse Company (The Playhouse Company, 2008: Internet).

Figure 2.28. Playhouse Drama Theatre (The Playhouse Company, 2008: Internet)

Today, in addition to the Playhouse complex, Durban has a number of other theatre venues, including the custom-built Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre (1981) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Leeman and Zulu, 2005: Internet) and the Seabrooke's Theatre (2007) at Durban High School, adapted from an existing space (Smart, 2007: Internet).

2.8. Summary and Conclusion

The three venues selected as case studies, the Seabrooke's Theatre (figure 2.29. and 2.30. overleaf), the Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre (figure 2.31. overleaf), and the Playhouse Drama (figure 2.32. overleaf page 43), fall into the category of a proscenium arch theatre. Although they vary in size, shape and available equipment, they possess certain basic features that identify the venue as proscenium arch theatres. All three venues were visited and the following observations were made.

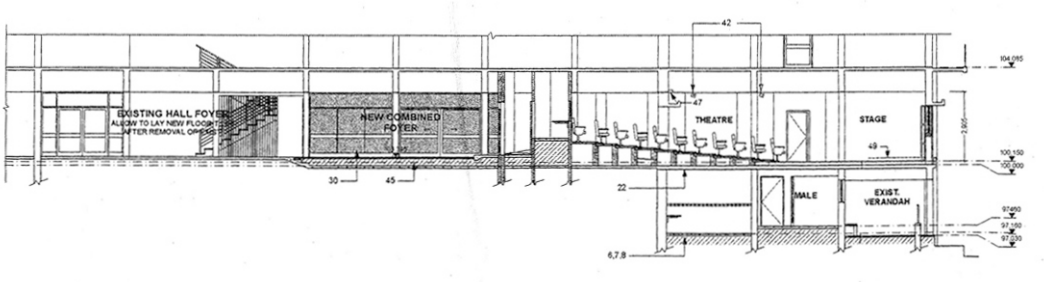


Figure 2.29. Side section of Seabrooke's Theatre (Courtesy of Durban High School)

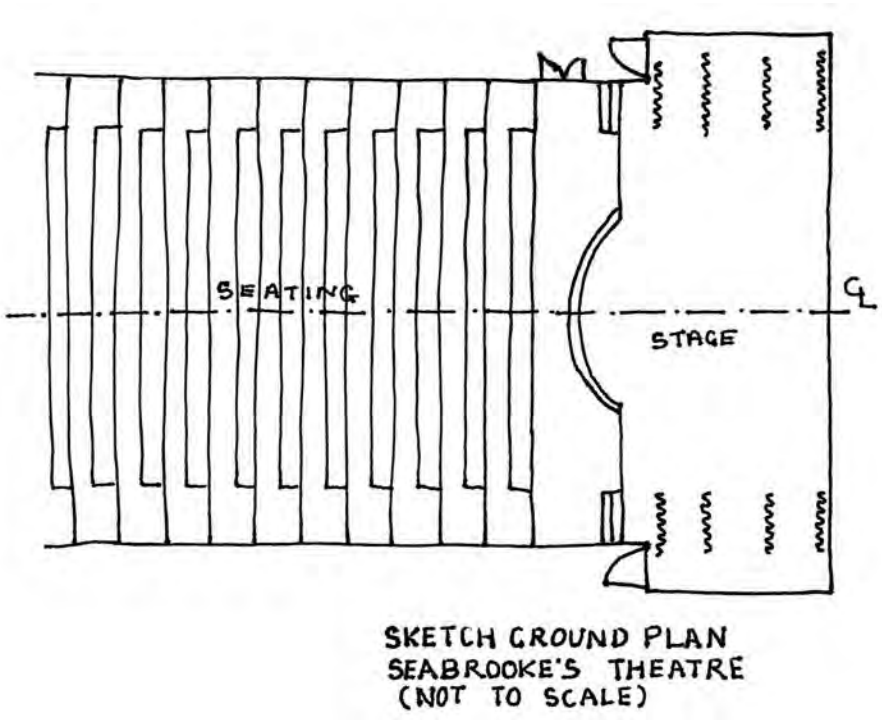


Figure 2.30. Sketch Ground Plan of Seabrooke's Theatre (Susan Donaldson-Selby)

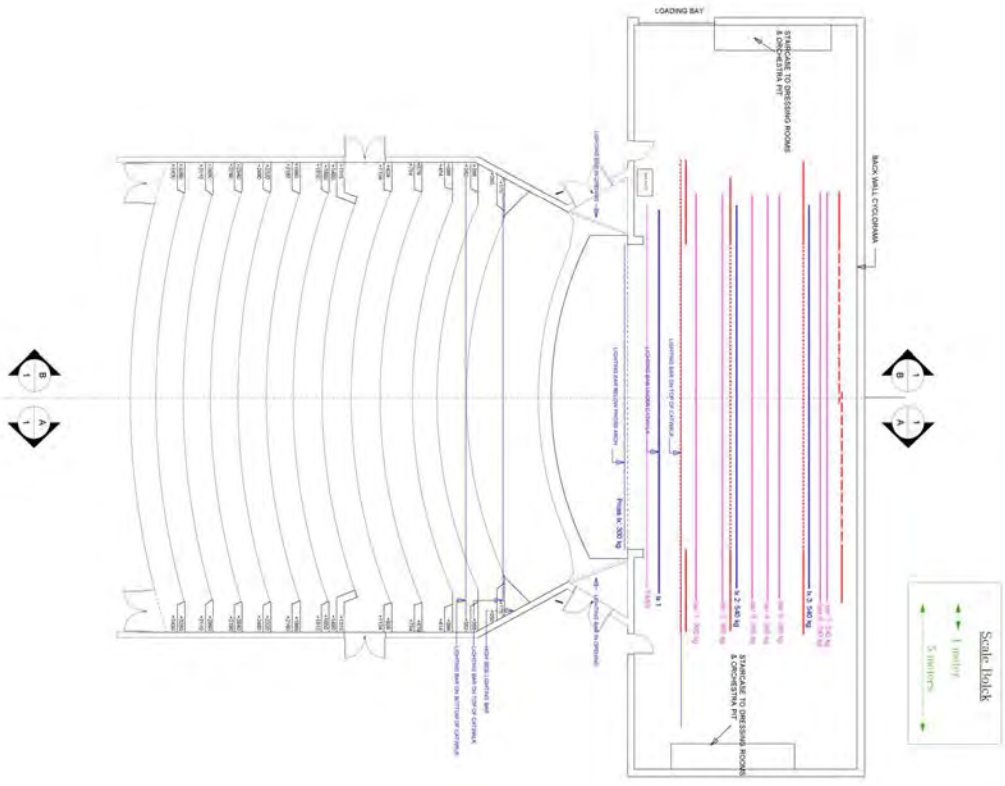


Figure 2.31. Ground Plan of the Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre (Courtesy of Jackie Cuniffe, Theatre Manager of the Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre)

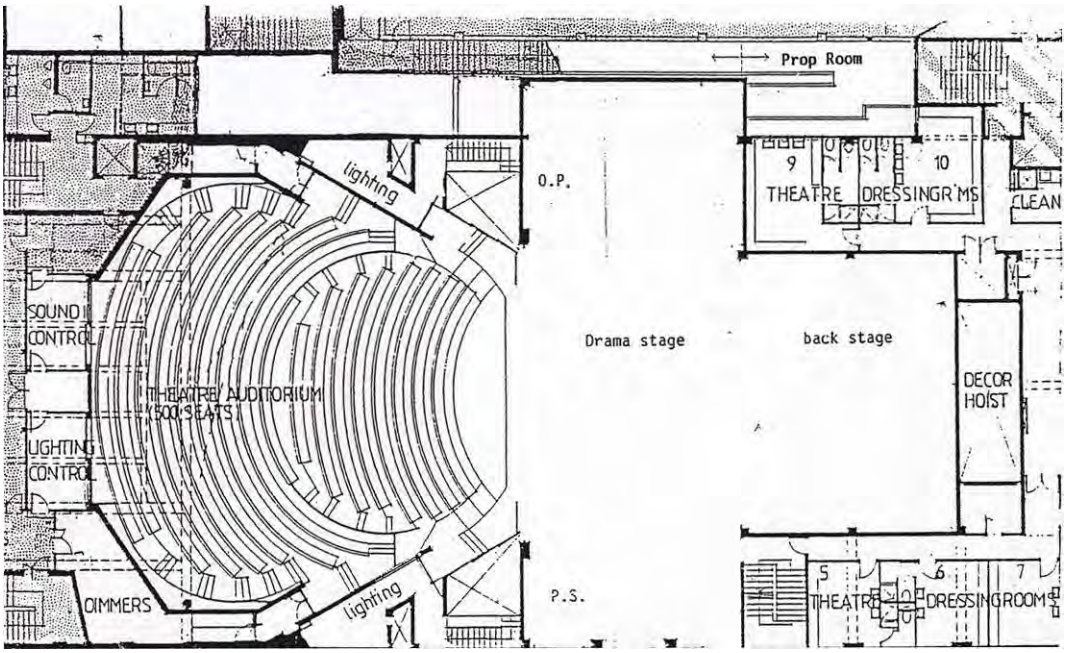


Figure 2.32. Ground Plan of Playhouse Drama Theatre (Courtesy of the Playhouse Company)

The auditorium in a proscenium arch venue is designed so that all the spectators view the stage from a single direction. All three venues are based on Wagner's fan-shaped design. In addition to the position of the seating, the sightlines in a venue are important, as each spectator desires a good uninterrupted view of the stage. The Seabrooke's Theatre has a problem with the height of the venue as it was constructed into a converted basement. An air-conditioning duct has been installed overhead, just in front of the stage edge, and this causes sightlines to be problematic. The rake of the auditorium is also very shallow. The Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre has good sightlines as the rake of the auditorium allows all spectators to view the action on the stage clearly. The sightlines in the raked auditorium of the Playhouse Drama are also adequate, although spectators sitting in the extreme outer seats of the front rows can see into the wing space.

The proscenium arch is the next important feature. The proscenium arch design can vary from theatre to theatre and many such as the Playhouse Opera still have elaborately decorated arches that were popular in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. A number of venues have opted for simpler arches, as can be seen in the Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre and the Playhouse Drama. The sidewalls and overhead arch are

painted in neutral colours and create a functional framework that does not 'up-stage' the scenery on-stage. Although the Seabrooke's Theatre does not have a physically constructed arch, it still falls into the category of a proscenium arch venue as black curtains are used to define the stage opening.

A third characteristic of a proscenium arch venue can be the orchestra pit. In the Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre and the Playhouse Drama an orchestra pit can be created by removing the floor panels. The Seabrooke's Theatre is too small to accommodate an orchestra pit.

Most proscenium arch theatres have a front curtain or main curtain that can be operated or controlled in a number of different ways. The Seabrooke's Theatre has a manual control system that works on simple curtain tracking, while the Playhouse Drama's curtain is electrically controlled. The Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre's main curtain has the advantage of dual operation and can either be flown using the counterweight system or it can be converted into a conventional manually operated draw curtain. All the theatres are equipped with black legs and the Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre and Playhouse Drama have black borders as well.

As spectacle has always been an important element in theatrical entertainment, most modern theatres are equipped with some form of machinery that will facilitate the shifting of the scenery. The Drama Theatre and the Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre have manual single and double purchase counterweight systems installed for flying scenery. The height of the Seabrooke's Theatre does not allow for any flying equipment. At the back of the stage is a cyclorama. The Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre and the Seabrooke's Theatre have a plaster wall cyclorama. The Playhouse Drama cyclorama is made of cloth and can be flown or removed to provide access to the rear stage area.

Another important requirement for a theatre is to have off-stage space for the storage of scenery and easy access to a road for shifting the scenery in and out of the venue. The Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre (figure 2.29.) has adequate side stage space left and right and a large scenic dock door on-stage right that opens onto the road. The Playhouse Drama Theatre (figure 2.30. overleaf) is constructed into the first floor of the Playhouse Complex and therefore the scenery has to be shifted using a decor hoist. Although the

side stage space is limited, particularly on-stage right, the theatre does have a large space behind the cyclorama that can be used to store scenery or as an extra performance space. The Seabrooke's Theatre (figure 2.31. and 2.32 overleaf) has inadequate side stage spaces and scenery has to be shifted through double doors situated in the auditorium. The theatre is also built within the school grounds and is not easily accessible to the road.

The three venues illustrate the variations that can occur in a proscenium arch venue and the potential design issues they may pose to a designer (see Appendix A).

Chapter Three
Development of the Dramatic Genre

The printed 'text' provides the blueprint for the director, performers and designers to bring to life (Barranger, 2006:84); however, the words in the text are "only symbols for ideas" (Selden and Sellman, 1959:3) and every director or designer will interpret the text in his/her own way. Each production therefore, becomes unique as the various talents of the production team combine to present a new interpretation of a text. From the earliest performances, theatrical texts have been classified into different dramatic genres (tragedy, satyr and comedy) because of certain distinctive characteristics they possess. These dramatic genres have not remained static and have adapted and evolved as the social, political, economic, cultural, religious, and educational needs of the audiences have changed. Therefore, the theatre produced often reflects the aspirations of the people in that specific period (Barranger, 2006:101). Most play texts can be divided into scripts that have a 'serious' subject content, namely tragedy and melodrama, and texts that are 'lighter' and more humorous, such as comedy and farce. The distinction between these types has frequently become blurred and tragicomedies have emerged (Wright, 1972:44-45). Other dramatic genres, opera, ballet, musical and pantomime, have also developed and include music or dance in their structure. It is important for the designer to know and understand each different genre as the language, scenic demands or requirements and performance styles may differ.

This chapter will first examine the process of textual analysis as text informs the decisions and choices of the director and designer. The selection of the production style is the next step within the production process, and this will be the second area to be studied. Lastly, although numerous dramatic genres exist, this dissertation will confine the discussion to the origins and specific requirements for three Western theatre genres: drama, musical and pantomime. In order to explore the influence the dramatic genres has on the designer, three productions, designed by King, have been selected that represent each of the genres, namely *Oleanna* (drama), *The Wizard of Oz* (musical) and *Aladdin* (pantomime).

3.1 Analysis of the Text

The analysis of the text is the first step in the production process as the text provides the framework behind the decisions taken by the director and the designer. Depending on the playwright, some texts contain detailed information about the setting while others only give a skeleton layout leaving the designer and director to 'fill-in the blanks' (Payne, 1993:195-196).

There are a number of methods the director and designer can use to interrogate the text. The first, Aristotle's (in Converse, 1995:253) six elements, divides the text into distinct areas that can be used as a foundation to analyse the text. A second approach is through a dramaturgical analysis that explores the text from "moment to moment" to identify the "elements of dramaturgy [that] are usually present in every scene of a play: exposition, inciting action, rising action, climax, and resolution" (Cohen and Harrop, 1974:32). These methods, however, are often more suited to the director as they explore the purpose and action within the text and assist the director in formulating his/her directorial concept and approach, and the blocking of the performers.

Darwin Reid Payne (1993:196) recommends another method that is suitable for both the director and designer, which requires asking five questions of the text: "Who? What? When? Where? and Why?" The first four questions supply information regarding the physical requirements of the design, while the last question explores the motivation behind the action in the text and provides the director and designer with an insight into the playwright's vision. Alternatively, Lynn Pecktal (1975:2) proposes looking for the "esthetic [sic] and mechanical elements [within the text such as]: place and locale, time and period, theme, mood, scenic style, social status of the characters, movement and position of the actors, and changing of the scenery". Instead of analysing the 'aesthetic and mechanical elements', Howard (2002:20-21) offers a method based on character and action; she advises the designer to break the text into situations "in which a **person** [sic] does **something** [sic] to **someone** [sic] and an **action** [sic] results" in order to create an "imaginary map of the landscape" of the text.

The route a designer selects to interrogate the text is irrelevant as long as s/he is able to identify the essential information that will assist in creating the design. The designer's

function is to "visually liberate the text and the story behind it, by creating a world in which the eyes see what the ears do not hear" (Howard, 2002:33). However, the director and designer need not be limited by a single concept derived from the setting specified in the text, and can include their own interpretations and ideas.

3.2 Style

After analysing the text, the designer and the director will meet and discuss their ideas in order to formulate a concept and a style for the production. Palmer (1994:167) defines style in theatre as "a recurring way of doing things characteristic of a given director, designer, or actor, typical of a specific theatrical period, or peculiar to a certain theatrical form". The style or 'look' of a production is influenced and shaped by a number of factors, which include the directorial style and approach, the dramatic genre, the theatre space, and the production budget.

3.2.1 The Directorial Style and Approach

Before a designer starts working on a production, s/he must be aware of the director's decisions with respect to his/her directorial style chosen for the production. The director is often the central pivot in a production and communicates his/her concepts and ideas to the performers and other members of the production team. However, each director approaches the written text in a different way and his/her decisions with regard the interpretation or use of the text may influence and impact on the choices taken by the designer. A number of theorists, including Robert Benedetti (1985), Charles Marowitz (1991) and Robert Smallwood (1996), have divided the director's approach to the text into various categories that can range from the conservative/purist[4] to the moderate/liberal[5] and, thirdly, the radical/interpretative[6]. The above three approaches differ widely and each will affect the final design. The designer working with a purist director needs to pay close attention to the information (historical period, social, economic and geographic) contained in the text that relates to the scenery, so that the

[4] The director chooses to leave the text alone and interpret it only as far as is necessary to tell the story (Smallwood, 1996:178).
[5] The moderate director acknowledges the fact that the text needs to be cut and will make the relevant edits that are in line with his/her ideas for the production (Marowitz, 1991:16).
[6] The radical director views the text as a starting point from which the text can be altered, adapted and reworked to suit his/her directorial concept (Marowitz, 1991:16).

design compliments the director's approach. A radical director's approach permits the designer to experiment with concepts and materials that may not be considered conventional or traditional and thus create a new and exciting design that breaks preconceived ideas for the production. In addition, when working on a text framed in a particular historical period, the director and designer have the option of keeping the production within the timeframe in which it was written or they can explore new ways to present the text. This can include setting the text in an alternative historical period, taking a modern interpretation, or using an eclectic mix of periods, styles and ideas (Berry, 1989:5-23).

3.2.2 Theatrical Styles

Once the director has chosen his/her directorial approach, the theatrical style of the production can be discussed. Set design styles can be divided into various categories, because of the similar features they possess, and range from a faithful recreation of an existing environment to an abstract non-representative structure that provides a purely functional background for the director and performer.

The first style, realism (Wright, 1972:153) or naturalism (Palmer, 1994:168), originated from the realistic and naturalistic theatre movements of the nineteenth century (discussed in chapter one) where an exact copy of an environment was recreated on the stage and included using real grass, glass and other properties. This unquestioning attention to detail was not always practical and most audiences are able to "accept the premise that all art is [a process of] selection rather than representation [and] that the theatre must seem real [but] not be real" (Wright, 1972:153). The style, therefore, evolved into simplified (Wright, 1972:153) or selective (Palmer, 1994:169) realism that allowed for the substitution of various elements. Walls were now constructed from wood and canvas flats, and the joins were concealed with Dutchman. Gauzes replaced glass in the windows. This style is able to retain the realistic look while providing a suggestion of a 'real-life' environment without the impracticalities of the realist or naturalistic style. In figure 3.1. (overleaf) the room appears to be a 'real' environment with a fireplace, bookcase, window, and realistic furniture.

Figure 3.1. Simplified Realism for Eugene O'Neill *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1971), set design Elmon Webb and Virginia Dancy (Pecktal, 1975:85)

A further move away from realism is the impressionistic (Wright, 1972:154), fragmented (Palmer, 1994:169), suggestive (Selden and Sellman, 1959:8) or modified (Huberman, Ludwig and Pope, 1997:340) realistic style. This style creates a suggestion or impression of a setting by partially removing sections of the walls or by using clearly identifiable scenic units such as a fireplace or prison bars to locate and orientate the design. All scenic units within the design are painted and constructed realistically and the spectator is expected visually to 'fill' in the blanks. In figure 3.2. (overleaf) the corner of the room is indicated by a thick vertical beam and a horizontal cornice from which is suspended an open picture frame, with a moulded square arch representing the entrance. The furniture in the design is realistic and helps to identify the purpose of the room.

Theatricalism (Wright, 1972:154), an alternative style, has its roots in the perspectively painted scenery of the Renaissance period and relies on an exaggeration of a realistic source for its inspiration. The style can be identified by its approach to the painting as the audience is aware that the setting is a painted representation of the real thing. This is evident in figure 3.3. (overleaf) where the Greek decoration is painted in exaggerated stylised lines. An adaptation of this style creates a 'cartoon-like' (Palmer, 1994:171) appearance where realistic elements are selected and "simplif[ied] or exaggerate[d]"

through the use of "line, color [sic], form, or details to create a very distinct style, one firmly rooted in realism, but self-consciously distorting reality".

