Ubu Roi: A Directorial Adventure

by

Ryan Gladstone

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Abstract

This thesis explores the process undertaken and the challenges encountered in staging Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi* as part of the UBC Department of Theatre and Film's season at the Frederic Wood Theatre, March 20 to April 5, 2014. As outlined in the following pages, I attempted to find a way to honor the controversy wrought by the original production in 1896 in a theatrical ecology where shocking an audience is extremely challenging. By drawing inspiration from *Ubu's* Paris premiere and also from the plays origins in a collective schoolboy imagination, I created a framework within which we presented our interpretation of Jarry's classic play.
Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Ryan Gladstone.
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Finally, none of this would have been possible without the love, kindness and support of my wife, Michelle. Thank you.
Introduction

*Ubu Roi* written by Alfred Jarry and translated by Barbara Wright ran March 20 to April 5 in the Frederic Wood Theatre at UBC. The cast featured Ghazal Azarbad, Sarah Canero, Morgan Churla, Lara Deglan, Catharine Fergusson, Sarah Harrison, Allyce Kranabetter, Jenna Mairs, Kat McLaughlin, Nicole Sekiya, Bethany Stanley, Cassandra Szabo, Naomi Vogt, Charlotte Wright, Natasha Zacher, and Mercedes de la Zerda. Keith Smith, the technical director for the production, made a brief appearance at the end of the curtain call as a Police Officer who chases the girls offstage.

The design team is as follows: the sets were designed by Sarah Melo, the lighting was designed by Chengyan Boon, the costumes were designed by Amelia Ross and the sound design was created by Kate De Lorme. Diane Chu was the stage manager, Christian Lovell was the costume assistant stage manager, and Patricia Jansen was the props assistant stage manager. Patricia replaced Kiara Lawson part way through rehearsals for medical reasons.

This document is structured in two parts: analysis of the play and a journal documenting the rehearsal process, followed by brief concluding thoughts.
Chapter One: Directorial Analysis

1. *INITIAL RESPONSE TO THE PLAY*

It has been many years since my first reading of this play. I do, however, remember some of the things that drew me to it initially. I was drawn to the visual and physical qualities of the play. I had read in the introduction of my copy that *Ubu* was originally performed by marionettes. I love puppet shows, and am constantly amazed at the verisimilitude we can generate by drawing performance inspiration from puppets or cartoons, such as the genius work of the original Looney Tunes creators Chuck Jones, Tex Avery, Bob Clampett, Carl Stalling and others. I loved that it included stage directions such as, “He starts tearing her to pieces.” (Connolly, 69) I loved imagining how one would stage that. I loved how it seemed so colourful, so loud, so obnoxious, so grandiose, so silly and so bold. I was excited by the fact that riots followed its first performance. I loved that a whole movement in theatre was inspired by such an adolescent work of art, albeit most of its disciples came 30 years after the fact.

As a history nerd, I was also drawn to the fact that it held a dubious but conspicuous place in theatre history. At the same time it seemed shockingly modern. It is one of the things I find fascinating about that era, that there are such modern events happening in the world - atoms are observed, motion pictures are invented, and *Ubu Roi* is written - while at the same time society as a whole seems mired in stuffy antiquity. *Ubu* was produced for the first time the same year as Chekhov's *The Seagull*, which is being directed by my fellow MFA applicant, both were protesting the theatre of the day, but in precisely opposite ways. There is a timelessness to Jarry’s work that I envy, and I wanted to take up that challenge to produce a version of this play that was as powerful to the world today as it was 120 years ago.
As an artist who creates almost exclusively original works, I had put the idea of producing *Ubu* on the shelf, until an opportunity presented itself.

2. **TYPE OF GENRE OF PLAY**

Clearly, when it was first produced it defied conventions and was unclassifiable. I am not a big believer in there being any benefit to categorizing art. I believe even less in developing artistic choices based on those categories. Categories can describe, but I do not believe that it should prescribe how any one piece of art is interpreted. Although, it is an interesting exercise to try and identify where *Ubu* fits, I believe there are a few answers.