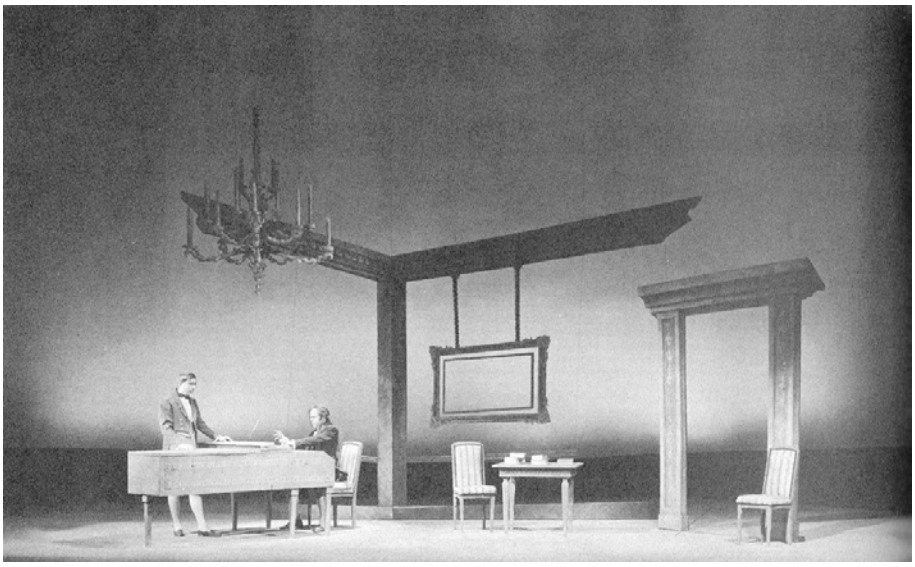


Figure 3.2. Fragmented Realism for *Beethoven* (playwright and date unknown), set design Ariel Balif (Parker, Smith and Wolf, 1985:82)

Figure 3.3. Theatricalism design for Barthe Halle's musical version of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* (1951), set design Kaare Hegle (Hainaux, 1970:153)

Expressionism (Selden and Sellman, 1959:9; Wright, 1972:154; Palmer, 1994:176), symbolism (Palmer, 1994:174) or surrealism (Palmer, 1994:176), all early twentieth century artistic movements (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:411, 432-433, 439), follow

abstract themes that are not rooted in a realistic interpretation of the text. Expressionism uses distorted images, exaggerated colour, texture and/or shape in the setting. In the design for *Hamlet* (figure 3.4.), the designer sought to reflect the mental or emotional state of the characters. A surrealistic design places unrelated pictures/objects together, often changing their size and scale, to create an altered, almost dreamlike, perception of the environment, while a symbolist setting attributes meaning to objects and images in the design that the spectator will, consciously or subconsciously, interpret within the context of the production.

Figure 3.4. Expressionistic design for Tchaikovsky's ballet *Hamlet* (1942), set design Leslie Hurry (Hainaux, 1970:177)

Lastly, settings can be created using an abstract, non-representational approach. The formalist style (Selden and Sellman, 1959:9; Wright, 1972:155; Parker and Wolf, 1996:172) seeks to create a neutral setting that can consist of rostra, stairs and walls assembled in a purely functional manner. It provides an environment in which the actor and director can work without 'fixing' it to a specific period or locality and is often suitable for productions where multiple scenes are required and budgets limited. In figure 3.5. (overleaf) the design is composed of a series of levels, stairs and vertical poles that allows the director to use the given space in a number of ways.

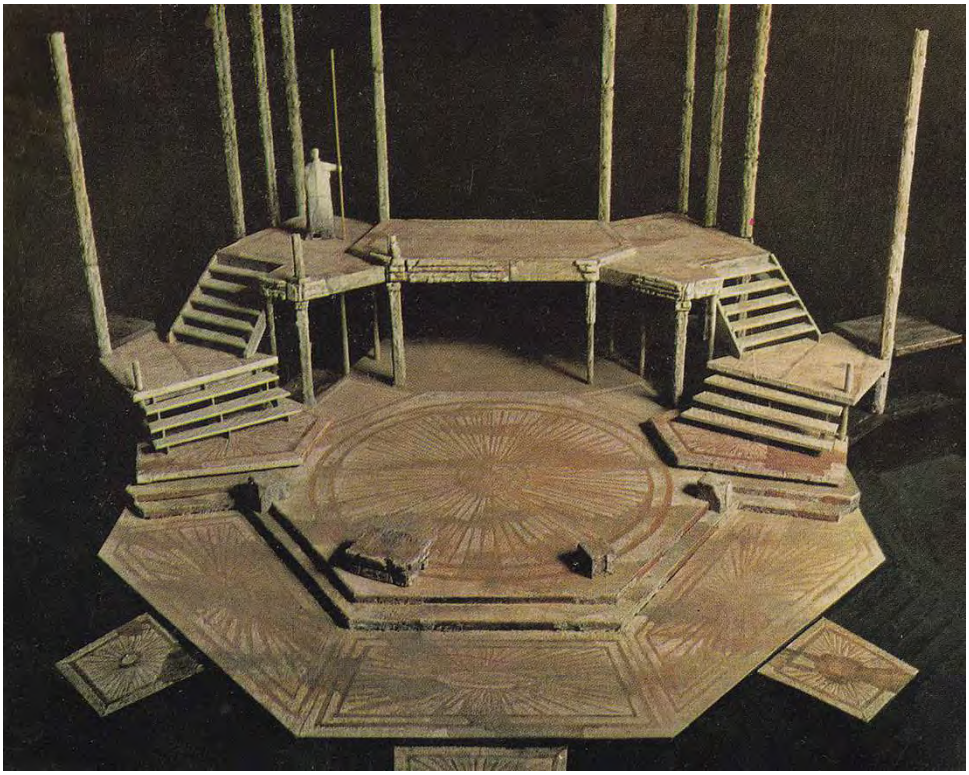


Figure 3.5. Formalistic design for Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* (1963), set design Ming Cho Lee (Warre, 1968:67)

However, most designers respond instinctively to the needs of the production, which often means "few settings will ever fit solely into a single classification, for freedom permits borrowing from any source that will contribute to the total effectiveness of the artist's goal in creating the proper locale" (Wright, 1972:151).

3.3 Dramatic Genres

The analysis of the text and the choice of the theatrical style are influenced, most often, by the dramatic genre in which the production is written. These dramatic genres have evolved and changed over a long period but their roots can be traced to the early Greek genres (tragedy, comedy and satyr). The genres chosen as case studies, musical, drama and pantomime, still contain elements that have their origins in the earlier genres, and therefore a brief overview of the historical development of the three genres will be undertaken. In order to easily discern the historical influences on the genres, they have been placed in a tabulated format.

3.3.1 Table of Dramatic Genres

The table below briefly illustrates the historical development of the three genres chosen as case studies.

Dramatic Genres			
Greek Genres	**Tragedy**	**Comedy**	**Satyr**
Periods	**Drama**	**Musical**	**Pantomime**
Ancient Greek Theatre 500 BCE - 200 BCE	In a tragic play the main performer has a character trait that results in him/her becoming involved in many difficult situations that finally end in a dramatic climax (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:16).	Old comedy used music to further the action of the play and contained farcical elements (Pickering, 1978:37).	The satyr play, based on mythology, was risqué and written in colloquial language (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:17) which was often obscene and included "indecent gestures" (Pickering, 1978:35).
Ancient Roman Theatre 200 BCE – 400 CE	The Romans wrote both comedies and tragedies which were often based on the earlier Greek plays (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:49).	The Roman Atellan Farce had stock characters, the performers wore masks, and it was the forerunner of Commedia dell'Arte (Wickham, 1985:44).	Mime was a "short, topical, usually comic, often improvised playlet" (Brockett and Ball, 2004:81). The Pantomime was a combination of dance and music used to enact a serious subject such as a myth, legend or historical event (Wickham, 1985:49).
400 CE – 900 CE	The church disapproved of the theatre and so discouraged its development. It was only kept alive by travelling minstrels, jugglers, and storytellers (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:74).		
900 CE – 1300 CE	Liturgical dramas based on biblical teachings were presented inside the church. The early plays were written in Latin and were either sung or chanted (Pickering, 1978:106-107).	Singing was an important part of the Mass celebration and music, mimed action and sung chants were combined to provide a visual reenactment of the Christian calendar (Pickering, 1978:105).	Mummings developed from the ritual of people dressing in costume and a mask. They visited their lord offered gifts, and performed a short dance, in silence (Wickham, 1985:62-63).
1200 CE – 1300 CE	Plays moved outside the church. They became more secular in nature, and the vernacular of the people was used. Themes were broadened to include mystery plays (biblical events) miracle plays (events or incidents of saints or people connected to the church) and morality plays (stories with a moral lesson) (Pickering, 1978:116-117).	Commedia dell'Arte relied on stock characters and improvisation. The young leads had no masks while the older character parts wore masks (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:178). The entertainment was a "fusion of lots of different influences: clowning, acrobatics, dance, music, slapstick, satire, farce, [and] love stories" (Lathan, 2004:14)	

Dramatic Genres Continued			
Periods	**Drama**	**Musicals**	**Pantomime**
1500 CE – 1700 CE	In Italy comedy and tragedy, considered the 'pure' form of drama, were divided into five acts with "a single plot, [that took] place in twenty four hours or less, and [was] confined to one place" (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:162-163). The entertainment was also interspersed with additional light entertainments. In England religious plays were banned and secular drama developed (Brockett and Ball, 2004:100). The action of the plays was sequential and all important events occurred in front of the audience (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:113). A number of playwrights emerged and included Shakespeare (1564-1616) who wrote in many different genres from tragedy, comedy to historical dramas (Wickham, 1985:133).	The intermezzi were short sung interludes between the main entertainment that relied on scenery and special effects. As this form of entertainment evolved, it became known as opera which consisted of arias, recitatives and choral songs (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:164-165).	In England during the Elizabethan (1558–1601) era men played all female roles (Burdick, 1974:77). In the Restoration period women were finally allowed to act on-stage. However, men often still played the older comic female roles (Limelight Scripts, 2005: Internet). In France "ballets-pantomimes", which were a combination of dance and mime were presented as short entertainments between the main performances. In England they were renamed "Italian Night Scenes" and the central character was Harlequin. In 1697 Charles Perault's (1628 -1703) *Mother Goose's Fairy Tales* was published and included stories such as *Cinderella, Puss and Boots* and *Sleeping Beauty*, which were to provide plots for many pantomimes (Lathan, 2004:18-19, 23).
1700 CE – 1800 CE	Tragicomedy combined a mixture of tragedy and comedy where good fortune turns bad or vise versa (Barranger, 2006:108). Domestic tragedy declined, while comedies that focused on people overcoming disasters became popular (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:222).	John Gay's (1685-1732) ballad opera, *The Beggar's Opera* (1728), had new lyrics set to familiar songs (Sutherland, 1998:5).	Pantomime became a popular form of entertainment that accompanied the main drama presentation, but were not full-length productions in their own right. Commedia dell'Arte characters still featured in the productions, such as Harlequin, who could wave his wand and magically transform scenes and characters (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:219). One of the first pantomimes to be presented was *The Loves of Mars and Venus* (1717) (Lathan, 2004:26).
1800 CE – 1850 CE	In 1843 The Theatre Regulations Act of Great Britain defined a stage play as "every tragedy, comedy, farce, opera, burletta, melodrama, pantomime or other entertainment of the stage, or any part thereof" (Banks, 1986:201). This resulted in an increase the number of theatres and the types of entertainment offered.		

Dramatic Genres Continued			
Periods	**Drama**	**Musicals**	**Pantomime**
1800 CE – 1850 CE Continued	The Romantic playwrights used Shakespeare's techniques as a foundation for their works. Although there are few significant examples of plays written in England during this period, it provided a transitional stage between the classical style of playwriting and the new dramatic genres that were to develop in the twentieth century (Pickering, 1978:423-425). Playwright Eugene Scribe (1791–1861) popularized the formula for the 'well-made play' that had "careful exposition and preparation, cause-to-effect arrangement of incidents, building scenes to a climax, and the skilful manipulation of withheld information, startling reversals, and suspense" (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:375).	Melodrama focused on a good person, beset by all manner of misfortunes, who manages to overcome them in the end. The productions often featured intricate and complex spectacle scenes. Music also played an important role in many of the melodramas (Brockett and Ball, 2004:142). The English music hall gained popularity with performers presenting a variety of different unrelated singing, dancing and comedic performances (Wickham, 1985:210). Popular entertainment was in the form of vaudeville and burlesque accompanied by popular songs of the times (Gänzl, 1995:9). Comic Opera had romantic themes and music composed specifically for the production (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:222). In France opéra-bouffe, which were short entertainments with specifically written music numbers, gained popularity (Gänzl, 1995:13-14). In America burlesque was popular and featured well-known songs, a strip tease, and made fun of the upper class opera tradition (Downs, Wright and Ramsey, 2007:421)	Joseph Grimaldi (1778-1837), playing the Clown, changed the costume, make-up, and character of the original commedia dell'Arte The harlequinade incorporated mime, dance, and acrobatics and ended the evening's entertainment. It later reduced in popularity and was replaced by Extravaganzas During the Nineteenth century Edward Blanchard (1820-1889) and Nelson Lee (1806-1872) began writing the first formalised scripts for pantomimes (Lathan, 2004:29-39).
1850 CE - 1900 CE	Realism playwrights focused on the world around them and highlighted the social and moral issues of their time (Brockett and Ball, 2004:154-155). Naturalism became a "segment of reality transferred to the stage" (Brockett and Ball, 2004:158) and sought to place the characters into environments that had a direct impact on their development (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:392-394).	In England Gilbert and Sullivan comic operettas became a popular form of entertainment (Gänzl, 1995:41-47). In America vaudeville replaced burlesque and became more 'family oriented' entertainment. Minstrel shows, which included song and dance depicted a romantic view of black slavery in the South, featured white performers with black make-up (Downs *et al.*, 2007:421-423).	The 'modern pantomime' first appeared in the 1850's and expanded into a full-length production. Music Hall stars were invited to perform in the pantomimes, as it assisted in increasing attendances. The 'Immortal characters' spoke in rhyming couplets (Lathan, 2004:41-54). The part of the principal boy was played by a woman and the dame (a man in women's clothing) and became an accepted feature in a pantomime (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:355).

Dramatic Genres Continued			
Periods	**Drama**	**Musicals**	**Pantomime**
1850 CE – 1900 CE Continued	Anton Chekov (1860-1904) explored a new type of dramatic drama by mixing comedic, tragic and tragicomedy into one text (Brockett and Ball, 2004:165). Symbolism explored the "universal truth independent of time and place" (Brockett and Ball, 2004:170). The 'problem play' emerged in the late 1800s and focuses on social problems such as class, wealth, gender and morality (Banks, 1986:223).		
1900 - Present day	Drama in the twentieth century has undergone a number of different changes. In the early part of the century poetic drama was revived (Banks, 1986:236-237). Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) developed the concept of Epic Theatre, which was a mixture of narrative, song, and dramatic action. The audience was made aware they were watching a theatre performance (Mackey and Cooper, 2000:293-327). After the Second World War a number of texts, which include Harold Pinter's (1930-2008) *The Room* (1956), Samuel Beckett's (1906-1989) *Waiting for Godot* (1953), John Osborne's (1929-1994) *Look Back in Anger* (1956), and Arthur Miller's (1915-2005) *Death of a Salesman* (1949) examined social, political and moral beliefs and led the way to a new form of the drama genre (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:490-504).	In the early part of the twentieth century musicals were mainly song and dance routines and were in the form of revues (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:457, 464). Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma* 1943 altered the format by using a cohesive plot and song that furthered the action (Sternfield, 2006:10). The rock musical *Hair* (1968) explored the "youth-oriented culture of the day" (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:536) and introduced a new type of musical. The mega musical such as *Cats* (1981), *The Phantom of the Opera* (1986), *Les Misérables* (1987), and *Chess* (1986) first appeared in the 1970s and 1980s. Spectacle has become an important feature of the entertainment as well as effective marketing strategies (Sternfield, 2006:1-3).	The pantomime is now an accepted part of entertainment in the United Kingdom and former British colonies and many small theatre groups as well as professional companies produce a pantomime at Christmas. The format developed in the late nineteenth century remains popular and local content is added to make the production more relevant to the audience (Zarrilli *et al.*, 2006:324).

Figure 3.6. Table of Dramatic Genres

As can be seen from the above table the three dramatic genres have developed and evolved from the early Greek genres. Each genre requires a different approach to the set design.

3.4 Considerations when designing for a Drama

The Greek (Brockett and Ball, 2004:61), Roman (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:56-57) and Elizabethan (Pickering, 1978:125) dramas relied on the architectural façade of the stage building to provide a backdrop for their productions, with properties and suggestive scenery added where necessary. In the nineteenth century the naturalistic and realistic theatre movements advocated creating a photographic reproduction of a real environment (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:377). In designing for a 'modern' drama the designer can choose to create a totally realistically setting that replicates the 'living' space of the fictional characters in the text, or the design can be abstract and fragmented with symbolic suggestions of the environment.

3.4.1 *Oleanna* (1992)

David Mamet's *Oleanna* (1992) provides an example of a modern tragic drama where the main characters are powerless to control the events (Wright, 1972:46). John is a university professor and is respected by his peers, while Carol is a struggling female student. She approaches John for assistance in her studies but she finds his attitude condescending and she misinterprets his offer of academic help. After their first meeting he finds she has accused him of sexual harassment and his well constructed and ordered life begins to fall apart (Murphy, 2004:124-137). At the end of the play the audience is left with mixed emotions as to who they feel is the 'victim' in the encounter as Mamet raises "questions about the use and abuse of power in the classroom" (Barranger, 2006:5). Mamet (1993:1) provides the following details with regard to the setting at the beginning of the first act: "John is talking on the phone. Carol is seated across the desk from him". From this brief information the designer can deduce that the setting is possibly in an office and requires a telephone, desk and at least one or two chairs. The designer has the choice to create a simple setting with no structural walls with a desk and a few chairs as furnishings, or design a full box set with walls, a door, window and all the necessary properties and dressing that would create a complete realistic environment.

3.5. Considerations when designing for a Musical

The set design for a musical is normally non-realistic because, although musicals can have serious and thought provoking themes, most people do not suddenly start singing about their problems in their everyday life. It is this feature that separates a musical from a drama and allows the performer to stop and communicate to the audience how s/he feels through song at appropriate times in the production (Grote, 1986:32-57). Many musicals are episodic and require a number of different locations to convey the story. In order to keep a unified appearance to the design, decoratively painted semi-permanent or permanent masking can be used. The various scenes are then created by either trucking in three-dimensional scenic units or by flying in scenic drops (Rowell, 1968:62-63).

3.5 *The Wizard of Oz* (1939)

In 1939 Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) produced the film *The Wizard of Oz*, starring Judy Garland, based on of L. Frank Braum's children's book *The Wonderful World of Oz* (1900). Although an earlier musical was produced in 1903, it is the 1939 film version that is better known and provides the music and lyrics for the stage production (Sutherland, 1998:74-75).

The Wizard of Oz begins in Kansas and is set in the 'real' world, which to Dorothy is boring and unexciting. After being swept up in a tornado she lands in a new magical environment that is full of vibrant colours, and is advised to find the Wizard who will help her find her way home. The set designer has to visually create a difference between the Land of Oz and Kansas and in the 1939 film this was achieved by filming Kansas in sepia tones and the Land of Oz in Technicolor (Reel Classics, 2010: Internet).

Parts of *The Wizard of Oz* text make specific references to colour such as 'Follow the Yellow Brick Road' and visit the 'Emerald City' (Langley, Ryerson and Woolf, 1939: Internet). A designer has to take cognisance of these limitations and incorporate these colours into the design.

3.6 Considerations when designing for a Pantomime

Set designs for pantomimes are exaggerated, colourful, cartoon-like and have multiple locations (Billington, 1988:168). The entire theatre is often used as the performance space (Zarrilli *et al.*, 2006:324) as comic chase sequences often invade the auditorium. The modern pantomime still has young females playing the roles of the principal male and men playing the pantomime dame (Billington, 1988:169). Another tradition is for the 'good' character to enter from the right hand side of the stage while the 'evil' character enters from the left and originates from the medieval positioning of heaven on the right, and hell on the left (Gillan, 2007: Internet).

3.6.2 *Aladdin* (1788)

The first performance of *Aladdin*, as a pantomime, occurred in 1788 at the Theatre Royal in Covent Gardens. The original story, based on the *Tales of the Arabian Nights*, takes place in the Far East. The pantomime is set in an Anglicised version of an 'Eastern' city. The story tells of a poor boy, Aladdin (played by a woman), who accidentally acquires a lantern, that contains a magic genie, from an evil wizard. The genie grants Aladdin a number of wishes that finally, after many adventures, allow him to marry the girl of his dreams, a princess. The evil wizard tricks the magic lamp from the princess and transports her away from the palace. Aladdin is able to rescue the princess and defeat the wizard.

The set design requires a number of different locations, which include a street outside Widow Twankey's (played by a man) laundry, inside the laundry, an enchanted cave where Aladdin finds the lamp, Aladdin and the Princess's room, a magic carpet and a transformation scene where the evil wizard is outwitted (Its-Behind-You, 2007: Internet). For the KickstArt production of *Aladdin* (2007), Steven Stead, a co-partner in the company, chose to write the text and he was able to include many scenic opportunities for King (Nicholson, 4 December 2007: Internet).

3.7 Summary and Conclusions

The set requirements of each of the dramatic genres do differ and the designer must consider this when formulating his/her ideas for the setting. After the analysis of the text and discussions with the director, with regard to the production concept and style, the designer can begin the process of designing the setting.

Chapter Four
The Design Process

Every production consists of a number of creative artists such as a director, playwright, choreographer, performers, and designers (set, lighting, costume and sound), who all contribute their own specialised skills. However, they do not work alone and their collective efforts result in the final theatrical presentation. The relationship between the set designer and the other members of the production team is, therefore, important for the development of the set design and this will be the first area examined in this chapter.

When viewing a production most spectators will only engage with the performance on a superficial level (McAuley, 1998: Internet). Similarly a theatre critic or reviewer often concentrates on the story or narrative of the text and the abilities of the performer or performers, while the setting, sound, lighting and costumes are only given a brief mention. It is, however, important to undertake an in depth analysis of all aspects of the production as it provides the director, playwright, designers and performers an opportunity to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of every aspect of the production and thus enable them to improve their skills (Howard, 2002:105-106). A number of theoreticians have offered semiotics, as a method that can be used to interrogate a theatre production in a holistic manner, and this will be the second area to be investigated.

The set designer is "the architect of [the] dramatic space" (Howard, 2002:72) and is responsible for designing the performance environment. In order to convey his/her ideas to the director, actors, stage management, lighting designer, sound designer, costume designer and, in some cases, the choreographer, the designer has to create a visual representation of the set. This can be in the form of scaled models, computer generated visualisations and/or perspective drawings. The third part of the chapter will, therefore, explore the processes a designer undergoes to achieve his/her design.

Lastly, the chapter will examine the design processes of three international designers, who have worked in a variety of different theatres and dramatic genres, Lee, Svoboda

and Koltai, further to understand the influence the theatre space, dramatic genre and directorial concept have on the final set design.