First and foremost it is a comedy. The main purpose of the play is to make people laugh. In a similar technique to what I use in writing history plays, Jarry seems to be disarming the audience with comedy, while laying down the foundations of deeper meaning underneath the laughter. As part of his pre-show speech as documented in his Selected Works he states,

...my only excuse for speaking to you now is that I am afraid that their generosity found Ubu’s belly fat far more swollen with satirical symbols than we have really been able to stuff it with for this evening’s entertainment. (30)

In this statement, Jarry clearly claims that he has larger messages in his play, but that the audience is not required to absorb them consciously, if they prefer, they can sit back, relax, and enjoy the play.

Conversely to the comic nature of the play, it has all the makings of a tragedy, a hero with a tragic flaw, who acts, and suffers as a result of his action. The basic plot is a clear imitation of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*.

- Hero endowed with new honors by the King.
- Hero driven to murder the King by his wife.
• Hero becomes King.
• Hero betrays his closest advisor (Bordure/Banquo)
• Hero becomes tyrannical leader.
• The slain King's son escapes and raises a foreign army to defeat the hero.

The only thing missing is a certain trio of witches. *Macbeth* being one of the classic examples of a tragedy, it is hard to argue that Ubu is not, at least structurally, akin. However, when the Ubs escape on a boat at the end, it clearly defies the forms of tragedy by letting them get away with their terrible deeds. It is a fascinating choice; imagine how the power of *Macbeth* would be altered if he escaped at the end and ran away to Ireland.

I was once told that in comedy no one gets hurt. Yes, they can die, but they get up again after, or if someone does actually die, we don’t see the funeral. *Ubu* is full of horrible acts, where people seem to suffer, but in the end, no one is really put out by it. The rightful heir ends up on the throne, the world order is re-set at the end of the play, and Ubu himself sails off to try his hand at another adventure. In juxtaposition to this, the world, and specifically the theatre world, was never the same after Ubu arrived with that first utterance of *Merdre*.

I think part of the trick to performing this play is to allow the comedic aspects to free one to give full reign to the violent and dark aspects. We must disarm the audience by letting them laugh, but we use their subdued defenses to challenge their preconceptions of theatre and society. It must be funny, but only so that can make it more brutal and shocking.

There are some sub-categories of comedy at play.

1. Farce. The situations and characters are so ridiculous that it cannot be argued that the audience is meant to believe the situations or the actions of the protagonists. In order to use these qualities of Ubu to their utmost, I will need to stage the action as fast-paced as possible, and to ask the actors to react as truthfully as possible to the ridiculous aspects of the plot.
2. Satire. As mentioned above, it is a satire of both 19th century French society and 19th century French theatre. Indeed, the original form of Ubu was as a classroom joke mocking their professor, the primal satire. In this version I hope to steer away from direct societal references, and to make our Ubu able to be viewed as universal or as Jarry put it, mythical - a comedy about the brutality of all humanity. A satire on ourselves.

3. STYLE

It is a challenging task to describe the style of Ubu Roi for it has been manifested in every theatrical style possible. The only possible common denominator of every production I have read about is that they were absurd. The school of theatrical absurdism was first coined in the 1960's by theatre critic Martin Esslin, therefore it is pointless to discuss how Jarry's play was created within these parameters. However, what is of use is to identify the style in which I hope to bring Jarry's play to life and where it contrasts with the original style of Jarry's 1896 production, and where they are the same.

Differences

- Naturalism of performance
  - Jarry - He wanted the actors to be inhuman, forcing Gemier, the actor who portrayed Ubu to wear a full head mask which concealed any nuance of naturalistic acting. He also wanted the performers to embody a puppet-like physicality so that they were not seen as human. “A few actors have agreed to lose their own personalities during two consecutive evenings by performing with masks over their faces so that they can mirror the mind and soul of the man-sized marionettes that you are about to see.” (Selected, 30)
  - Our version – I want to create an undercurrent of naturalism in our performance style, so that the schoolgirls are convincingly real, going
through natural, lifelike feelings and events. The world of the Ubs will mirror more closely the style that Jarry intended, but at all times I want to see the schoolgirl performers underneath the characters. (I liken this performance style to the Muppets. Fozzy may be playing Long John Silver, but we always know that it is Fozzy.)

• Relationship to the audience
  o Jarry – He wanted the play to act as a mirror to the audience so that they saw themselves up on the stage, or at least the worst version of themselves. That was where the interaction between stage and seats ended, however.
  o Our version – I want the schoolgirls to have an intimate relationship to the audience. I am going to attempt to make the audience feel a kinship with the schoolgirls. I want the audience to like some of them, to hate some, and to feel pity for some.