4.1 The Relationship between the Designer and the Director

As discussed in chapter three the director's style can affect how a designer approaches his/her design. Therefore, one of the most important relationships in a production is between the director and the designer (Howard, 2002:67) as "the scenographer's role is to act as another pair of eyes to the director-mind" (Payne, 1993:81) and assist the director in bringing the text to 'life'. However, the relationship between the director and the designer can differ from production to production.

Some directors assume an authoritarian approach and choose to become solely responsible for the development of the concept. S/he will then convey/dictate his/her ideas to the design teams, and the designers have to work within these set parameters (Payne, 1993:81-83). With this approach the designer has to take care not to become a puppet to the director's vision by being used purely for his/her construction and painting skills (Banks, 1986:299).

Other directors prefer a collaborative approach and meet with all the designers early in the production process. Each specialist brings their own research, suggestions, photographs, and sketches to these meetings and collectively they develop the production concept and style (Payne, 1993:81-83), although the director normally makes the final decisions (Howard, 2002:67-72). The second method allows the designer greater freedom to explore his/her own creative ideas. Regardless of how a director decides to work there needs to be good communication between him/her and all members of the production team.

The following two diagrams illustrate the potential relationships between the director and the designer. The first diagram (figure 4.1. overleaf) shows a dictatorial approach and how his/her concept is imposed onto the various members of the production. The second diagram (figure 4.2. overleaf) demonstrates a collaborative approach where the designer's ideas are taken into consideration during the formulation of the concept.

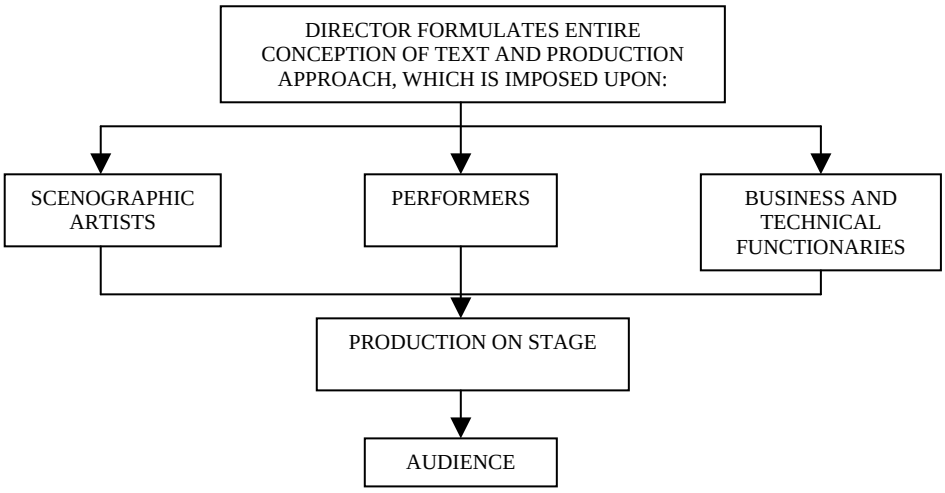


Figure 4.1. Authoritarian Approach (Payne, 1993:82)

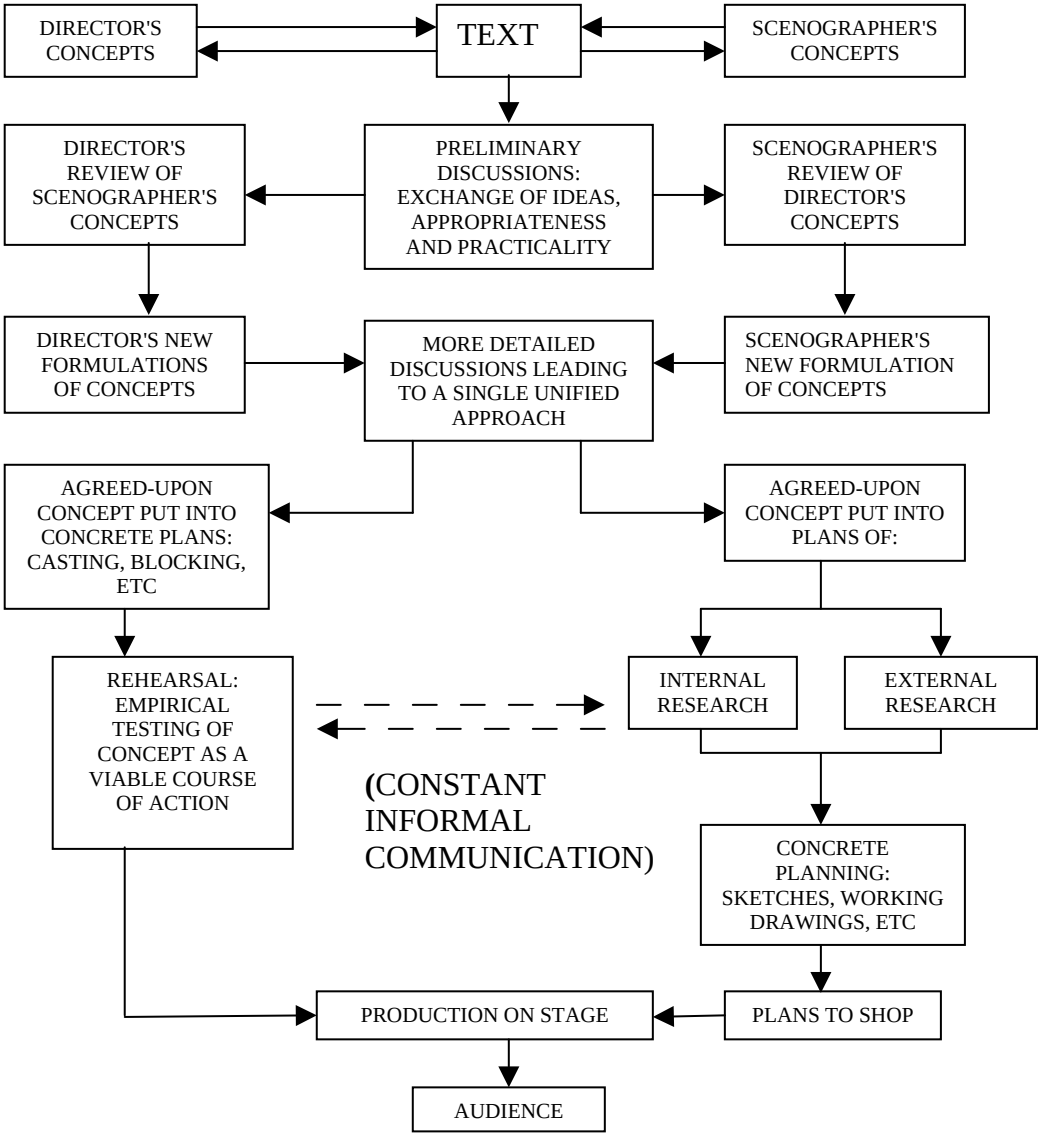


Figure 4.2. Collaborative Approach (Payne, 1993:83)

4.2 The Designer and Other Members of the Production Team

Although the relationship between the director and the designer is the most important, the designer also needs to communicate with the other members of the production team as their areas of expertise intersect, and compliment the design.

4.2.1 Lighting Designer

The relationship between the lighting designer and set designer is critical as the lighting "direct[s] the audience's eye and control[s] what is and isn't seen" (Parker and Wolf, 1987:10). Early productions relied on natural lighting, oil lanterns, and candles, which had limited ability to create different lighting effects. With the advent of gas and electricity the control of the illumination became possible and lighting became an important feature in a production (Chaffin, 2009: Internet). The three primary colours of light (red, blue and green) differ from the three primary colours of paint (red, blue and yellow) and therefore the colours selected by the lighting designer should enhance and compliment the colours of the set (Gillette, 1992:93-94). The lighting designer should study the plans for the design, before it is constructed, to see if there will be any potential problems with the hanging and focusing of the lanterns. In some productions the scenic designer is responsible for designing the lighting for the show as well (Gillette, 1998:12-13, 18-19).

To achieve his/her design a lighting designer uses the "intensity, colour, distribution and movement" (Pillbrow, 1991:16) of light, in order to support the feeling or mood within a scene (Pecktal, 1975:23), and reinforce the production style and concept. The designer can also use special effects such as gobos, projections and intelligent lighting to achieve a desired effect (Gillette, 1992:78). Therefore, the lighting designer and the set designer should work closely together, in order to achieve a unified visual picture.

4.2.2 Costume Designer

A set design is never complete until the performers steps onto the stage. Therefore, the costumes worn by the performers should work in harmony with the set design (Thorne, 2001:23). The set designer and costume designer need to liaise and work in parallel as their ideas for the production can often "feed each other" (Reid, 1996:59). A set

designer characterizes the environment within which the action takes place, whereas a costume designer supports the characterization of the performers within that environment (Brockett and Ball, 2004:383).

4.2.3 Stage Management

The stage manager should be familiar with and understand all the technical aspects of the set design as s/he assists the director during the rehearsal process and is responsible for supervising the set-up and running the show once it opens. S/he is also responsible for drawing up a timeline of the production deadlines and the designer and construction team should be aware of any time constraints (Griffiths, 1982:32). The set designer should provide a full set of ground plans so the stage manager can mark out the rehearsal space, record the performers' moves in the prompt book, and assist in the set-up process. During the rehearsals the stage manager is often responsible for communicating, to the designer, any minor changes or modifications to the set design such as the hinging of a door or the position, size and shape of a property (Gillette, 1992:9-11).

4.3 Analysis of a Set Design

From the beginning of dramatic performances theatre practitioners have sought to understand how drama 'communicates' with the audience (Esslin, 1987:14). Aristotle (in Converse, 1995:253) identified six elements that could be used to analyse a dramatic text and his 'rules' influenced the development of dramatic texts (Esslin, 1987:14-17). During the twentieth century a number of theoreticians offered semiotics as a method to understand and examine both the dramatic text and the theatrical performance (Elam, 1980:5-9; Esslin, 1987:17-19; Aston and Savona, 1991:5-9)

In the 'real' world people consciously or subconsciously 'read' signs in their environment everyday (Esslin, 1987:44). This is because the "human mind works with symbols, not raw sensory data. [People] can only respond to sensory data; [but] can think and feel using symbols" (Bellman, 1983:8). The 'science' of semiolgy explores the meaning of these signs and can be defined as "tools [that are] deliberately employed [by people] to

establish communication" (Esslin, 1987:44). Signs can be divided in three distinct groups, icon[7], index[8] and symbol[9] (Peirce in Elam, 1980:21-27; Esslin, 1987:43-51; Aston and Savona, 1991:6).

There are a number of semiotic systems, such as "proxemics, kinesics or paralinguistics" (J.F. and Woodward, 1977-1978:135) which can be used to interrogate dramatic productions. Proxemics studies the "interaction between characters and their stage environment" and how "the performers' occupation of stage space is also important to interpretation of setting and spatial aspects of scenography" (McKinney and Butterworth, 2009:157), while kinesics (interpretation of the performer's body language) (Aston and Savona, 1991:116-117) and paralinguistic or paralanguage (nonverbal elements of speech) (The Free Dictionary, 2012: Internet) focus on the performer and the language of the text. These systems, however, are often autonomous in their structure and theatre cannot 'fit' into a single system as the various elements of a production (music, text, performer and setting) communicate through their own 'sign' systems (J.F. and Woodward, 1977-1978:135). Theatre can, therefore, be defined as being "polysemic" as it draws on a number of different sign systems that operate simultaneously during a performance (Aston and Savona, 1991:99).

All objects used on the stage can assume and communicate a new set of values that differ from their everyday function (Bogatyrev in Elam, 1980:7; Nikolarea, 2002: Internet). Tadeusz Kowzan (in Nikolarea, 2002: Internet) identified thirteen different signs systems that operate in a production and groups them into two main categories, auditive (word, tone, music and sound effects) and visual (mime, gesture, movement, props, stage scenery, lighting, and signs that effect the performers appearance, such as make-up, headdress and costume). Esslin (1987:103-105) later expanded this list to twenty-two different sign systems that included a number that referred to film and television. Although many of the sign systems focus on the actions of the performer and the structure of the text, a number of sign systems relate to the stage setting:

[7] An icon is a sign that represents an object and can be an image, diagram or metaphor of the object (Elam, 1980:21).
[8] An index is a sign that is connected or 'points to' an iconic sign (Esslin, 1987:44).
[9] A symbol is "a sign where the connection between the sign and the object is agreed by convention and there is no similarity between the object and sign, e.g. the dove as a symbol of peace" (Aston and Savona, 1991:6).

Visual sign systems

a. Basic spatial configuration
b. Visual representation of locale
c. Colour scheme
d. Properties
e. Lighting. (Esslin, 1987:104)

In 1985 Patrice Pavis (in Aston and Savona, 1991:108-111) provided a detailed questionnaire, for students of the theatre, that could assist in analysing a performance, and he included the following sign systems that make reference to the scenery:

Scenography

a) spatial forms: urban, architectural, scenic, gestural, etc.
b) relationship between audience space and acting space
c) systems of colours and their connotations
d) principles of organisation of space
- relationship between on-stage and off-stage
- links between space utilised and fiction of the dramatic space.

(in Aston and Savona, 1991:110)

Aston and Savona identified four levels of operation, namely, functionalistic, sociometric, atmospheric, and symbolic, by which a stage design can be examined (1991:146-148). The director has the responsibility of blending and integrating all the elements of a production into a unified presentation (J.F. and Woodward, 1977-1978:135). Although the playwright is the originator of the sign systems within the dramatic text, it is the director who, along with the designers, selects the signs to be communicated through the set, performer, lighting, sound, costume and properties, and they ensure that the signs used work on their own and together (1991:100).

4.4 The Design Process

Each designer has a different approach to developing his/her design (Pecktal, 1975:111) for both the setting and the stage properties (Gillette, 1992:31). The design process is often a combination of the designer's research, the director's concept, and the textural analysis that are 'mixed' and 'sifted' together, and then filtered through a 'sieve' to achieve the final design.

When designing a setting a designer has to consider a number of different factors or challenges. The first is the functional and practical aspects of the design and 'how' it will be constructed (Aston and Savona, 1991:146; Gillette, 1992:119). The second is the social and economic status of the characters (Aston and Savona, 1991:147), as well

as the historical and geographical location of the production (Gillette, 1992:113-117). The third challenge is to create an atmosphere or environment within the design that will assist in expressing or communicating the feelings and emotions of the text (Aston and Savona, 1991:147). The production genre may also influence the setting, as a ballet often requires a large, flat, uncluttered stage for the ballerinas while a musical, with multiple scenes and locations, may need scenery and furniture to be shifted on and off stage (Pecktal, 1975:6-9). Lastly, as discussed above, the designer may choose to use signs or symbols in his/her design, which will be 'read' by the audience within the context of the production (Aston and Savona, 1991:147).

Michael Gillette (1992:31; 1998:148) proposes a structured approach where the design process is divided into a number of stages: "(1) commitment, (2) analysis, (3) research, (4) incubation, (5) selection, (6) implementation, and (7) evaluation". The first five stages focus on the collection of relevant information for the design and allow the designer time to develop his/her ideas. The sixth step is when the designer begins to express his vision for the production in a concrete form through sketches, models, and working drawings while the last step provides the designer with an opportunity to reflect on the success or failure of the design. However, most designers are not conscious of following a structured approach.

Before starting his/her design, the designer should be familiar with the venue in which the production will take place (Griffiths, 1982:78; Bellman, 1983:154). One of the important phases in the design is the initial meeting between the director and designer to discuss the production style and concept (Pecktal, 1975:111). After this first meeting, the designer will interrogate the text and the music if the production is an opera, ballet or musical. Conducting research is the next important phase in a design process and will include background research into the text, performance research[10] and visual research. A designer may explore a number of scenarios for the production and, in consultation with the director, will often discard ideas that do not work. Lastly, in order to communicate his/her thoughts to the director and other members of the production

[10] Performance research refers to finding out about previous stagings of the production (Reid, 1996:55-56).

team the designer can draw sketches, build sketch models or present a storyboard[11] sequence. These early images translate into final models and working drawings (Reid, 1996:51-68). The diagram (figure 4.3.) graphically illustrates the design process:

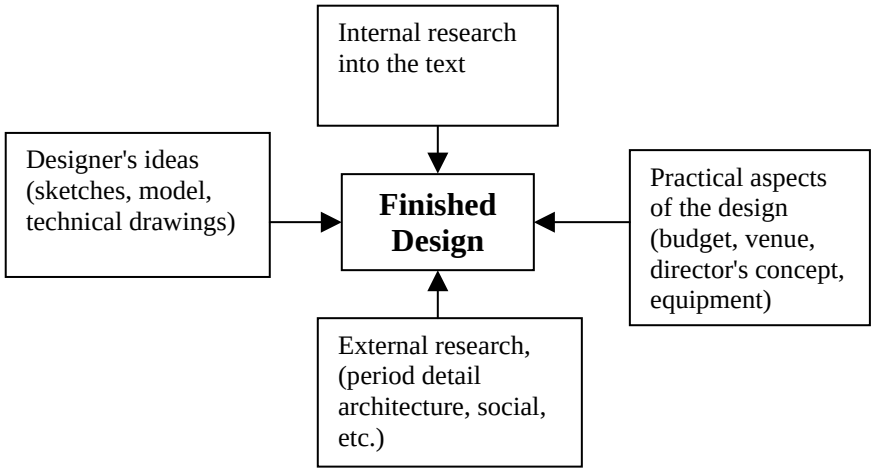


Figure 4.3. The Design Process (adapted from Payne, 1993:199)

4.4.1 Types of Stage Settings

A set designer has control of the "infrastructure of [the stage] spaces" (Esslin, 1987:72) and a good ground plan should provide a number of acting areas as well as creating an "obstacle course" (Converse, 1995:114) for the performer. Some texts require a single setting for the entire production while others have many scenes set in multiple locations (Pecktal, 1975:6-9). In order to create the setting the designer can use a combination of two-dimensional scenery that can be either hard (flats) or soft (fabrics, drapes) (Parker *et al.*, 1985:190), and/or three-dimensional scenery such as platforms and stairs or irregular shapes (rocks and trees) (Griffiths, 1982:220-240), or projected images. Set designs can be grouped into different types as they possess similar features and are listed below:

> Box setting
> Wing, border, and backdrop setting
> Portal, wing, border, and backdrop setting with profiled or three-dimensional set pieces
> Set pieces in front of a cyclorama or backdrop
> Drapery setting with props
> Projected scenery on backdrops or cycloramas
> An arrangement of platforms and levels. (Pecktal, 1975:14)

[11] A storyboard sequence can assist the designer and the director in visualising the various acting areas, possible lighting ideas and scene changes (Reid, 1996:64).

A box set is often selected when a production requires a realistic interior (Lounsbury and Boulanger, 1991:17) but the arrangement of furniture in a box set will differ from real life as the furniture is placed in the body of the room in order to aid the dramatic action (Converse, 1995:114-115). A unit set has a variety of levels, stairs and ramps that provide a flexible stage space, with many acting areas for the different scenes, and can be used when the budget and construction time is limited (Pecktal, 1975:14). A semi-permanent setting has fixed architectural or decorative frames into which three-dimensional scenic units are shifted on and off stage to indicate new scenes or locations and is suitable for productions that have multiple scenes (Rowell, 1968:41) such as musicals and pantomimes. Other texts require simultaneous settings where two or more scenes take place in locations that are positioned on the stage at the same time (Parker and Wolf, 1996:93). However, for this type of design to be successful, the theatre should have sufficient stage space for each area to have good sightlines, be lit independently, and the scenery should be braced and supported without being visible. It is important, when designing a production that requires multiple scenes, to keep the entire setting in the same scenic style in order to provide visual unity to the production (Pecktal, 1975:14-15).

In addition to choosing the type of stage setting, the designer has to plan how the scenery will be moved on- and off-stage, and whether the audience will see the changes or if it will occur behind the curtains (Pecktal, 1975:10). The shifting of the scenery is influenced by the size and shape of the stage, the off-stage or wing space, the sightlines, and the equipment available for moving scenery in the venue.

Scenery can be shifted vertically, horizontally or from beneath the stage (Parker *et al.*, 1985:279-280). The first method is flying scenery which can be achieved by using either manual counterweight systems or motorized winches (Ionazzi, 1996:31-32). The theatre should be equipped with a flytower and have sufficient height above the stage floor to accommodate the backdrops and scenic pieces being flown, out of view of the spectator (Gillette, 1992:52-53). The second is to move the scenery horizontally across the stage. There are a number of different ways this can be achieved, such as manually handling the scenery by 'running' it. To make the scenery faster and easier to move, and assist the stage personnel, swivel, fixed or air casters can be fitted to the scenery (Parker *et al.*, 1985:304-305). Small scenic pieces can be moved using tip jacks, lift jacks

(Selden and Sellman, 1959:167), outriggers (skeletonized wagons) or small wagons (Parker *et al.*, 1985:308-309), while larger or complete settings can be shifted by slip stages, jack knife stages or a turntable or revolve (Ionazzi, 1996:163-164). Some theatres have elevators, traps and/or treadmills constructed into the stage floor that allow the scenery to be shifted from below the stage (Ionazzi, 1996:318-321). A number of productions now include automated scenery, which is controlled by a computer operating system. 'Mice' are attached to cables that run under the stage floor and then are linked to the scenery above. Guiding tracks allow the scenery to be moved in complex directions (Primrose, 1997-2012: Internet).

4.4.2 Elements and Principles of Design

In order to create a design the scene designer may use "either consciously or intuitively, well-established rules and fundamentals of design common to all the visual arts" (Parker *et al.*, 1985:45), which can be defined as the elements and principles of design (Pecktal, 1975:18).

The first element is line, which is used to optically lead the viewer's eye, in a planned direction, through the design (Bellman, 1983:27). A designer uses lines (whether straight, broken or curved) to define shapes, separate colours, indicate textures, convey movement, express perspective and/or focus attention on specific parts of the design (Pecktal, 1975:18). The second element, shape, adds depth and spatial dimension to design (Gillette, 1992:77) and can assume many different forms such as geometric shapes (two-dimensional and three-dimensional), natural or organic shapes, "nonobjective shapes" and "invented shapes" (Pecktal, 1975:22).

The third element is colour. Each person may have a different cultural, psychological and emotional response to the colours used (Pecktal, 1975:24); however, the colours selected should be 'read' in the context of their use within the production. Colours can be warm (reds and yellows), cold (blues and greens) or somewhere in between (yellow-green and blue-violet) depending on how the designer chooses to use them. The designer however, should remember his/her colour palette remains incomplete until the performer steps onto the stage (Bellman, 1983:210-211). Colour provides visual information about the production and assists in reinforcing the mood and atmosphere.

A designer can select a colour scheme that can be "monochromatic (variations of one color [sic]), complementary (using two complementaries like blue and orange), analogous (three neighboring colors [sic] like yellow, yellow-green and green), or a combination of several colors [sic]" (Pecktal, 1975:25).

The fourth element is texture and is used by scenic designers "to provide visual reference to the play's psychological environment" (Gillette, 1992:77), as it can communicate a tactile sensation about the production to the audience (Bellman, 1983:27). Three dimensional or "actual" textures are created by using fabric, soft furnishing or by applying various materials (sawdust, hessian, mirrors) to the surfaces of the scenery in order to replicate a smooth, shiny, or rough appearance. Alternatively the designer can 'simulate' the textures through skilful painting techniques (Pinnell, 1987:1).

The last element is the use of space within a design. By defining the space within a design, the designer controls the movement of the performer, and productions with moving scenery often determine the pace of the performance. In addition to the physical shapes the designer creates within the design, s/he has to consider the shapes that are created around the objects (Parker and Wolf, 1996:49-50).

The principles of design can be divided in balance, proportion, emphasis, rhythm and unity. Balance refers to the visual composition of a setting. The various components used in the design can create a symmetrical or asymmetrical picture. A symmetrical design can be formal and dignified (Pecktal, 1975:33) while an asymmetrically balanced design allows the designer to experiment with unmatched sides, thus creating a visually stimulating image (Bellman, 1983:27; Gillette, 1992:81) by providing a sensation "of greater movement and excitement which lends itself readily to dramatic uses" (Parker *et al.*, 1985:71-72).

The proportion of all aspects in a design focuses on the size, shape and spatial relationship between the various elements (including the performers) in a design (Pecktal, 1975:33-34). The designer can also choose to emphasise and direct the spectator's attention onto a particular part of his/her design and achieves this through the use of colour, shape, texture or lighting (Gillette, 1992:84). In order to avoid creating a monotonous setting the designer should create a visual rhythm within the design by

varying the use of shapes, lines, colours and the positioning of the properties so that s/he can lead the spectators eye through the design (Pecktal, 1975:35-36; Gillette, 1992:81). If the costumes, lighting, stage setting, furniture, music or actions of the performers 'stands out' or distracts the spectator, the production will lack unity and the production will not have achieved a single harmonious image (Bellman, 1983:28; Dietrich and Duckwall, 1983:69; Gillette, 1992:78-79). Lastly, a designer should remember a stage design is three-dimensional and each spectator will see a different aspect of the setting depending on where s/he is sitting (Pecktal, 1975:27-28).

4.4.3 Methods of Communicating the Design

After undertaking all the initial research, textural analysis and meetings, the designer has to convey his/her ideas to the director and other members of the production team. The first step is to draw rough thumbnail sketches (Pecktal, 1975:114), followed by more detailed sketches, models and ground plans, which provide the initial concrete visual concepts of the design.

A number of designers choose to construct scaled three-dimensional models of their design as they can convey the structural layout of the design, as well as providing references to the colours, textures, size and proportion. In addition, the model assists the director and performers in visualising the stage space and helps the carpenters plan the construction (Payne, 1985:xvii-xxiii). Some designers may also provide colour elevations for the scenic artists (Pecktal, 1975:119).

The designer will also draft scaled ground plans that fit the chosen performance venue and a complete set of technical drawings that can include front elevations of each element, construction information, side sections and details of proposed finishes (Gillette, 1992:126-132). With the advance in technology, a number of designers are choosing to create their designs on computer aided drafting programs as the model, ground plan and technical drawings can now be produced by programs such as AutoDesk-AutoCAD and 3D Studio Max (AutoDesk, 2010), and Vectorworks (Vectorworks, 2010).

4.5 Analysis of Three International Designers

The innovative work of international designers Josef Svoboda (1920 - 2002), Ming Cho Lee (1930 -) and Ralph Koltai (1924 -) has influenced the development of scenographic design of Western theatre for the last sixty years. All three designers started their careers in scenic design by obtaining academic qualifications. Czechoslovakian Svoboda first trained as a carpenter and after the Second World War qualified as an architect from the School of Fine and Applied Arts in Prague (1946 -1950). The practical training and academic knowledge he gained from his studies provided a solid foundation for his exploration into theatrical design (Burian, 1974:3-6). Lee moved from China in 1949 to study art at the Occidental College where he later changed to a speech/theatre major; after graduating he continued his studies at the University California Los Angeles (UCLA) (Unruh, 2006:15-19). German born Koltai studied theatre design at the Central School of Arts and Design in London (1948 - 1951) (The Central Saint Martins Museum and Study Collection, 2010: Internet).

Svoboda's interest in the theatre and set design began during the Second World War when he worked with a semi-professional ensemble called the New Group. After the war, he joined the Grand Opera of the Fifth of May, which later came under the control of the Prague National Theatre. In 1951 he was appointed as the chief designer and technical director of the Prague National Theatre (Burian, 1974:3-8), where he was instrumental in reorganising the theatre workshop into separate laboratories that were responsible for researching the properties of various fabrics, plastics and optical and electronic equipment (Baugh, 2005:135 -137). Svoboda felt the term 'designer' or 'décorateur' did not adequately describe his work and preferred to use the term scenographer (in Burian, 1974:15-16) as it encompassed his vision to combine "the interplay of space, time, movement and light on-stage" (in Howard, 2002:xiv).

Lee was first exposed to theatre through his mother, who took him to a number of theatrical performances in China and during his studies in Los Angeles he continued to explore his interest in the theatre. After graduating, he relocated to New York to become an assistant to Jo Mielziner, and through his encouragement Lee sat and passed the entrance examination for the United Scenic Artists in 1955. Lee left Mielzinier in

1958 and started working with Boris Aronson, again as an assistant (Unruh, 2006:15-19).

Koltai considers himself an artist who has chosen theatre as a medium through which he could express his artistic talents. Koltai feels he has not been influenced by other designers but has rather 'absorbed' the works of the 1920s German and French schools of design, and he admits that art and photography have provided inspiration for his work (in TheatreVOICE, 3 September 2004 a: Internet).

As mentioned above, the relationship between the director and the designer is important for the success of the production. Svoboda, Lee and Koltai have worked with many different directors and they acknowledge the importance of communication between themselves and the director. For Svoboda, a good director should understand design while a designer must be familiar with directorial principles (in Burian, 1974:19). Lee believes good communication between the director and designer is important and will discuss his ideas for the setting with the director, and together they select the best option (in Ching-wen, 2007: Internet). During his career Lee has had a number of successful collaborative relationships with choreographers and directors, including Martha Graham and Joseph Papp (Unruh, 2006:21). Koltai prefers to work with directors who allow him to contribute his ideas to the design (Burian, 1983:221) and does not want to be used purely for his technical skills. Koltai feels he "gives directors what they want without them even knowing it" (in Backemeyer, 2003:103).

As a scenographer, Svoboda considered himself responsible for the design of settings, lighting, sound, properties and costumes, rather than a stage decorator or designer (in Baugh, 2005:83). He felt that "nothing from life [could] be transferred intact into the theatre" and that one should "always create a theatrical reality and then fill it with the dynamics of life" (Svoboda, 2010:390). Burian commented that Svoboda "steer[ed] clear of both illusionism and alienation" and preferred to create suggestive designs that would "prompt the viewer's imagination" (1974:28). When starting a design, Svoboda said he would stare into the empty stage in order to project himself and his ideas into the space so that he could create a suitable design for the space, the production and the performers (in Baugh, 2005:87). He would often begin a design with a "simple drawing" that would "capture an 'image' of the scene with a mere few lines" (Svoboda,

2010:392). He wanted to avoid over designing and sought to find what all the elements in a design had in common in order to achieve a single unified form. Svoboda (in Burian, 1974:27) once said

> I don't want a static picture, but something that evolves, that has movement, not necessarily physical movement, of course, but a setting that is dynamic, capable of expressing changing relationships, feelings, moods, perhaps only by lighting, during the course of the action.

Lee began designing in the 1960s when American society was undergoing a period of social and political unrest that was often expressed by the use of "signs, symbols, slogans of the anti-war movement, the civil rights struggle, and women's liberation" (Unruh, 2006:30). These influences lead Lee to develop an "outside in" approach (in Unruh, 2006:29) to his work; he sought an overall image or symbol that would express the entire play. In his early designs he often choose to read the text once before formulating his idea for the design, and only went back to the text when he had 'found' his concept (Pecktal, 1975:242). Lee found this approach often ignored the needs of the text and the actor as it was "emblematic" and tended to 'show off' the work of the set and lighting designer while the properties and costumes had to 'fit' into the design (in Unruh, 2006:29-30).

In his more recent designs, Lee has discovered he explores the text in greater depth as it enables him to release the play's emotion in order to let the play speak for itself (in Ching-wen, 2007: Internet). Lee (in Unruh, 2006:70) states "I approach the play now from the people who live there. I approach it from the action, and then I can understand whether it is an emotional or an architectural world" and this has lead him to develop an "inside to outside" (in Unruh, 2006:67) approach. In order to fully understand the text, he listens to the music of a production as it can assist him in reaching his concept for the design. He prefers to design for operas, dance and Shakespeare as the productions are more artistically challenging. Lee finds dramas can limit the designer to purely solving problems (in Pecktal, 1975:243).

Lee constructs models, supplemented with rough sketches and storyboards, to communicate his ideas for the setting (Gussow, 1995:12) as he finds the model allows him to explore "the volume, the space, the mass, and the void" (in Pecktal, 1975:243). He acknowledges that computers can assist in the creation of a set design, as they can

speed up the process, but he prefers to manually draw his sketches as the process of drawing assists him in developing his ideas and allows time for them to evolve and mature. Lee's work has sometimes contained Chinese images, but he feels that designers should not "reflect their cultural background", but rather their "spiritual identity" (in Ching-wen, 2007: Internet).

David Benedict (TheatreVOICE, 3 September 2004 a: Internet), in an interview with Koltai, stated that "great designers don't design sets, they design plays" and that Koltai's designs "have nothing to do with the literal representation, they are absolutely centered on the ideas of the writer and the ideas of the play." Many of Koltai designs have been for operas and classics as he finds he can create designs that explore fantasy and are more abstract. However, if a play calls for a realistic, functional set, he feels the designer should follow the demands of the text (in Burian, 1983:221). When starting a design, Koltai seeks to find the 'metaphor' within the play, opera or production, and he asks of the text "what is it about, not where does it take place" (in TheatreVOICE, 3 September 2004 a: Internet). Koltai's aim for a production is to 'bring to life' the text, as interpreted by the director. In viewing his designs he believes the spectator's eyes should first focus on the performer then at the setting and back to the performer (in Rosenfeld, 1973:195).

The shape of theatrical space can influence the scenographer's approach to his/her designs. For Svoboda the ideal theatre would have "no architectural division [between the] stage space and [the] auditorium" (in Burian, 1974:33) and could be adapted to the needs of the production. Many of his designs can be viewed from only one perspective, which lead him to work in proscenium arch venues as he felt "certain plays [were] written with a certain space in mind; sometimes you want the proscenium theatre, deliberately" (in Burian, 1974:32). Svoboda therefore, considered the proscenium arch venue as "the most theatrical space available" (in McKinney and Butterworth, 2009:73). In his designs he strove for the spectator to be absorbed "into the mental world of the action of the drama as opposed to merely its location" (in Baugh, 2005:89-90). He accepted and embraced the division between the spectator and performer created by the arch and explored ways to achieve his vision within the confines of the proscenium venue.

Lee has refused to become "trapped into specializing in a singe stage configuration" (Gussow, 1995:12), and has therefore worked in many different venues. A number of Lee's early designs were presented at the outdoor Delacorte Theatre in Central Park for the New York Shakespeare Festival. The theatre has the New York skyline as a backdrop and Lee found that he had to create settings that were often thirty feet (9.144 metres) high in order to focus the spectator's attention on the action of the play. The venue was also situated in a natural environment, which meant Lee had to develop a style that did not compete with nature but still had its roots in realism (Unruh, 2006:23-24). His design for *Richard III* (1966) (figure 4.4. overleaf) illustrates his use of suggestive realism to solve the problem. The design is composed of five rock-like structures that are attached to vertical pipes. The 'walls' have numerous emblematic shields and carvings attached to the rock surface. On either side of the stage are scaffold structures with stairs that lead down to the stage floor, which is composed of a number of levels. The predominant colour of the setting is a silvery grey while the shields add some colour. The structures suggest the interior of a castle but as the supports and scaffolding are clearly visible to the spectator, the design becomes 'real and non-realistic' at the same time.

Koltai has discovered that each stage space calls for an individual approach and what would work in one venue may not be suitable for another (in Burian, 1983:221). In his design for *Carmen* (1997) (figure 4.5, overleaf) he used the height of the Albert Hall (Backemeyer, 2003:96) to construct a tall Spanish style building that provided a backdrop to the design. The stage floor, which thrust out into the auditorium, was on various levels and had a broken circular disc that gave the impression of a bullring. He chose warm orange tones for the setting that expressed the hot Spanish climate as well as the emotions of the characters in the production.

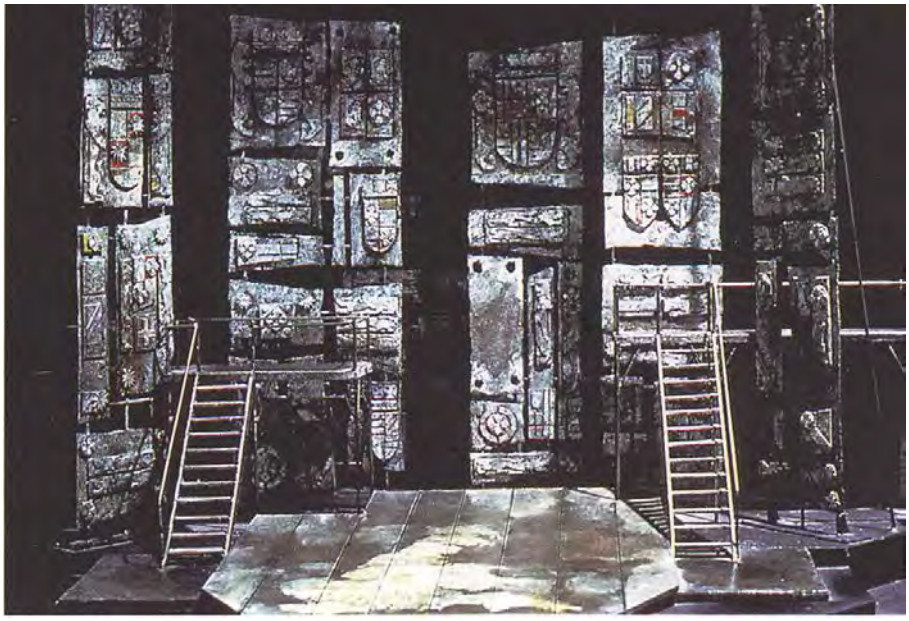


Figure 4.4. *Richard III* (model photograph) (1966) Delacorte Theatre, New York, Ming Cho Lee (Unruh, 2006:37)

Figure 4.5. *Carmen* (model photograph) (1997) Royal Albert Hall, London, Ralph Koltai (Backemeyer, 2003:96)

Innovation and exploration into new materials and techniques has been an important part of Svoboda, Lee, and Koltai's work. From early in his career Svoboda supported research and experimentation and was instrumental in founding an experimental laboratory or workshop at the Prague National Theatre in 1957 (Burian, 1974:22). In 1958, he presented two multimedia presentations at the World Fair in Brussels, in collaboration with director, Alfred Radok. The first, *Polyekran* (figure 4.6.), did not include any scenery or live performers but was created by suspending eight large screens, of different sizes, in front of a black backdrop. To project his images he used eight slide and seven film projectors and the entire presentation was accompanied by a sound track (Burian, 1974:81). Each of the screens was treated as a separate entity and not as a scenic backdrop, and the production varied from being a documentary to a form of surrealistic reality in style (Parker and Wolf, 1987:217).

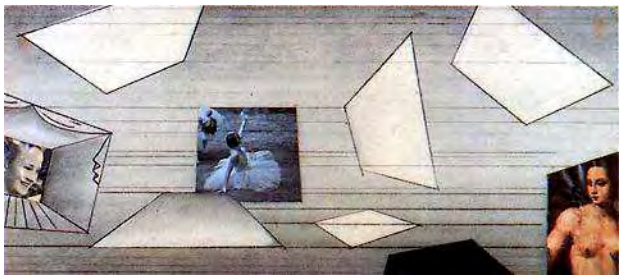


Figure 4.6. *Polyekran* (1958) EXPO 58, Brussels, Josef Svoboda (Media Art Net, 2011: Internet)

The second, *Laterna Magika* (figure 4.7. overleaf), incorporated performers with movable screens, a treadmill, still projections and film images, and sound into a single presentation (Burian, 1974:85-86). These ideas and techniques were later integrated into a number of Svoboda's stage designs (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:479). In 1972, Svoboda founded the Laterna Magika theatre that allowed him to continue his exploration into combining film and performers in live presentations (Baugh, 2005:135).

In order to produce his scenographic images, Svoboda devised and developed various lighting instruments such as a low-voltage lantern with its own dedicated transformer that enabled the fixture to emit an intense, white, controllable beam of light. He used pneumatic mirrors, manufactured from a flexible material so they could be manipulated

into concave or convex surfaces, resulting in the images, reflected on the surface, being able to shift and change shape in front of the audience (Burian, 1974:23-26). He felt "the stage should use technologies to retain a sense of distance from representation" and "consciously used the strangeness, the mystery of effects and their frequently complex technologies to keep the scenography on the level of the inner feelings and meaning of the play" (in Baugh, 2005:88). Although Svoboda was interested in technical innovations, he only used them if they served the needs of the text and the production and not as a means to create a technological spectacle (Burian, 1974:23-26).

Figure 4.7. *Laterna Magika* (1958) EXPO 58, Brussels, Josef Svoboda (Media Art Net, 2010: Internet)

Lee has explored the use of different materials in his designs. His early design work moved away from a two-dimensional approach to sculptural unit settings that were composed of "pipe scaffolding, raw wood planks and textured surfaces" (Aronson, 1984:5). His design for *Much Ado About Nothing* (1972) (figure 4.8. overleaf) shows his use of scaffolding and collages. His design for *Richard III* (1966) (figure 4.4) also illustrates his use of textured surfaces and scaffolding.

Koltai has used materials, such as plastics, machine parts and barbed wire, within his design and has always been conscious of how their use will enrich the experience of the spectator. Like Svoboda, Koltai is not interested in using technology for 'technology's sake' and will only include it if it contributes to his design and the needs of the production (Backemeyer, 2003:102-103).

Figure 4.8. *Much Ado About Nothing* (1972) Delacorte Theatre, New York, Ming Cho Lee (Unruh, 2006:40)

In 1967, Koltai was asked to design the set for an all-male production of *As You Like It* (figure 4.9. overleaf). He chose to approach the design as a dreamlike experience because in a "dream everything is real" (in TheatreVOICE, 3 September 2004 b: Internet). The design was abstract as well as being organic; he suspended large perforated plastic structures that could represent both tree foliage and clouds (Burian, 1983:224) and used Plexiglas tubes to symbolize tree trunks (Howard, 1998:22).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Craig and Appia proposed designs that were sculptural rather than realistic (Brockett and Hildy, 2003:413-415) and their vision is reflected in the designs of Svoboda, Lee and Koltai. This is illustrated in Svoboda's design for *Hamlet* (1965) (figure 4.10. overleaf) where the set was composed of a number of moving geometric forms. He suspended a large mirror above the stage at a forty-five degree angle so that it could reflect the action on-stage (Burian, 1974:124).

The use of the mirrors assisted in reinforcing the director's concept that "Hamlet himself, rather than the Ghost, [was] the motivator of his actions" (Burian, 1998:34-41).

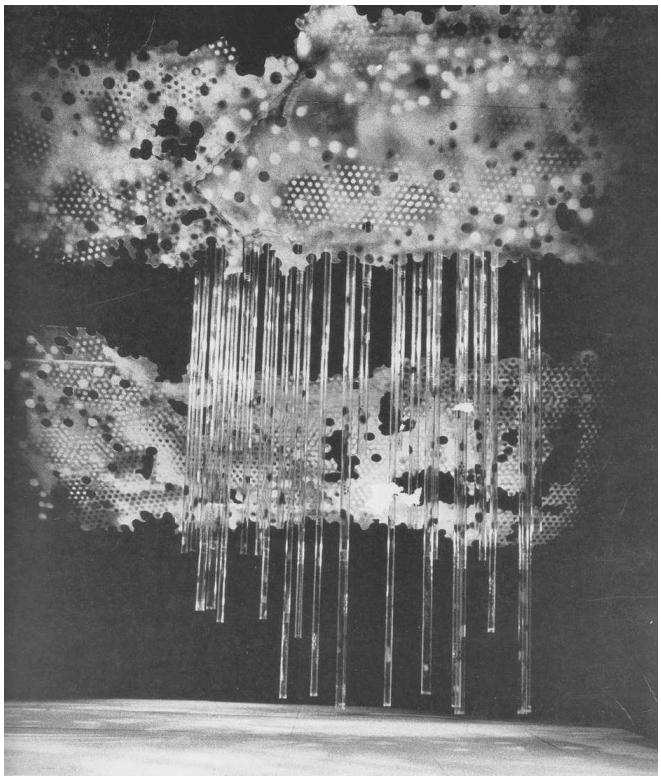


Figure 4.9. *As You Like It* (1967) National Theatre, London. Ralph Koltai (Backemeyer, 2003:16)

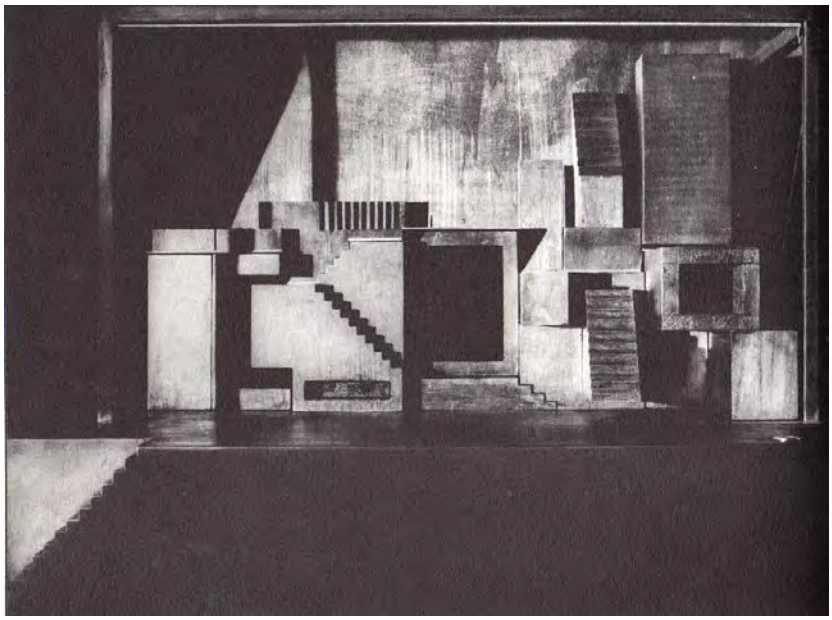


Figure 4.10. *Hamlet* (1965) National Theatre of Belgium, Brussels, Josef Svoboda (Rowell, 1968:22)

Lee also recognises the sculptural influences in his early work and refers to it as being "too iconic, too emblematic, too architectural. My beginning designs were very Brechtian - no frivolity, no magic, no color, no decorative quality. In many ways I was forcing the play into an architectural solution" (in Unruh, 2006:29). This can be seen in his design for *Peer Gynt* (1969) (figure 4.11.). The set was designed to represent the "visual journey of the play - its icon - was a roller coaster, with three levels of reality". The entire setting was mounted on a revolve and constructed from wooden poles that symbolised the forests of Norway (Unruh, 2006:69). This sculptural design reflected Lee's 'outside to inside' approach.

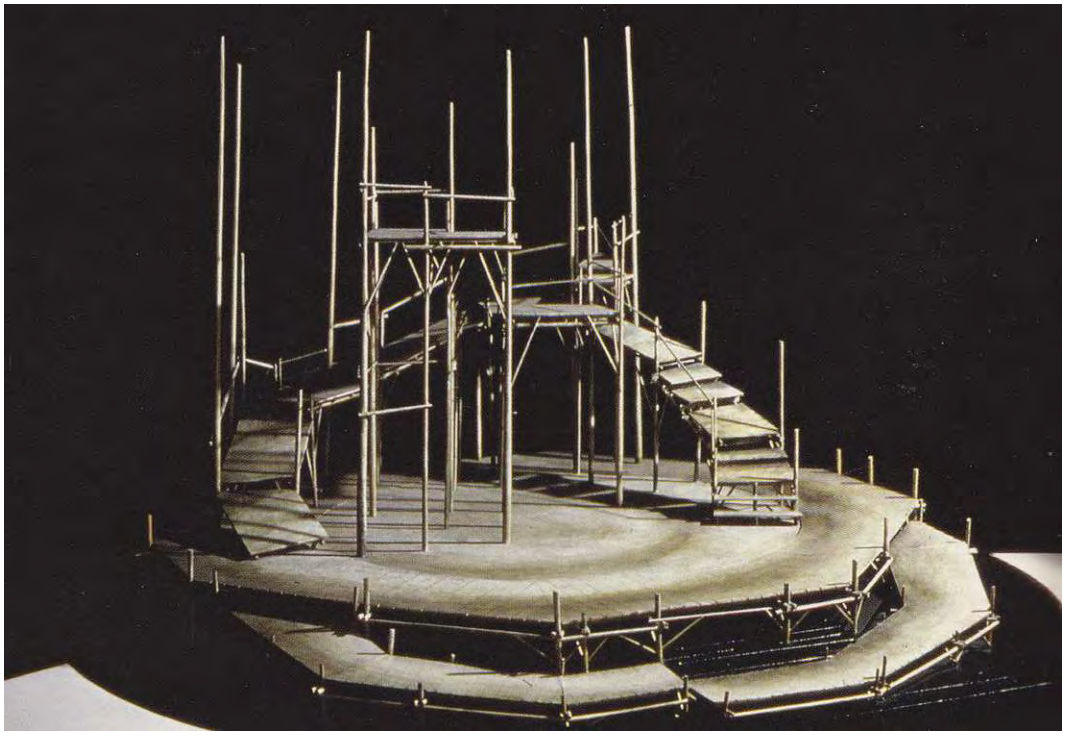


Figure 4.11. *Peer Gynt* (1969) Delacorte Theatre, New York Ming Cho Lee (Unruh, 2006:60)

He was asked to work on *Peer Gynt* (figure 4.12. overleaf) again in 1998 and for this design he used an 'inside out' approach'. The two interpretations are completely different. The second design consisted "of a basic set of curved wings that could travel on and off stage (evoking the fjords), a sky, a raked deck, and a red bridge that could raise and lower and tilt" (Unruh, 2006:70). The first provided a functional, iconic structure, while the second offered the spectator a symbolic insight into the emotions present in the text (Unruh, 2006:69-70).

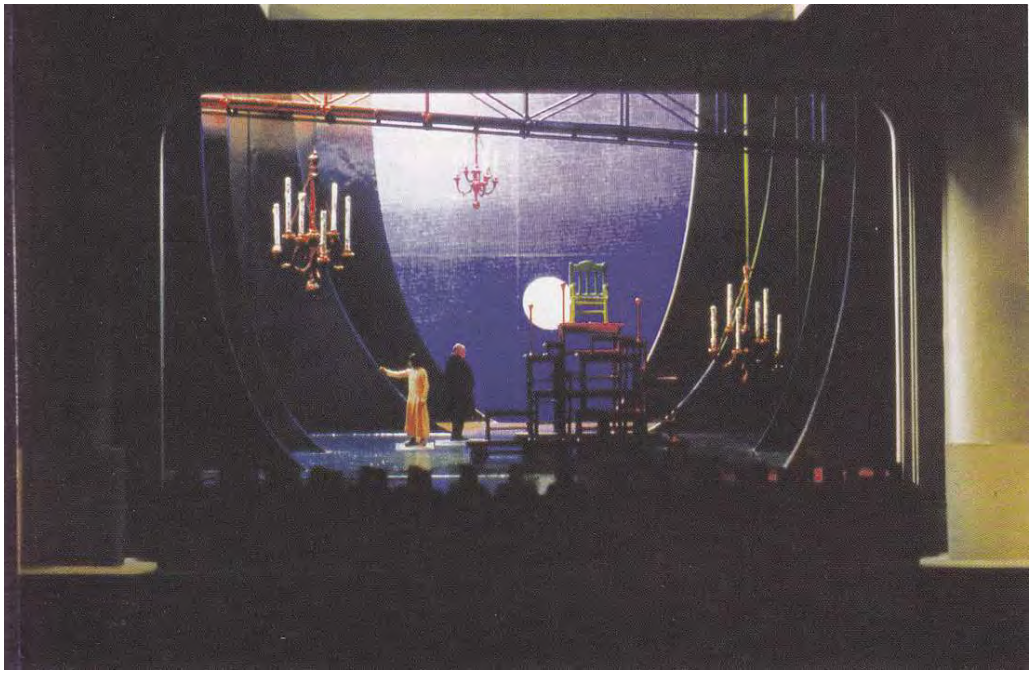


Figure 4.12. *Peer Gynt* (1998) Shakespeare Theatre, Washington DC, Ming Cho Lee (Unruh, 2006:61)

Koltai's design for *The Jew of Malta* (1964) (figure 4.13) also shows strong sculptural influences. It was composed of large, heavily textured, movable blocks that could be shifted into new configurations (Burian, 1983:222).

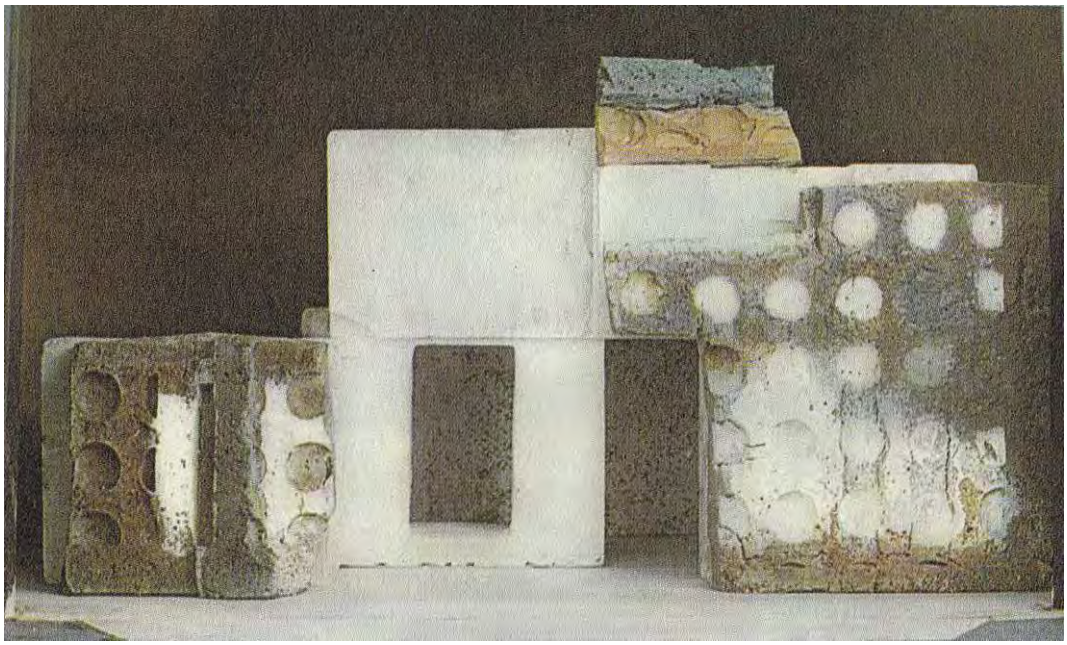


Figure 4.13. *The Jew of Malta* (1964) Aldwych Theatre, Ralph Koltai (Rowell, 1968:40)

Although a number of Svoboda, Lee, and Koltai's designs have been abstract, they have all created settings that have their roots in realism. The design for *A Sunday in August* (1958) (figures 4.14.) illustrates Svoboda's use of lighting and projections onto scrim and opaque materials in order to create an infinite depth to the stage and simulate the surface of a pond (Burian, 1974:60). The design is asymmetrical and the projections suggest a realistic environment and assist in shifting the mood in the production. The diagonally hung Chinese lanterns provide height to the design as well as directing the spectator's eye around the setting. The two chairs, placed downstage left, are visually balanced by the bench and ladder up-stage right. Svoboda's later design for *The Seagull* (1988) (figure 4.15. overleaf) also shows his continued use of lighting and fabric to create his settings. The bed, wooden table, and red carpet provide iconic symbols of a bedroom while the strong shafts of sunlight help to direct the spectator's attention on the bed. The curtain at the back, that appears to be moving in the wind, demonstrates his use of movement to enhance his designs.

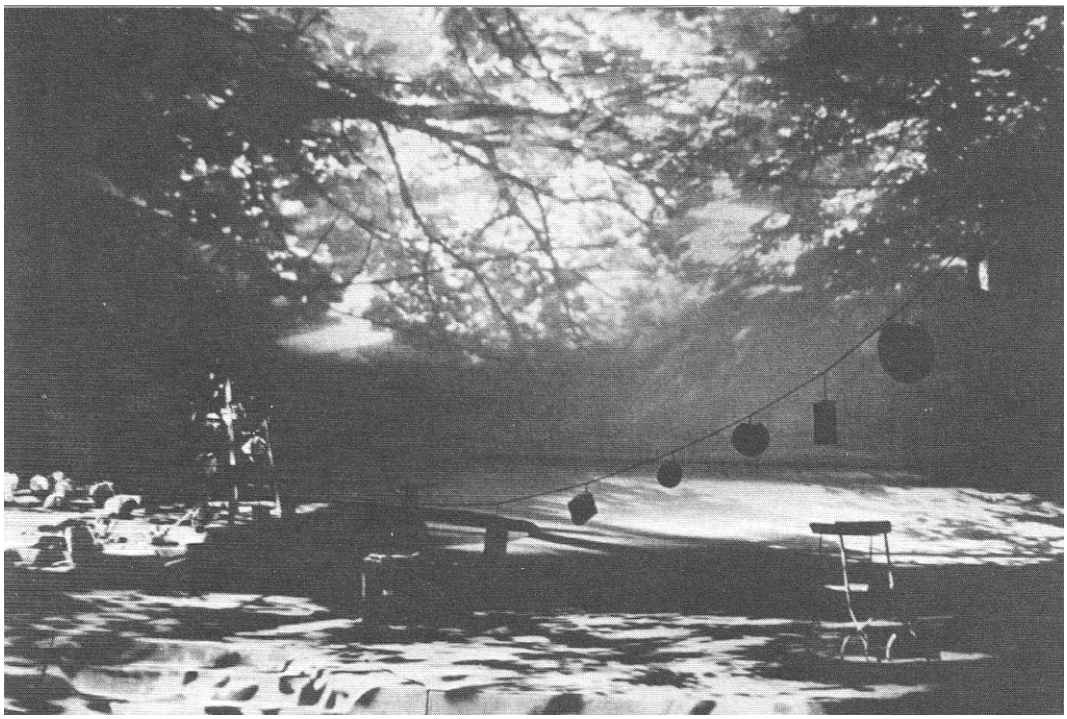


Figure 4.14. *A Sunday in August* (1958) State Theatre, Ostrava, Josef Svoboda (Burian, 1974:61)

Figure 4.15. *The Seagull* (1988) Atelier Theatral Louvaine-la-Neuve, Josef Svoboda (Ohio Arts Council's Riffe Gallery Exhibition, 2000: Internet)

For a production of *A Moon for the Misbegotten* (2005) (figure 4.16.), Lee chose to create a realistic setting that indexically pointed to the poor, depressed life of the characters in the 1930s: the house appears weather-beaten and has simple furnishing; the floor gives the impression of being dry and sandy; and the outside water pump helps provide an iconic indication of the period.

Figure 4.16. *A Moon for the Misbegotten* (2005) Long Wharf Theatre, New Haven, Ming Cho Lee (Unruh, 2006:77)

Koltai's design for *Much Ado About Nothing* (1982) (figure 4.17.), created from a "mirrored floor and walls reflect[ing] the narcissistic nature of the characters" (Backemeyer, 2003:39), illustrates his use of suggestive realism. Koltai developed a technique where his Perspex trees could hang without wooden or metal supports enabling them to be backlit (Howard, 1998:26).

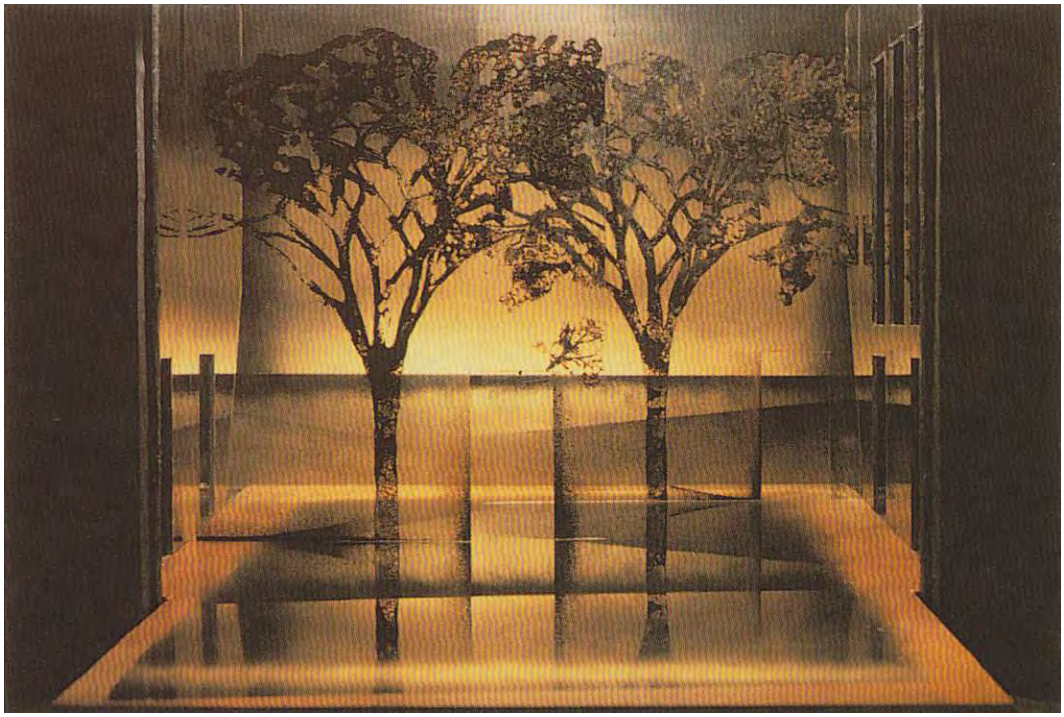


Figure 4.17. *Much Ado About Nothing* (1982) Royal Shakespeare Company, Ralph Koltai (Backemeyer, 2003:39)

The three designers have also encouraged and spent time mentoring students in the industry. Svoboda taught at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague (1952-1958) and later became a Professor of Architecture at the School of Fine and Applied Arts in Prague (Burian, 1974:xix, 9). He toured the world sharing his knowledge at various seminars and master classes (Baugh, 2005:83). Lee has taught at the New York University (1967-1971) and Yale (1971-), where he is currently co-chair of the design department and holds the Donald M. Oenslager Chair in Design (Unruh, 2006:45). Lee was instrumental in setting up the Stage Design Portfolio Review known as "Ming's clambake", ending in 2009 (Gener, 2009:38), where young student designers were provided the opportunity to present their work to designers and directors. He believes that established designers can provide them with a strong foundation by passing on their knowledge and techniques, and therefore employs young designers as his apprentices

(Gussow, 1995:12). Koltai was appointed as Head of Theatre Design Department at the Central School of Arts and Crafts from 1965 to 1972, and is a consultant and Fellow of the London Institute (Backemeyer, 2003:7).

4.6 Summary and Conclusions

Svoboda, Lee and Koltai's contribution to scenic design will have a lasting impact on the way people view scenography for many years. Miloslav Hermanek, a close colleague of Svoboda, interviewed by BBC News Online, said of Svoboda that he "did not look at the theatre space as a painter, he always perceived it as an architect, fully aware of its kinetic dynamism" (BBC News, 2002: Internet). Lee acknowledges his approach to designing has changed during his career and he no longer tries to "impose an architectural/conceptual solution on the play. That was outside to in. Now I trust the action and the emotion of the play more. That is inside to out. It is so much easier" (in Unruh, 2006:70 -71). Lastly, "the primary and lasting impression of Koltai's work is that of great inventiveness with regard to the variety and functionality of his sets and a rich combination of imagery with pure form in his embodiment of the essential concept underlying a given work" (Burian, 1983:226).

Chapter Five
Analysis of Greg King's Designs

Each designer uses a different method or approach to achieve his/her scenic design. As seen in chapter four, the working processes of international designers, Svoboda, Lee, and Koltai differed. This chapter focuses on the work of King and three of his designs for three different genres and venues. The case studies examined will explore how theatre space and dramatic genre affect or influence the decisions of the designer.

5.1 Design Process of Greg King

King is one of the most successful designers in Durban and has designed over thirty productions in the last ten years for the KickstArt Theatre Company and has received *The Mercury* Durban Theatre Awards: Best Set Design since 2003 (KickstArt, 2011: Internet). In 1994, after graduating with an Honours Degree in Drama at the University of Natal, Pietmaritzburg, he became a member of NAPAC's Loft Company (KickstArt, 2011: Internet). After the Loft Company closed he joined the newly formed Playhouse Puppet Company (1995-1998) (Badenhorst, 2005:269). His interest in puppets had begun while at school, after he had watched a performance of the Handspring Puppet Company. The Playhouse Puppet Company gave him, in addition to performing, the chance to design and construct the puppets, the properties, and the scenery required for the performances. He was able to interact with the scenic artists and property makers employed at the Playhouse workshops, and according to King (9 October 2009), "had the opportunity to learn from them and go away and play, discover things by myself, that was probably the biggest period I learnt the craft". Some of the designers working for NAPAC, such as Andrew Botha, Ed Haynes and Hugh Durant, also provided inspiration to King to follow a career in design. During this period he also became a co-founder of the Creative Madness theatre company with Peter Court and Philippa Savage in 1997 (Smart, 1999: Internet).

In 2000 King formed the KickstArt Company as a profit share company, in order to provide work for himself and his friends. Their first production, *Popcorn* (2000) at the KwaSuka Theatre (Stead, 25 November 2009), was followed, a year later, by *The*

Importance of Being Earnest at the Square Space Theatre. Billy Suter, reporter for *The Mercury*, commented that "Durban can be proud of and truly cherish Greg King and his KickstArt theatre company, which was formed in May last year to serve popular plays to a local market saturated with cabaret, supper theatre and musical reviews" (KickstArt, 2011: Internet).

King took over the lease of the KwaSuka Theatre in 2003 so he could provide a "home base" for the company. The venue, an old converted T-shaped church, became a "learning ground" for King and although it "only [had] seven metres squared of working space", he enjoyed the challenge of creating new and exciting designs that maximized the existing space, such as converting it into a cabaret venue (King, 9 October 2009). As the company expanded, Steven Stead joined as executive director in 2004 and King became the artistic director. The company now produces theatre for both adult and child audiences and they have explored a number of different genres, such as drama, musical and farce. Their aim for the company is to produce work from internationally recognised playwrights "such as Oscar Wilde, David Mamet, Ben Elton, Charles Ludlam, Athol Fugard, Reza de Wet, Christopher Hampton, Christopher Durang, Yasmin Reza, David Auburn, Beth Henley and Shelagh Stephenson" (KickstArt, 2011: Internet). The company also decided to revive the tradition of the Christmas pantomime in Durban (Stead, 2007). After the lease of the KwaSuka theatre expired, the size of their productions expanded, and together with a small grant from the National Arts Council (Stead, 25 November 2009), they have been able to produce bigger shows in venues with larger seating capacities. These venues include Durban's Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre, the Playhouse Loft Theatre, Drama Theatre and Opera Theatre, and Cape Town's Baxter Theatre (KickstArt, 2011: Internet).

Stead normally assumes the role of the director and handles the administration, while King is responsible for designing and constructing the setting. Although King also enjoys directing he believes a production is enriched and "can be taken further" when there are "two creative minds". He finds that, as he 'thinks' like a director, he is more sympathetic to the needs of the performer. Although King has worked with other directors, their aim now is to concentrate on developing their own company. They have a good working relationship and work collaboratively, discussing their ideas for the production and together agreeing on a concept (King, 9 October 2009).

King and Stead select the script first and often look for a text that "is gritty and challenging intellectually from an actor's point of view and the director's". King enjoys designing for musicals as they have many scene changes and allow him "the opportunity to explore creatively in terms of techniques and working styles" (King, 9 October 2009). However, the choice of the venue is based on what will be best suit the production as

> the size of the auditorium is directly proportional to the size of the show you are going to be producing because if you can't get enough people to pay for tickets. You can't pay the salaries for a large cast and/or enormously elaborate sets and any of the other things. A small theatre allows you to do intimate pieces, two actors and you can get thirty people a night or five, you have to do the ratio planning in your budgets. (Stead, 25 November 2009)

King (9 October 2009) stated that one of his favourite venues is the Playhouse Drama theatre because

> in terms of its facilities, [it] is one of the best theatres in the city. It's also versatile as you can reconfigure the space and change it into a theatre-in-the-round situation. I have never had the opportunity to do so, but it's very exciting that that option exists.

However, they often choose the Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre for many of their productions as they find the Playhouse Company's terms and conditions of hire too restrictive. King finds the staff of the Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre efficient and helpful, although the flying equipment is more limited than the Drama theatre (King, 9 October 2009). Stead also enjoys working in the Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre as it offers him an enormous amount of space, but still retains an intimate feeling. In addition, as a producer, the theatre provides a hospitable environment that is easily accessible for families and the performers (Stead, 25 November 2009).

King starts a production by interrogating the text as it provides him with "clues" to his design. His approach is influenced by the "style of a piece", and as many of the texts they choose require naturalistic settings this has given him an opportunity to explore this style. He acknowledges that his techniques may seem a "little dated" as he has not investigated the potential of audio visual, projection and screen printing in his designs, but he is not really interested in that area and feels that it is like taking a "short cut" (King, 9 October 2009).

Stead also analyses the text and aims to find out" what the writer is trying to communicate in a broad picture and then from scene-to-scene and moment-to-moment". To him, "directing is story telling and [his] job is tell the story to an audience, who have

never heard the story before" (25 November 2009). However, when communicating his ideas/requirements for the setting, Stead said:

> I tend to be quite prescriptive in what I need in terms of functionality, which is not something Greg is used to doing. He will often do stuff [sic] that is decorative rather than practical like give me doors in the wrong place, or windows in the wrong place. I have now learnt I have to be extremely specific. Going back to the text, if the text requires someone entering from a bedroom window on the left the bedroom window must be on the left. I am kind of dictatorial from that point of view but he is so malleable and fluid, it is a very nice exchange, it becomes mutual.

Although King has to work within the parameters set by Stead, King is responsible for taking the final decision with regard the overall feel and look of the production. Stead trusts King's work and feels he is very versatile and capable of designing for a wide range of styles (Stead, 25 November 2009). King is often surprised by the amount of detail that the director requires and is "constantly tripped up by questions that [he] hadn't thought of" (King, 9 October 2009).

In order to communicate his ideas for the production King constructs models, although in the smaller productions the model was not always essential. As the size of their productions grew and the number of scene changes increased the need for a model became evident. Stead uses the model in his rehearsal process to both plan his directing and to explain what he requires of the performers while the model assists King in planning the structure (figure 5.1. overleaf) (Stead, 25 November 2009).

The three productions selected for case studies illustrate King's work in three venues in Durban and are from different dramatic genres. The first case study is the adult drama *Oleanna*, while the second and third case studies, the pantomime *Aladdin* and the musical *The Wizard of Oz*, demonstrate his designs for children's theatre. However, no production is complete without the lighting, and the designs of Dylan Heaton for *Aladdin* and Tina le Roux's work on *Oleanna* and *The Wizard of Oz* assisted in bringing King's designs to life. All three theatrical performances were viewed live and the live Digital Versatile Disc (DVD) recordings (courtesy of KickstArt Company) were used to assist in the analysis of the productions.

Figure 5.1. King marking out a piece of scenery for *The Wizard of Oz*, working from a section of the model (Photograph Susan Donaldson-Selby)

5.2 *Oleanna* (2008)

As mentioned in chapter three, Mamet (1993:1) supplied the following information with regard the set requirements; "JOHN is talking on the phone. CAROL is seated across the desk from him". This brief description allowed King the freedom to interpret the design in his way. He chose to use a realistic box set (figure 5.2. overleaf) because he likes to think that KickstArt has "built up a bit of an expectation" for their productions and that, the set design has become a "prominent feature" of their work. The Seabrooke's Theatre was selected as the stage suited a small cast and provided an

intimate space in which he could create a claustrophobic office. King, however, finds the stage space limited, the sightlines restrictive as the proscenium arch is long and narrow and, as it has been constructed in a basement, the ceiling is very low and not suitable as an auditorium (King, 9 October 2009).

Figure 5.2. *Oleanna* (2008) Seabrooke's Theatre (Photograph courtesy Val Adamson)

Using Esslin's (1987:104) visual sign systems and Aston and Savona's (1991:147-149) four levels of operation as a means of analysing King's design, it can be seen that he provided the director and the performers with a "basic spatial configuration" (Esslin, 1987:104) that was both practical and functional. King created an asymmetrical design and in order to maximise the small space he placed the rear wall of the setting against the cyclorama. The set was decorated in neutral tones with the lower half of the wall painted in gunmetal grey while the upper section was in a light grey, the door, skirting board, window, dado rail and cornice were finished in white. This colour choice created a cool, clinical, and somewhat impersonal environment and assisted in creating a sombre mood for the production.

The furniture selected, although functional, is iconic as it visually communicates the purpose of the room. A large wooden desk and comfortable black swivel executive

office chair occupies most of the prompt side of the stage. The choice of the desk and type of chair indicated John's social and academic status as well as his position of authority as professor. It also acted as a physical and psychological barrier between him and his student. Using proxemics, to further examine the "spatial arrangements" between the performers and each other and the performers and their environment (McKinney and Butterworth, 2009:157) it can be seen that the position of John's desk and chair, which are clearly visible to someone entering the room, provides him with a position of power. However, as Carol slowly invaded this space, a subtle shift of power in their relationship was perceived (figure 5.3.). To further strengthen the professor's 'ownership' of the space, King etched the professor's name onto the glass-panelled door (figure 5.4. overleaf).

Figure 5.3. *Oleanna* (2008) Seabrooke's Theatre (Photograph courtesy of Val Adamson)

The other furniture in the setting also assisted in reinforcing the office location. King chose severe, upright metal office chairs; three positioned on the downstage right wall and one centre of the stage in an 'interrogation-like' position. The chairs lacked the supposed comfort of the professor's chair and this again strengthened his position of authority. King's attention to detail in his set dressing is evident with a light switch, office-type stationery items on the desk, a computer on the up-stage desk, a consultation schedule on the door (figure 5.4. overleaf), a Venetian blind on the window and an air

conditioner unit on the rear wall. These iconic symbols helped visually to establish the purpose of the room.

Figure 5.4. *Oleanna* (2008) Seabrooke's Theatre (Photograph courtesy of Val Adamson)

After its run at the Seabrooke's Theatre, the production was taken to the Hilton Festival where it was performed successfully with only the furniture (King, 9 October 2009). The design received favourable reviews and Caroline Smart (2008: Internet) commented that "Greg King's set is simple, sensible and suitably academic allowing good space for the action", while Sally Scott (14 March 2008: Internet) praised "Greg King's impeccable and perfectly detailed set".

5.3 *Aladdin* (2007)

KickstArt's production of the pantomime, *Aladdin*, was presented in association with the Playhouse at the Drama Theatre. Stead chose to write and direct the pantomime (Nicholson, 4 December 2007: Internet) as this enabled him to add scenes that provided

King with exciting design opportunities. Their aim was to create a show that would "blow [sic] people away with as many scene changes and as much spectacle as possible". Although King finds it challenging to work with a newly scripted text, as it has not been "tried and tested and fine tuned", it does provide them with the freedom to make changes if something does not work (King, 9 October 2009). Stead followed a number of pantomime traditions. He cast a female in the role of Aladdin and an actor as Widow Twankey. The 'good' character, the Ring Genie, first appeared from a stage lift on-stage right while Abanazar, the 'evil' character, predominantly occupied the left hand side of the stage in the opening scene. The pantomime also included a chase sequence, a 'sing-a-long' and a transformation scene.

The pantomime was located in Peking and this provided King with the opportunity to include a number of iconic Chinese motifs, symbols and architectural features. The text had multiple scenes and King chose to use a semi permanent setting. To frame his design King constructed a decorative false proscenium that featured dragons and oriental fans in oranges and yellows. The design continued on-stage with repeated legs and borders that assisted in unifying the setting from scene to scene and act as masking. In order to achieve a smooth transition between each scene King designed a front cloth (figure 5.5. overleaf) that acted both as a backdrop to scenes played on the apron and as a method to hide the scene changes. The front cloth featured iconic Chinese architecture that was painted in a stylised cartoon-like manner. The cloth was painted with a one-point perspective with the horizon line fairly low which made the buildings appear somewhat distorted. The Chinese lanterns and windows were painted in luminous yellows, oranges, and pinks that 'lit-up' under various lighting states.

King has always had a "passion for cartooning and illustrating" and he enjoys using a "bold illustrative two-dimensional" technique as he would like to "create a great big living cartoon" on the stage (9 October 2009). This was evident in all the scenes. The design was painted in a theatrical style, and the spectator was aware that the scenery, although based on realism, was painted. King chose to use bold primary and secondary colours and although colour was an important element in his design, he also paid attention to the other elements and principles of design.

Figure 5.5. Front cloth, *Aladdin* (2007) Playhouse Drama Theatre (Photograph taken from DVD)

Although the pantomime is set in China, the opening scene occurs in the Temple of the Goddess Isis where Abanazar seeks the Goddess's help in becoming the Grand Visor of all China. By calling the goddess Isis, after an Egyptian god, Stead gave King the opportunity to include an Egyptian statue and entrance piece (figure 5.6. overleaf) into his design. King used the iconic Egyptian style headdress, and collar together with two stylised, birdlike statues visually to convey the goddess's location. The text provided Abanazar with the motivation to visit Peking to find Aladdin.

As discussed in chapter two, the Playhouse Drama theatre is equipped with forty single purchase and five double purchase flybars, a personnel lift and adequate off stage space. This provided King with good technical facilities and the use of this equipment is evident in his design. A personnel lift was used for the Genie of the Ring to magically appear from below the stage in a puff of smoke in the opening scene. In the scene where Aladdin is 'fishing' for his breakfast and singing about his dream for the future, the bridge is positioned in front of the next scene. A cut cloth of painted foliage was lowered that hid the street scene behind (figure 5.7. overleaf). The cloth was later raised and formed part of the street scene.

Figure 5.6. Temple of the Goddess Isis, *Aladdin* (2007) Playhouse Drama Theatre (Photograph taken from DVD)

Figure 5.7. Aladdin on bridge, *Aladdin* (2007) Playhouse Drama Theatre (Photograph taken from DVD)

In the street scene (figure 5.8.) King placed the 'shops', stage right, on a diagonal line across the stage that assisted in directing the spectators' eye around the set. This was balanced by the large three-dimensional 'shop' on the left. Many of the textures were simulated such as the cracks and exposed brickwork. The whole truck was turned around to reveal the inside of Widow Twankey's laundry (figure 5.9. overleaf). King used striped wallpaper in peppermint green and pink, which contrasted with the multi-coloured, checked floor of the truck. The entrance to the laundry was through swing bar doors. The louvre slats on the doors were painted. The setting also included stylised washing machines. Across the set, various items of washing were strung up providing the iconic image of a laundry.

Figure 5.8. Street outside Widow Twankey's Laundromat *Aladdin* (2007) Playhouse Drama Theatre (Photograph courtesy Val Adamson)

Figure 5.9. Inside Widow Twankey's Laundromat *Aladdin* (2007) Playhouse Drama Theatre (Photograph taken from DVD)

For the cave scene (figure 5.10. overleaf) King used an analogous colour palette for the walls of the cave by painting them in various shades of blue and grey. This provided a neutral backdrop that contrasted with the jewels and riches that Aladdin later discovers in the cave. The jewels, brought in by two-dimensionally painted cut-outs and a cut-cloth, which rose from behind the cave wall, were painted in a cartoon style. The Genie of the Lamp appeared up-stage centre and was created by a large puppet. Again, King used Egypt for his inspiration and gave the genie an Egyptian-like collar and loincloth. In order to animate the puppet the face had moving parts.

King also used flying to create a number of his scenes such as the magic carpet, and Princess Jasmine and Aladdin's room in the palace (figure 5.11. overleaf). In his design for the palace room he used a symmetrical layout. The back wall of the room featured black wood framework with large red discs with Chinese characters. King design is also eclectic as he used Japanese style paper window as a central feature in the backwall.

Figure 5.10. Aladdin's cave, *Aladdin* (2007) Playhouse Drama Theatre (Photograph taken from DVD)

Figure 5.11. Princess Jasmine and Aladdin's room in the palace, *Aladdin* (2007) Playhouse Drama Theatre (Photograph taken from DVD)

Setting the pantomime in Peking, China, provided King with the opportunity to use a number of symbolic Chinese images. In the finale, he used the Willow Pattern as an inspiration for the design (figure 5.12. and 5.13.).

Figure 5.12. Delft Willow Pattern (Marks4antiques.com, 2011)

Figure 5.13. Finale *Aladdin* (2007) Playhouse Drama Theatre (Photograph courtesy Val Adamson)

Using Aston and Savona's (1991:147-149) four levels of operation to analyse King's whole design for *Aladdin,* it is apparent that he created a functional environment for the performers and that the changed smoothly from scene to scene. The decorative legs and

borders helped to create continuity between the scenes and to unify the entire design. The set design had both intimate scenes and larger settings that gave space for dance sequences.

King was able to differentiate between Aladdin's humble origins and the Princess's social status by using colour and texture. In the street scene, the area appeared 'run-down' with cracked plaster and stained walls. The palace was decorated in rich golds, yellows, and reds and in Chinese culture red brings joy and happiness while yellow is reserved for royalty (Nations Online, 2011: Internet). By using these symbolic colours, King was able visually to convey the social status of the Princess. Lighting played an important part in creating atmosphere in many of the scenes and the lighting designer made use of patterned gobos, intelligent lighting, follow spots, and practical lanterns to create various lighting effects.

Smart (2007: Internet) commented that as King and Stead's pantomimes moved from the KwaZuka Theatre their productions have got "bigger and glitzier"; however, they have managed to retain "the essential fun and heart that makes panto [sic] work". The Playhouse Drama enabled them to use "flying magic carpets, enormous genies and stunning sets", but they also included the "smaller visual quirks and jokes - a dog on a lead, Abanazer's 'horse', obvious slapstick moments and the villain's final comeuppance [sic] from Widow Twankey and Wishee Washee", which "keep the soul of the pantomime where it should be". In another review, Emma Nicholson (4 December 2007: Internet) stated that the sets are "glorious and glittering, full of bright colours, quirky knick knacks [sic] and a liberal dose of enchantment. King has delighted once again with this visual feast that seamlessly transforms the stage into anything from a leafy bridge to a bustling street in downtown Peking to the shadowy throat of the cave that hides the magic lamp."

5.4. *The Wizard of Oz* (2008)

The last case study is KickstArt's production of *The Wizard of Oz,* presented at the Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre. Although the 1939 MGM film version of the musical is well known Stead and King chose to use The Royal Shakespeare Company's (1987) text (King and Stead, 2008). In designing this musical, King had to take into account that

many spectators were familiar with the MGM film version and would consciously or sub-consciously compares the two. He, therefore, wanted to create a design that visually differed from the film, but retained the essence of the original film.

The theatre presented King with a number of challenges as it has only seven fly bars and limited side stage space. King and Stead, therefore, began by studying the text and "where the story telling allowed [they] cut the sequence down" so they could "tell the story as visually and effectively as possible" (King, 9 October 2009) without losing the integrity of the musical. King (9 October 2009) said, "I chose to do the whole design [with a] kind of Dr Seuss feel about it, because it's a dream world, it had that slightly surreal quality to it with two dimensional renderings on flattage [sic]".

Similar to his design for *Aladdin*, King used a semi-permanent setting. The Sneddon Theatre has a plain neutral proscenium arch and in order to frame the stage, as he had done for *Aladdin*, King constructed a false proscenium arch. The design was repeated on-stage with legs and borders that again acted as masking and a means to unify the various scenes. King used simple curved organic lines in an Art Nouveau style. He was able to gain an extra fly bar by replacing the main tab curtains with an emerald green, sequined show curtain which was used to mask a number of the scene changes. Unlike *Aladdin*, King chose to use a plain coloured front curtain instead of a decorative front cloth, as it was a more suitable 'backdrop' for a number of the scenes including the storm sequence.

The musical is set in Kansas and in the fantasy Land of Oz, and similar to the film, King chose to use sepia tones for Kansas as he wanted to create a neutral "monochromatic space" (King, 9 October 2009) that would contrast with the vibrant colours in the Land of Oz. To hide the 'Yellow Brick Road' underneath, he covered the floor with a stage cloth. To give the impression of the scene stretching to infinity he used a ground row of perspectively painted cornfields, which was placed in front of the cyclorama. A small farmhouse with a practical door was positioned on the right hand side of the stage and two-dimensional cutouts completed the scene (figure 5.14. overleaf). King specifically chose this colour scheme as it provided him with a method visually to contrast the two worlds quickly and effectively. In addition to defining the difference between the two worlds, *The Wizard of Oz* text provides specific references to some colours for the

setting and includes 'the yellow brick road' and the Emerald City. King, therefore, had to comply with these design limitations.

Figure 5.14. Kansas, *The Wizard of Oz* (2008), Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre (Photograph taken from DVD recording)

The Kansas scene ends with a large storm as Dorothy is transported from Kansas to the Land of Oz. King used his early experiences with the Playhouse Puppet Company to include puppets in his designs. A black cloth was raised, above head height, along the front edge of the stage, and puppets on long rods were lifted above the black cloth and were used to enact the chaos of the storm. The puppets included a scaled down cutout of the house, a cow, a man in a rowing boat and Miss Gulch on her bicycle. The action continued into the auditorium with The Wicked Witch of the West, again represented by a puppet, being flown from the front of house lighting bridge using a pendulum action. Scott (26 August 2008: Internet) commented on King's use of puppets and stated that "King ha[d] surpassed himself on another front, with his superb puppets, some Muppet-likes sing in unison (real show stoppers), while others, at times, swoop from the air over the auditorium". This was an effective method of representing a possibly challenging scene in a venue with limited flybars and stage space. As most of the action was concentrated on the forestage it allowed the Munchin scene to be set up behind the curtain, thus enabling a quick scene change.

After the storm, Dorothy and the house from Kansas 'land' in the colourful Munchkin town in the Land of Oz. The Munchkins are very short people and King constructed the town to match the scale of the residents. The town consisted of a number of three-dimensional houses that were grouped in a half circle around the stage. The Kansas house, downstage left, was clearly 'alien' and 'out-of scale' with the colourful environment (figure 5.15.). The scene was completed by large flown cutout of a rainbow and landscape showing the Land of Oz. By including a rainbow in this backdrop, King was able to symbolically indicate Dorothy had found her dream of a land "somewhere over the rainbow".

Figure 5.15. Munchkin town *The Wizard of Oz* (2008) Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre (Photograph courtesy Val Adamson)

As stated earlier, the Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre has limited side stage space. King solved this problem by using two-dimensional cutouts and double-sided trucks that could be used for more than one scene. This was evident when Dorothy met the Scarecrow and the Tinman (figure 5.16. overleaf), the same truck was used and turned around to reveal each scene. Actors dressed as crows added to the Scarecrow scene, while girls were used as trees in the Tinman scene. The house in the Tinman scene does not have any vertical or horizontal lines and has a distorted perspective and King's

inspiration from Dr Seuss (figure 5.17.) can be seen in the treatment of the 'Yellow Brick Road' backdrop, Scarecrow and Tinman scenes.

Figure 5.16. Tinman scene, *The Wizard of Oz* (2008) Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre (Photograph taken from DVD)

Figure 5.17. Dr Seuss Drawing (Dr Seuss, 1998:7)

An integral part of *The Wizard of Oz* is the iconic 'Yellow Brick Road'. Dorothy has to follow it in order to obtain help from the wizard. King chose to paint the yellow brick road as a large ring on the stage floor with exits up-stage and downstage. In the centre of the ring, King created a circular pattern in yellow and green (figure 5.18.). This layout allowed the performers to 'follow' the road and continue their journey to the Emerald City. The 'road' design was also extended into the backdrop.

Figure 5.18. 'Yellow Brick Road' and backdrop, *The Wizard of Oz* (2008) Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre (Photograph taken from DVD)

Colour played an important part in King's design for the production, as he had to visually differentiate between the real world and a dream-like state. The Land of Oz also had a number of different locations that could be identified by his use of colour. As mentioned above, the real world of Kansas was achieved by using sepia tones. For the Munchkin town and the journey to the city of Oz, he used primary and secondary colours. The Emerald city was painted in varying tones of green while the wicked witch's castle (figure 5.19. overleaf) was in blues, greys and blacks with green vines growing up the walls. The Wicked Witch's castle had a raised platform that allowed the performer to 'melt' away.

For the Emerald City King used the double-sided trucks again. The exterior 'wall' and entrance door for the city were painted on the back of the trucks that formed the shops in the city. The shops had an Art Deco style shape and King chose to use varying

shades of green and yellow to represent the Emerald City. The backdrop for the city also changed and featured buildings with minarets and geometric designs painted in a distorted perspective in blues and greens (figure 5.20.). Being able to turn the scenic units around facilitated a smooth and quick transition between many of the scenes.

Figure 5.19. Wicked Witch's Castle, *The Wizard of Oz* (2008) Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre (Photograph taken from DVD)

Figure 5.20. Emerald City *The Wizard of Oz* (2008) Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre (photograph courtesy Val Adamson)

King adapted the genie puppet he created for *Aladdin* for the Wizard and in figure 5.21. Wendy Henstock can be seen carving the puppet for *The Wizard of Oz* (figure 5.22. overleaf). In *Aladdin*, the Genie of the lamp was raised from behind the cave backdrop, whereas in *The Wizard of Oz*, the Wizard puppet was mounted on a 'cupboard' structure that allowed the Wizard to control the puppet from below.

Figure 5.21. Carving of the Wizard, *The Wizard of Oz* (2008) Playhouse Workshop (photograph Susan Donaldson-Selby)

King, in his design for *The Wizard of Oz,* was able to contrast the fantasy Land of Oz with the real world of Kansas by using colour as a signifier. He used a theatrical style that was also eclectic as he used many different sources for his inspiration. He was able to combine Art Nouveau and Art Deco styles together with Dr Seuss drawings to create a harmonious image.

5.5 Summary and Conclusions

In examining the three designs, it is evident that King is able to adapt his designs to accommodate for the size and shape of the theatre. He does not allow the problems of the venue to inhibit his creative design process. The information contained in the text is equally important to King and the genre of the text influences the way he approaches the design. King predominantly works in a realist style as the productions Stead and he

select accommodate this style. In *Oleanna*, King chose to create a realist environment, while for *Aladdin* and *The Wizard of Oz* he chose to explore a cartoon or theatricalistic style.

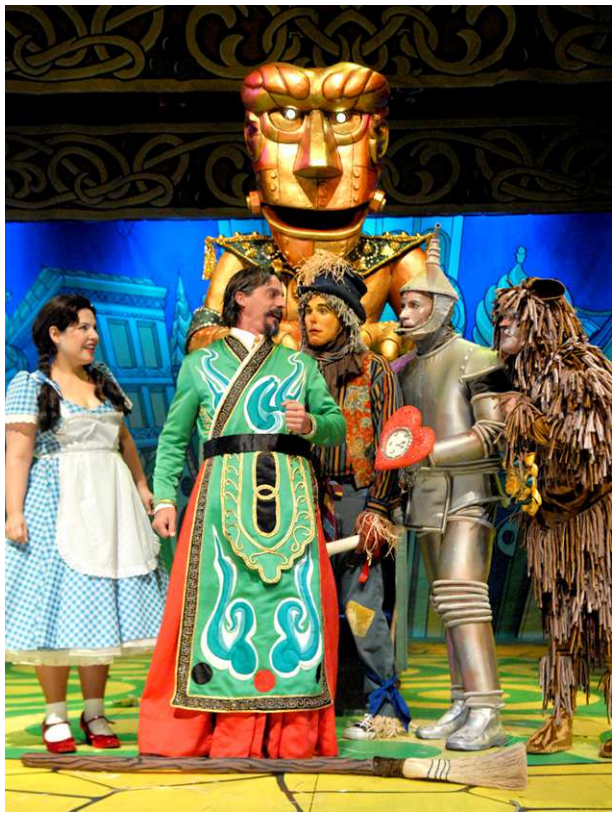


Figure 5.22. The Completed Wizard, *The Wizard of Oz* (2008) Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre (photograph courtesy Val Adamson)

Together King and Stead are an efficient creative team as is evident by the number of awards the company has received, in the last ten years, acknowledging their contribution to the theatre industry in Durban (see appendix D).

Chapter Six
Summary and Conclusions

This dissertation sought to investigate how theatre space and dramatic genre influence the scenographic process. Three designs of Greg King's were selected and analysed to determine how the theatre space and dramatic genre played a role in his design choices. Semiotics was offered as a vehicle by which King's designs could be interrogated as signs and symbols are present in his designs.

As scenery has always been a part of theatre productions, the first area examined was the development of the proscenium arch theatre. It was found that as the performance space altered the type and use of scenery underwent a number of changes. The outdoor or open theatres primarily relied on the architectural features of the building to provide a backdrop to the action and scenery. With the introduction of the proscenium arch, scenic artists explored the use of perspective in their designs and machinery was invented that assisted in changing the scenes. However, the scenery remained predominately generic in nature and was not integrated into the action on-stage and performers were 'out-of-scale' to most of the scenery. In the nineteenth century, a number of changes occurred that again affected the use of scenery. These included the introduction of the director, the naturalistic, realistic, and symbolist movements, electric lighting, and, in the twentieth century, the film and later television industry.

It was established that in most cases the theatre venue does not limit the designers' decisions as a designer uses and exploits the strengths and weaknesses within the venue to create his/her setting. In examining the work of three international designers, it was found that all three designers have adapted their designs to suit the venue. Svoboda predominantly worked in proscenium arch venues. His designs accommodated the single directional view of the spectator and he made use of and 'invented' technologies in order to enhance his designs. Both Lee and Koltai have worked in a number of different theatre layouts. They are able to create designs that compliment and exploit the venue space. This was evident in Lee's work at the Delacorte Theatre where the natural outdoor environment led him to develop an emblematic and sculptural style, while Koltai made use of the height in the Albert Hall as part of his design for *Carmen*.

The three venues chosen as case studies, although all proscenium arch spaces, emphasised the variations that can occur in proscenium arch theatres and the challenges they present to the scenic designer. The size of the Seabrooke's Theatre poses many problems for a designer. The venue is more suited to box settings or settings with black legs and a painted backdrop. The height of the venue can create difficulties for both the set designer and lighting designer. Large complex settings were not practical as the stage, side stage space and storage was limited. However, King was able to maximise the space offered by this venue and create a realistic box set that provided a functional space for the performers. The Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre and the Playhouse Drama Theatre, although relatively similar in stage size and audience capacity, differ in the technical equipment they have to offer the designer. The Playhouse Drama Theatre has more flybars and a large rear stage space into which a designer can extend his/her design. King made full use of the equipment the Playhouse Drama Theatre had to offer and many of his set changes included flown pieces of scenery. The theatre was also able to install a personal lift.

The Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre benefits from its location, as it is easily accessible for spectators. King and Stead knew their choice of the Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre would pose some design issues and through careful analysis of the text, they were able to retain the key elements of the story. King used reversible trucks that made good use of the stage space and limited off-stage storage space, and substituted puppets for some of the action. It was established that the KickstArt Company select their venues based on the production they have chosen. This means King is aware, in advance, of the venue's facilities and is able to adapt his design to suit the limitations imposed by the theatre. However, he also enjoyed the challenge offered by the KwaSuka Theatre where he was able to alter and change the seating and performance spaces in order to create new environments and layouts that suited different productions.

The dramatic genre was also offered as an area of exploration. It was found that the text provides the designer and director with a 'map' for the production. The dramatic genre however, determined the style in which the text is written. The director and the designer's approach to text analysis does not change from production to production or from genre to genre, but the dramatic genre often determined to what extent spectacle

was used within a production. A drama does not necessarily require a complete visual recreation of the text's physical environment as the spoken text can 'paint' a verbal image for the spectator. The use of spectacle is more firmly entrenched in the musical and pantomime genres as the text is written in a manner that provides the designer with opportunities to create decorative settings. The three international designers found the text an important factor in the decision making process. Svoboda felt one should "not merely illustrate a literary text" and that the designer should "transform it creatively into specific theatrical elements " (in McKinney and Butterworth, 2009:391). During Lee's career his approach to the text changed. His early work was emblematic and iconic as he sough to 'dictate' an image onto the production by an "outside to inside" approach to the text (in Unruh, 2006:29-30). In Lee's later designs, he explored the text from "inside to outside" (in Unruh, 2006:67) and he felt this provided him a greater awareness of what the playwright was intending to communicate. Koltai examines the text in order to create a metaphor that expresses the text's intentions. He aims to 'bring to life' the text as interpreted by the director.

King also studies the text as it provides him with the clues for his design. The genre, however, often influences how he approaches his designs. In his three designs it was evident that the genre played an important part in his interpretation of the text and his creation of the design. In *Oleanna,* King chose to use a box set that provided the performers with a small claustrophobic environment to perform that suited the play's mood. Stead's text for *Aladdin* gave King the opportunity to design a number of exciting scenes and as spectators normally assume pantomimes have multiple scenes and lavish settings, King's design incorporated many of these different aspects. For *The Wizard of Oz,* Stead and King analysed the text and retained the important elements of the storyline in order to accommodate the limitations imposed by the venue. As it was a musical from a children's story, King used a cartoon-like style for his design, which included a blend of bold primary and secondary colours. In addition to exploring the dramatic genres of the texts, King incorporates many different iconic symbols into his designs that assist the spectator in identifying visually the location, mood, social status, and atmosphere of the production.

As a production is a collaborative effort amongst many people, the relationship between the designer and the other members of the production team was examined. It was found

that the director plays a critical role in guiding and selecting the production concept to which the designer has to respond. All three international designers acknowledged the important role the director plays in assisting them in formulating their designs. In examining the KickstArt Theatre Company, it was found that the relationship between King and Stead is collaborative and they are able to combine their creative talents.

In examining the three international designers' and King's design processes it was found that South Africa has a scenic designer whose designs are comparable to the work being done in other Western Countries. In addition to King, South Africa has many other talented scenic designers who include Andrew Botha, Dicky Longhurst and Sarah Roberts who could be studied, in the future, to ascertain their influence on scenic design in South Africa. King continues to work in Durban and has recently designed the musical *Cabaret* (2011), which had a successful tour to Johannesburg and Cape Town in 2012 and the drama *Red* (2012). At the end of the same year KickstArt is presenting Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* at the Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre (KickstArt, 2012: Internet)

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Appendix A

Comparison Table of the three venues

		Drama Theatre	Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre	Seabrooke's Theatre
Proscenium Arch Dimensions	Width	15 metres	12 metres	± 7.3 metres to a maximum 9.6 metres
	Height	7 metres	5,45 metres	2.4 metres
Seating Capacity				
Number of seats		464 people	400 people	117 people
Main Stage				
Floor covering		Masonite	Re-paintable black canvas Grey/Black Dance Mats for hire.	Shutterboard
Depth from main curtain to rear wall		20.50 metres	9 metres	3.96 metres
Forestage		4.3 metres	3 metres	1.4 metres
Distance from centre stage (CS) to opposite prompt (OP) side wall		15.40 metres	12.5 metres	5.96 metres
Distance from centre stage (CS) to prompt side (PS) side wall		12.75 metres	12.5 metres	5.96 metres
Orchestra pit		Yes Trapped	Yes Trapped	No
Stage Equipment		No stage lifts, A personnel lift can be added	No stage lifts	No stage lifts
Stage access		Décor Hoist 9 metres x 3 metres maximum capacity 6 tons	Scenic Dock Door OP Accessible via side stage	Double doors front of house PS
Flying Equipment				
No. of Bars		40 single purchase 5 double purchase	7 hand lines 3 winches 4 x 1 ton chain blocks	None

		Drama Theatre	Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre	Seabrooke's Theatre
House Drapes				
Main Tabs	Colour	Orange	Brown	Black
	Control	Electrically controlled	Vertical – line in fly gallery Horizontal – electrically operated from SM desk	Manual on curtain tracking
Other curtains	Black traverse	2 x 18 metres x 9 metres	0.6 metres from cyclorama	2 x 5 metres x 2.4 metres
	Black borders	5 x 18 metres x 3 metres	3 sets	None
	Black legs	10 x 4.4 metres x 9 metres	3 sets	6 x 1.2 metres x 2.4 metres
	Back projection screen	1x 15 metres x 9 metres	None	None

Information on theatre specifications sourced from Jane Cross and Megan Levy (2005) and Tina LeRoux (2008) (Playhouse Drama), Jackie Cunniffe and Mark Kleinert (2009) (Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre) and site visits by Susan Donaldson-Selby to the Seabrooke's Theatre, the Playhouse Drama and the Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre.

Appendix B

Interview Greg King

9 October 2009

Playhouse Workshop

Transcribed and edited by Susan Donaldson-Selby

Donaldson-Selby: What is your background in the theatre?

King: I have grown up with a passion for the theatre, and have been to theatre ever since I was a child. I studied at Maritzburg University [sic] and did an honours degree, specializing in directing and theatre arts, which was my introduction to design and the only real training that I have had.

Donaldson-Selby: What lead you into set design?

King: It came as a result of my years with the Playhouse Puppet Company; I was one of the original members of the group. The idea was for the company to construct all their puppets, props, scenery and so forth. It gave me a chance to dabble in the field on a small scale. I had the advantage of being able to consult the Playhouse resident scenic artists and prop makers and learn from them. I could then go and play, and discover things by myself. It was probably the biggest period in which I learnt the craft. I was also inspired by some of the fantastic designers that worked for NAPAC during the early nineties like Andrew Botha, Ed Haynes, and Hugh Durant.

Donaldson-Selby: From the Playhouse you then moved to the KwaSuka.

King: Yes, I had started a company called KickstArt, which at the time was just a banner under which I was producing shows. I got into this by default. I was expecting to cut it as an actor and I realized opportunities were getting more and more [sic] scarce. Other people, as well as my friends, were in the same position and we got together and began producing shows in order to make-work for ourselves. So, I started directing and producing as a means to an end. The next step was the KwaSuka theatre because it

gave us a home base in which we could do the work, which we wanted to do when we wanted to do it.

Donaldson-Selby: How long were you at the KwaSuka?

King: I signed, took over the lease in 2003, and was there for about three years. I had done a few productions there before I became responsible for the building.

Donaldson-Selby: So you started the KickstArt Company, who are now the managers of the company?

King: Steven Stead and I run it together. He is the executive director and I spend most of my time designing and in the workshop. He does all the admin [sic] and directs.

Donaldson-Selby: When you begin a design, how do you approach it?

King: The starting point is always the script. I try and find all the clues in the text. Then, in very close consultation with the director, I start to evolve a concept. My experience started with me being both a director and a designer. I used to have a conversation with myself in my head about the design. It was quite a leap to discover, once I started working with a director that the design required close discussion with the director, especially for the bigger and more complex shows. If the design is anything beyond a unit set I have found the level of detail required, from the practicality of rehearsals, the cast's preparation, and the move into the theatre, constantly surprises me. I am constantly tripped up with questions that I hadn't thought of from people, usually the director.

Donaldson-Selby: So you believe in a good collaborative approach between you and the director.

King: It is essential.

Donaldson-Selby: You and Steven Stead have worked on a number of productions do you have a good working relationship with him.

King: Yes

Donaldson-Selby: Have you worked with other directors?

King: I haven't, well not many, since we formed KickstArt we are both committed to making the work together. If there were an opportunity, I would certainly work with another director.

Donaldson-Selby: Do you find it easier if you are the director and the designer?

King: In ways it is certainly easier because changing your mind is also easier. Invariably Steven and I discuss ideas and we agree on how we are going to do it. However, I often discover a better way, quicker way, easier way of doing things that changes the concept slightly. This can cause friction, as I am no longer going with the game plan. When I am directing and designing myself, I am able to solve these issues. I think what is important about a director and designer relationship is that the work is ultimately taken further, because you have two creative minds working together.

Donaldson-Selby: You have designed for a number of different genres – farce, pantomime, musical – do you find you approach them differently or in a similar way?

King: Yes. It comes down to style. Again, I always go back to the script. The style of a piece determines the style of the design. Most of our work is divided into children's theatre and adult shows and the approaches are very different.

Donaldson-Selby: You normally work in a very realist style.

King: Yes I do.

Donaldson-Selby: Have you ever done anything 'non-realist'?

King: There have been one or two smaller shows for KickstArt that haven't been realistic.

Donaldson-Selby: Is there any reason why you have chosen the realist approach.

King: I think it comes down to our choice of plays. Most require a naturalist set and so that's the route I take. However, for the show *Laughing Wild*, which is a series of monologues inter spliced with dream situations, we went with a very surreal look that was formed by the characters experiences in the script.

Donaldson-Selby: KickstArt have produced a number of productions for children.

King: The children's productions are largely influenced by the fact that I have a passion for cartooning and illustrating. I lean towards a very bold illustrative two-dimensional feel in my work. I try to create a great big living cartoon.

Donaldson-Selby: You have designed for a number of venues; does the venue affect your design?

King: Yes. I found the KwaSuka an excellent learning ground, training space because; being an old T-shaped church it wasn't designed as a theatre and had lots of obvious limitations. What became exciting, as we did a new project, was finding ways of working around its limitations; towards the end, we were doing productions in thrust. We even turned the theatre into a cabaret venue by creating a stage in the wings of the theatre and by putting chairs and tables on the stage. The theatre provided all the needs and it became part of the game, for me, to create a design that took what the space afforded much further. It had only seven metres squared of working space and that was extremely tight, but people used to be amazed at how much we managed to fit in.

Donaldson-Selby: You have worked in the Seabrooke's Theatre, what do you think of this venue?

King: Seabrooke's is a very difficult space to work in because first of all there is no space. The theatre has been built into a basement and the ceiling is just too low to actually be a successful auditorium, you also have extreme sightlines.

Donaldson-Selby: You designed *Oleanna* for this theatre.

King: We choose our theatres based on the play that we are doing. We felt *Oleanna* needed an extremely intimate space and therefore Seabrooke was a good option. The play was a two hander, with a small cast, so I was able to create a very claustrophobic little office set in the available stage space and the actors were able to operate quite comfortably within the space.

Donaldson-Selby: The *Oleanna* set design was realist, what were your motivations for this design.

King: The script only requires a door, a desk, and a chair. It is only because, I like to think, we have built up an expectation of our KickstArt work, and that design has become a prominent feature in our productions. This is why I was prompted to take and fully realize the office space. It could quite successfully have worked without all the trimmings and when we took it to Hilton, we just took the furniture and did it on an open stage.

Donaldson-Selby: Can you comment on your design for *The Wizard of Oz* in the Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre?

King: The Sneddon, although it is a lovely space to work in, presented all sorts of challenges for a full scale musical like *The Wizard of Oz* that is packed with special effects and technical requirements. Our starting point was to sit down with the script and try and simplify, wherever possible, what was expected from the text. All the flying was basically cut and replaced with puppet effects. We had the Wicked Witch of the West flying across the auditorium on a pendulum motion and for safety; we created a sculptured figure as opposed to getting someone to actually do the trick. Flying monkeys are supposed to drop in at odd points in the show; again, we went with dummies for that. Where the story telling allowed we cut the sequence down so we could tell the story as visually and effectively as possible.

Donaldson-Selby: So the venue reflects your choices.

King: Very much so. You think the Sneddon has unlimited potential because you have a fly tower and wing space and coming from the KwaSuka it's a dream. However, there are still only eight fly bars in the venue, well actually seven, we take the front tabs off the tabs bar and use that for a front cloth just because it allows us another fly bar. For a musical, that has ten or twelve different locations the trick was try and work around the few fly bars that we had. In addition, for a show that required loads of trucks coming in and out the theatre has a limited wing space. The show ended up having two-dimensional renderings on flats, because storing cutouts, as apposed to three-dimensional trucks, was often a solution. I also chose to do the whole show with a kind of Dr Seuss feel, as it's a dream world with a slightly surreal quality.

Donaldson-Selby: How did you design Kansas?

King: For the Kansas set we kept the stage as open as possible. I created a ground row with a vanishing point that meant the cornfields stretched as far as the eye could see. There was a tiny little farmhouse to one side of the stage and then because we had painted the floor for all of the Oz scenes we put a floor cloth over the brightly coloured yellow brick road thus creating a very neutral monochromatic space. Kansas was painted in sepia tones, taking the cue from the film that begins in Black and White. The Land of Oz was painted in dazzling Technicolor.

Donaldson-Selby: You designed *Aladdin* at the Playhouse Drama.

King: *Aladdin* was a challenge it was the big show for the end of the year. We had done My Fair Lady at the Playhouse Opera at the end of the previous year but this was KickstArt's first in-association-deal with the Playhouse Company. The idea was to make a big spectacular show that would really blow people away with as many scene changes and as much spectacle as possible. We found as many opportunities to do this, as Steven wrote the script. He added in extra scenes that would not have been found in the original fairytale in order to add variety.

Donaldson-Selby: Is it easier to work with a new script.

King: Yes and no. Working with an existing script is easier because it's often been tried and tested, and fine-tuned. You only discover where the shortcomings in a new script are only when you are doing it. However, you have the freedom to make changes and work around something that's not effective. Writing the pantos [sic], like Steven did with *Aladdin*, allowed him to write in design opportunities that we had discussed and come up with together.

Donaldson-Selby: Which theatre do you prefer to work in?

King: I think that the Drama theatre, just in terms of its facilities, is one of the best theatres in the city. It's also versatile as you can reconfigure the space and change it into a theatre-in-the-round situation. I have never had the opportunity to do so, but it's very exciting that that option exists. There are lots of reasons that I won't go into as to why we choose the Sneddon over the Playhouse venues; it comes down to a lot less bureaucracy and red tape [sic]. The Sneddon has a very efficient, although minimal staff, who get the job done and we really enjoy working with them.

Donaldson-Selby: If you could choose any show to design for what would it be?

King: A couple of years ago I would have said *My Fair Lady*. I saw NAPAC's production in the late eighties designed by Andrew Botha and have many enchanting memories from that production because of his spectacular designs. Therefore, I had always thought my ultimate goal was to design for *My Fair Lady* and my dream came true in 2006. I would love to work on big musicals as they have opportunities for spectacle and scene changes, something I find fascinating. I am invariably the set builder, painter and set dresser, as well as the designer and I tend towards designs that allow me the opportunity to explore creatively, in terms of techniques and working styles. The opportunities are endless.

Donaldson-Selby: The designers here at the Playhouse in the eighties have influenced your designs.

King: Very much so.

Donaldson-Selby: Have any international designers or shows influenced you?

King: Yes, I have seen a couple of things overseas, but not in recent years. I think I am being left behind a little as technology progresses in audiovisual presentation, projection, and screen-printing techniques. My approach is becoming a little dated, I don't know anything about that field, but it also doesn't excite me; to be perfectly honest it feels like a short cut.

Donaldson-Selby: Are you therefore a traditionalist.

King: Pretty traditional, it shows in the kind of plays we choose to produce. We try to find stuff [sic] that is gritty and challenging, intellectually from both the actor's point of view and director's. We do tend to stick to the well-known and tried and tested options. We are traditionalists Steven is too. Our choice of shows is also informed by what we have seen.

Donaldson-Selby: Do you collectively choose the texts?

King: We discuss things ad nauseas; we joke about the fact that no sooner have we finished something, and breathing a sigh of relief, we are already discussing what the next show is going to be or what we will be doing a year down the line. It is very much a constant source of discussion.

Donaldson-Selby: You include puppetry in many of your designs.

King: I have had an interest in puppetry from a young age. When I was in standard four or five I saw touring productions of the Handspring Puppet Company and they have inspired and influenced my journey because they were wonderfully creative. I have therefore dabbled in puppetry since those days and because it is a skill and an interest, it provides great novelty in our shows. Whenever I can, I will use Puppets.

Donaldson-Selby: Thank you for your time.

Appendix C

Interview Steven Stead

25 November 2009

Drama Studio, University of KwaZulu Natal

Transcribed and edited by Susan Donaldson-Selby

Donaldson-Selby: What is your background in the theatre?

Stead: I was taken to the theatre from a year old. I have always been involved in community plays, amateur theatre, children's theatre, and school productions throughout my entire life. I made my professional debut, when I was twelve, playing Christopher Robin in *Winnie the Pooh* at the Alhambra for NAPAC. Every Christmas holiday, over my teens, I worked for NAPAC in a production and earned my own pocket money. I guess I have been doing theatre professionally since I was twelve. I then studied at varsity [sic], UKZN, the then University of Natal. I did an honours degree in Drama and went straight from there into the profession as an actor. I have been working fulltime in the theatre since 1991 and have never stopped.

Donaldson-Selby: What lead you into directing?

Stead: Directing came later. I first started acting but I always had the idea that I wanted to direct and acting was a means towards getting there. I believe that being able to understand something from inside out is very helpful and knowing something of the actors craft, movement and voice, I am able to help actors so much more than a director who is purely academic and doesn't know it from the skin, from inside the skin. I made a decision to start directing in my late twenties. I had enough of being directed by people who I didn't think were very good at it. I thought if they can be paid for doing it, I could do a better job. I don't know if I am doing a better job, but I am still working.

Donaldson-Selby: Can you tell me more about the KickstArt Company?

Stead: Greg started it in 2000 when the Arts Councils all closed and there was no professional theatre happening in Durban of any standard. It was generated more from nostalgia than anything else and a desire to recapture some of the magic of what had been around. He started at the KwaSuka theatre with a production of *Popcorn* and it did very well and won a couple of awards. It gave him the courage to do it again and he followed it, only the following year, with *The Importance of being Earnest*. The actors, at that stage, were working profit share, they came together, and any money made at the box office was split amongst them. That has changed; KickstArt has taken on a completely different life of its own. We now have augmented funding from the National Arts Council, who gives us a small grant, which is very helpful. Our shows have got bigger and bigger and we have moved from a hundred seater venue like the KwaSuka to the Drama, four hundred to five hundred, or even the Opera's one thousand seater, which definitely allows you more economic freedom, more bums on seats [sic].

Donaldson-Selby: How do you approach a production and formulate your director's concept?

Stead: My approach to a production is always primarily through the text. Directing is story telling and my job is to tell the story to an audience, who have never heard the story before. Every marker along the line whether it is visual, physical, or psychological needs to be in place. My departure point is always the hard copy of the text or score if it is an opera or a musical. I look for what the writer is trying to communicate in a broad picture and then from scene-to-scene and moment-to-moment. It really doesn't matter if I am doing *La Boheme* or *Oleanna* it is exactly the same process of dissection from moment-to-moment. Choosing a concept for a production on is also another way in. Once you have chosen the big picture, you begin working with your designer such as saying 'I would like to do *Rigoletta*, and lets set it in Zanzibar at the turn of the century so that we have a bit of colonial colour coming in'. Whatever decision you decide to make, it is secondary to the work from the text. You can't take a conceptual choice until you have analysed what the play piece is about.

Donaldson-Selby: Is it a collaborative approach between you and the designer?

Stead: It is a very collaborative approach between the designer and the director; in our case, we have the luxury of living together, which means that at any given moment we can be discussing work. It doesn't feel arduous at all and is really pleasant. I tend to be quite prescriptive in what I need in terms of functionality, which is not something Greg is used to doing. He will often do stuff [sic] that is decorative rather than practical like give me doors in the wrong place, or windows in the wrong place. I have now learnt I have to be extremely specific. Going back to the text, if the text requires someone entering from a bedroom window on the left the bedroom window must be on the left. I am kind [sic]of dictatorial from that point of view but he is so malleable and fluid, it is a very nice exchange, it becomes mutual. In terms of the overall feel/look of something I always defer to him because although I may have a pretty good idea he can come along and make you realize he had a better one. Making models is critical and it is something he didn't start off doing. He would always just build but in order for me to be able to plan as director and also for him to plan the structure, especially the bigger the show, the model has become more important. The model has become a very integral part of my rehearsal process. We are rehearsing *Peter Pan* now and I have the model in the rehearsal room. I haul the model out everyday and I keep referring to the three dimensional model. We also have cutout layouts of the floor plan so the actors have a sense of what I am talking about.

Donaldson-Selby: Greg King and you have worked on a number of productions together how have you found this working relationship.

Stead: Our working relationship is extremely pleasant and very functional and I won't work with other directors/designers very easily. It is not just for KickstArt, I have taken Greg to Cape Town to design for operas and to Johannesburg and if I got an opportunity and was offered a job in London, I would ask if I could bring my designer with me. I really trust his work, mostly because it is not limited to a specific style. He is capable of doing a wide range of design styles. The one style we haven't really explored yet is abstract, and certainly, we could, if we did opera.

Donaldson-Selby: You have directed for drama, farce, musical and pantomime, which do you prefer and why?

Stead: I have directed opera, musical, pantomime, farce and drama. I love all of the art forms. I don't really have a favourite it depends on what we are doing at the time to which one I love most. I have a passion for opera so that is the thing I enjoy the most. I like doing the archaeology of it blowing the dust off it to try to find what is the makes the characters tick from moment to moment. I also love complicated sophisticated dramas like *Oleanna* where you are working with an incredibly difficult text and trying to make sense of it from moment-to-moment, I love the challenge.

Donaldson-Selby: Do you find you directing styles change when you direct for a musical, drama, or pantomime?

Stead: Of course my directing styles change between genres I don't think my approach changes it is still back to the text back to the moment-to-moment story telling. I tend to be more analytical and more academic when I am directing a play than when I am directing *Cinderella* but ultimately any directorial choice comes down to timings and rhythms. No. I suppose I don't change very much I am still keen to sculpt the moment-to-moment transitions whether it is a Buttons and Cinders pantomime scene or whether it's *Oleanna*. Maybe my moods change more than my style.

Donaldson-Selby: Does the venue effect your choice of production and why.

Stead: The venue doesn't affect the choice of the production. It is quite the opposite; the choice of the production affects what venue we use. Therefore, when we decide to do a production like *Oleanna* I am not going to take it to the opera theatre. We will choose a theatre that is appropriate for the piece. Occasionally a situation will arise such as the Sneddon calling an offering a three-week slot. Then the venue is going to play a part in our choice. We decided to do *Little Shop of Horrors* because doing anything smaller than a mini musical in the Sneddon theatre is a bit crazy. Although we did *Shirley Valentine* but it wasn't an ideal situation. The size of the auditorium is directly proportional to the size of the show you are going to be producing because if you can't get enough people to pay for tickets. You can't pay the salaries for a large cast and/or enormously elaborate set and any of the other things. A small theatre allows you to do intimate pieces, two actors and you can get thirty people a night or five, you have to do the ratio planning in your budgets.

Donaldson-Selby: Which theatres in Durban do you enjoy working in the most and why?

Stead: The theatre I like most in Durban, ironically I love the Sneddon. I find it hospitable for the audience and for the actors. It is accessible, comfortable, and convenient all things you have to think about as a producer, not as a director, when you are planning productions; where you are expecting people to bring families and you want them to have a good time and come back again. As a director, I find the theatre wonderfully intimate and at the same time, it has a fair amount of space. I am happy working at the Sneddon. I love the Square Space Theatre although I have not worked there. Greg did *Importance of Being Earnest* and *Keeley and Du.* I wish that we could work in that space but its accessibility and comfort is a problem because it doesn't have a functional bar, parking, signage or easy access but the space itself, for a director, is just fabulous with its three quarter thrust.

Donaldson-Selby: There are not many other thrust theatres.

Stead: No. Everything else is pros arch. I love the KwaSuka for its flexibility. When we did *Dangerous Liaisons,* we could put into a three quarter thrust. The Loft was the only other space that afforded that configuration but now the Playhouse has locked those seats down and won't move them.

Donaldson-Selby: If you had a choice what show would you like to direct most?

Stead: I have done so many things I would like to do *Boston Marriage* and *Peter Pan,* I am just loving it. I would like to do some opera's like Mozart's Cosi *fan Tutte* with Greg, as it is one of my most favourite pieces. I would like to do some Shakespeare such as *Midsummer's Night Dream.*

Donaldson-Selby: Thank you for your time

Appendix D

List of theatre awards won by the KickstArt Company.
Information obtained from (KickstArt, 2011)

Boston Marriage
Grahamstown Festival 2010

- Winner of a prestigious **Standard Bank Ovation Award** for excellence – Grahamstown Festival 2010

Little Shop of Horrors
Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre 2009

- **Best Sound Design** – Durban Theatre Awards 2009: *Megan Levy*
- **Best Set Design** – Durban Theatre Awards 2009: *Greg King*
- **Best Costume Design** – Durban Theatre Awards 2009: *Terrence Bray*
- **Best Director of Musical** – Durban Theatre Awards 2009: *Steven Stead*
- **Best Choreography** – Durban Theatre Awards 2009: *Janine Bennewith*
- **Best Actress in a Musical** – Durban Theatre Awards 2009: *Lisa Bobbert*
- **Best Actor in a Musical** – Durban Theatre Awards 2009: *Bryan Hiles*
- **Best Musical Production 2009** – Durban Theatre Awards 2009

W;t
Playhouse Loft Theatre/Rhodes Box Grahamstown 2009

- **Best Poster Design** – Durban Theatre Awards 2009: *Shirley Berko*
- **Best Lighting Design** – Durban Theatre Awards 2009: *Tina le Roux*
- **Best Supporting Actress** – Durban Theatre Awards 2009: *Olivia Borgen*
- **Best Actress** – Durban Theatre Awards 2009: *Clare Mortimer*
- **Best Director of Drama** – Durban Theatre Awards 2009: *Steven Stead*
- **Best Drama Production 2009** – Durban Theatre Awards 2009

Oleanna
Seabrooke Theatre 2008

- **Best Actor** – Durban Theatre Awards 2008: *Tim Wells*

Shirley Valentine
Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre 2008

- **Best Drama Production** – Durban Theatre Awards 2008
- **Best Director** – Durban Theatre Awards 2008: *Steven Stead*
- **Best Actress** – Durban Theatre Awards 2008: *Lisa Bobbert*
- **Best Actress in a Comedy** – Durban Theatre Awards 2008: *Lisa Bobbert*

The Wizard of Oz
Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre 2008

- **Best Musical Production** – Durban Theatre Awards 2008
- **Best Director of Musical Theatre** – Durban Theatre Awards 2008: *Steven Stead*
- **Best Musical Direction** – Durban Theatre Awards 2008: *Evan Roberts*
- **Best Choreography** – Durban Theatre Awards 2008: *Janine Bennewith*
- **Best Set Design** – Durban Theatre Awards 2008: *Greg King*
- **Best Lighting Design** – Durban Theatre Awards 2008: *Tina le Roux*
- **Best Actor in Musical Theatre** – Durban Theatre Awards 2008: *Peter Court*
- **Best Supporting Actress in Musical Theatre** – Durban Theatre Awards 2008: *Clare Mortimer*
- **Best Supporting Actor in Musical Theatre**– Durban Theatre Awards 2008: *Rowan Bartlett*
- **Best Poster Design** – Durban Theatre Awards 2008: *Shirley Berko*

Cinderella
Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre 2008

- **Best Supporting Actress Children's Theatre** – Durban Theatre Awards 2009: *Shelley McLean*
- **Best Actress Children's Theatre** – Durban Theatre Awards 2009: *Janna Ramos-Violante*
- **Best Actor Children's Theatre** – Durban Theatre Awards 2009: *Bryan Hiles*
- **Best Director Children's Theatre** – Durban Theatre Awards 2009: *Steven Stead*
- **Best Children's Theatre Production 2009** – Durban Theatre Awards 2009

The Road to Mecca
Seabrooke Theatre 2007

- **Best Actress** – Durban Theatre Awards 2007: *Alison Cassells*
- **Best Supporting Actor** – Durban Theatre Awards 2007: *Thomie Holtzhausen*
- **Best Director** – Fools' Awards 2008: *Steven Stead*

The Jungle Book
The Playhouse Opera 2007

- **Best Director** – Durban Theatre Awards 2007: *Steven Stead*
- **Best Actor – Children's Theatre** – Durban Theatre Awards 2007: *Mike Gritten*

The Mystery of Irma Vep
Seabrooke Theatre 2007

- **Best Drama Production** – Durban Theatre Awards 2007
- **Best Director** – Durban Theatre Awards 2007: *Greg King*
- **Best Actor** – Durban Theatre Awards 2007: *Steven Stead and Mike Gritten*
- **Best Set Design** – Durban Theatre Awards 2007: *Greg King*
- **Best Production** – Fools' Awards 2008

Aladdin
The Playhouse Drama 2007

- **Best Children's Production** – Fools' Awards 2008
- **Best New Script** – Fools' Awards 2008: *Steven Stead*
- **Best Actress** – Fools' Awards 2008: *Ntando Cele*
- **Best Actor** – Fools' Awards 2008: *Bryan Hiles*
- **Best Costume Design** – Fools' Awards 2008: *Peter Court and Terrence Bray*
- **Best Set Design** – Fools' Awards 2008: *Greg King*

Winnie the Pooh
The Playhouse Opera 2006

- **Best Production – Children's Theatre** – Durban Theatre Awards 2006
- **Best Director – Children's Theatre** – Durban Theatre Awards 2006: *Steven Stead*
- **Best Lighting Design** – Durban Theatre Awards 2006: *Mike Broderick*
- **Best Children's Production** – Fools' Awards 2007

Sleeping Beauty
Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre 2006

- **Best Children's Theatre Production** – Durban Theatre Awards 2007
- **Best Actress – Children's Theatre** – Durban Theatre Awards 2007: *Clare Mortimer*

Art
KwaSuka Theatre 2005

- **Best Actor** – Durban Theatre Awards 2005: *Michael Gritten*

Boston Marriage
KwaSuka Theatre 2005

- **Best Drama Production** – Durban Theatre Awards 2005
- **Best Director** – Durban Theatre Awards 2005: *Steven Stead*
- **Best Actress** – Durban Theatre Awards 2005: *Clare Mortimer*
- **Best Supporting Actress** – Durban Theatre Awards 2005: *Janna Ramos Violante*
- **Best Set Design** – Durban Theatre Awards 2005: *Greg King*
- **Best Actress** – Fools' Awards 2006: *Clare Mortimer*

Snow White and the Seven Dwarves
KwaSuka Theatre 2005

- **Best Children's Theatre Production** – Durban Theatre Awards 2006
- **Best Actress Children's Theatre** – Durban Theatre Awards 2006: *Carol Trench*

- **Best Actor Children's Theatre** – Durban Theatre Awards 2006: *Darren King*
- **Best Children's Production** – Fools' Awards 2006

Dracula
KwaSuka Theatre 2005

- **Best Director** – Fools' Awards 2006: *Steven Stead*
- **Best Actor** – Fools' Awards 2006: *Neil Coppen*
- **Best Set Design** – Fools' Awards 2006: *Greg King*
- **Best Costume Design** – Fools' Awards 2006: *Terrence Bray*

Laughing Wild
KwaSuka Theatre 2004

- **Best Actress in a Comedy** – Durban Theatre Awards 2004: *Lisa Bobbert*
- **Best Actor in a Comedy** – Durban Theatre Awards 2004: *Darren King*

Dangerous Liaisons
KwaSuka Theatre 2004

- **Best Set Design** – Durban Theatre Awards 2004: *Greg King*
- **Best Lighting** – Design Durban Theatre Awards 2004: *Mike Broderick*
- **Best Costume Design** – Durban Theatre Awards 2004: *Terrence Bray*
- **Best Actress** – Fools' Awards 2005: *Clare Mortimer*
- **Best Set Design** – Fools' Awards 2005: *Greg King*
- **Best Costume Design** – Fools' Awards 2005: *Terrence Bray*

Cinderella
KwaSuka Theatre 2004

- **Best Children's Theatre Production** – Durban Theatre Awards 2005
- **Best Director – Children's Theatre** – Durban Theatre Awards 2005: *Steven Stead*
- **Best Actress in Children's Theatre** – Durban Theatre Awards 2005: *Belinda Henwood*
- **Best Actor in Children's Theatre** – Durban Theatre Awards 2005: *Darren King and Thomie Holtzhausen*
- **Best Breakthrough Actor** – Fools' Awards 2006: *Bryan Hiles*

The Memory of Water
KwaSuka Theatre 2003

- **Best Drama Production** – Durban Theatre Awards 2003
- **Best Director** – Durban Theatre Awards 2003: *Greg King*
- **Best Actress** – Durban Theatre Awards 2003: *Clare Mortimer*
- **Best Lighting Design** – Durban Theatre Awards 2003: *Mike Broderick*
- **Best Actress** – Fools' Awards 2003: *Clare Mortimer*

Run to Ground
KwaSuka Theatre 2003

- **Best Set Design** – Fools' Awards 2004: *Greg King*

Proof
KwaSuka Theatre 2003

- **Best Drama Production** – Durban Theatre Awards 2004
- **Best Director** – Durban Theatre Awards 2004: *Greg King*
- **Best Actor** – Durban Theatre Awards 2004: *Neil Coppen*
- **Best Actress** – Durban Theatre Awards 2004: *Olivia Borgen*
- **Best Supporting Actress** – Durban Theatre Awards 2004: *Clare Mortimer*
- **Best Actor** – Fools' Awards 2004: *Neil Coppen*

Table Manners
KwaSuka Theatre 2003

- **Best New South African Script** – Durban Theatre Awards 2004

Keely and Du
Square Space Theatre 2002

- **Best Production** – Durban Vita Awards 2002
- **Best Actress** – Durban Vita Awards 2002: *Vera Clare*
- **Best New Actress** – Durban Vita Awards 2002: *Olivia Borgen*

Private Lives
Hilton College Theatre 2002

- **Best Costume Design** – Durban Theatre Awards 2003: *Andrew Verster*
- **Best Supporting Actor** – Durban Theatre Awards 2003: *Kevin Turner*
- **Best Costume Design** – Fools' Awards 2003: *Andrew Verster*
- **Best Set Design** – Fools' Awards 2003: *Greg King*

Steel Magnolias
KwaSuka Theatre 2002

- **Best Supporting Actress** – Durban Theatre Awards 2003: *Vera Clare*
- **Best Production** – Fools' Awards 2003
- **Best Director** – Fools' Awards 2003: *Greg King*
- **Best Actress** – Fools' Awards 2003: *Kate Bruce*

The Importance of Being Earnest
Square Space Theatre 2001

- **Best Actress in a Comedy** – Durban Vita Awards 2002: *Vera Clare*
- **Best Supporting Actress** – Durban Vita Awards 2002: *Alison Cassells*

Popcorn
KwaSuka Theatre 2000

- **Best Actor** – Durban Vita Award 2001: *Michael Gritten*
- **Best Set and Costume Design** – Durban Vita Award 2001: *Greg King*

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KickstArt. 2011. *Welcome to KickstArt making the Ordinary Extraordinary*. Available at: http://www.kickstart-theatre.co.za/index.html. [Accessed 15 June 2011].

Appendix D

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Letter of Consent

To Greg King

I, Susan Donaldson-Selby, am currently registered for my Masters Drama and Performance Studies at the University of KwaZulu Natal. I have been lecturing set design for the last nineteen years at the Durban University of Technology and have designed sets for a number of professional and student productions. I am therefore familiar with the design processes and practical techniques required by a designer to create a set design. However, in researching scenography for my dissertation I realized that there are numerous sources available on American and British set designers but there is limited material on South Africa designers. Therefore I believe it is important to document King's work.

The title of my dissertation is

> The craft of scenic illusion: an investigation into how theatre space and dramatic genre influence the scenographic process, with specific reference to Greg King's set designs for *Aladdin* (2007), *Oleanna* (2008) and *The Wizard of Oz* (2008).

Please may I request your voluntary participation in an interview/s? The information obtained will be strictly for the purposes of the dissertation. You are at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time.

Signature of Participant

S Donaldson-Selby

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Professor M McMurtry
Supervisor
Department Drama and Performance Studies

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Letter of Consent

To Steven Stead

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