Similarities

• Presentational
  o I believe this is an element of performance style that is similar between our two takes.

• Home made
  o In Jarry’s opening night speech, he apologized for not having time enough to prepare better costumes and props. He said that they had been up all night painting the backdrop, and excuses thecrudity of the props saying, “you will see leading characters such as Ubu and the Czar talking to each other while prancing around on their cardboard horses (which, incidentally, we have been up all night painting).” (Selected, 30) We will recreate this sensation of do-it-yourself-ness.

• Misbehavior
  o This is something that I hope to achieve with our production that is only mirrored in the original Jarry production with the Morin brothers back in his school days. I hope to have the feeling that the
girls are doing something wrong, that they could be caught at any moment. It will increase the stakes, and generate a sense of danger throughout the play.

Jarry was heavily influenced by the Guignols, or traditional puppet shows that were performed in France since the late 1700’s.

In the traditional Guignol, plot is often anecdotal, psychology is rudimentary in the extreme, tending to stylization and to caricature, whilst the action is unbounded by limitations of time, space, and logic. (Beaumont, 31)

It is clear how *Ubu* is inspired by these characteristics, not only in these elements, but also in the madcap, fast-paced mayhem that the show engenders.

**Figure 1.1**  Ubu riding the replacement phynancial horse. (From left to right: Cassandra Szabo as the horse, Naomi Vogt as Père Ubu, Morgan Churla as Pile – Photo credit Nancii Bernard)
4. **SPACE**

My production will be in the Frederic Wood Theatre, which is a classic proscenium stage built in the 1960’s. In a way I feel like the theatre is the worst possible fit for *Ubu*, since it is so conventional. The nature of proscenium theatres is to separate the action on stage from the audience, to create nice tidy pictures framed perfectly, which is the exact opposite of the type of theatre that I envision *Ubu* as. I see *Ubu* as an in your face, no fourth-wall, brand of theatre.

In other ways, I feel like the Frederic Wood provides the perfect resistance against which to accomplish this feat. If the audience is already surrounding the playing space like it is in the TELUS Studio, there is no accomplishment, no resistance to including the audience in the action. With a proscenium stage, I have to find ways to burst the action through the fourth wall, find ways to have the audience feel like the story is being told for them directly, perhaps even to have them feel unsafe in their seats, that this play might sweep them up and not let them go back to their safe lives.

5. **AUDIENCE**

I believe that UBC audiences are primarily made of three groups.

- First, what we theatre practitioners call a traditional audience, or somewhat jokingly, *the grey-hairs*, although it is meant to define a larger type of audience member and not the actual color of their hair. This group is made up of traditional season ticket holders, though they can range vastly in age and hair-colour, and it must be noted that some of our most adventurous patrons are of advanced age. The group I am referring to see our art form as worthwhile and more importantly they purchase the vast majority of tickets at live theatre around the world. Young people will rarely “go to the theatre” unless there is a direct connection to their specific interests, while this
“older” group go as a cultural experience. Their tastes are, of course, varied, but often lean towards conservative, straightforward, traditional theatre.

• Second, university professors and sundry intellectuals. This is a demographic that I have never purposely played to. I imagine they will be interested in the historical relevance of the play, and the fact that it is rarely produced nowadays should draw more of this group from around the cities various institutions.

• Third, students. Young, educated, and presumably much more difficult to shock, in fact, I imagine many are looking for the kind of a thrill we are hoping to provide with our version of Ubu.

The first group has potential to be scandalized by this play, I’m not sure what there is to be done about that, presumably the committee that chose it for the season already considered this likely outcome. I believe I have no choice but to discount them in my preparation – this play is simply not meant for them. The second group will likely find interest in the play due to its historical impact, and the rarity of it being performed. The third group, young students, I think I have to consider my primary audience. I believe all the aspects that I hope to explore are aimed primarily at this demographic. The violence, the dirty jokes, the absurdity and the bursting forth from theatrical norms will, hopefully, excite them.

6. GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES OF PRODUCTION

I have a very limited budget. Apparently I have the ability to borrow from one element to supplement another, but from which, for what? My main desire is to hire my long time collaborator Drew Jurecka to compose music for the play. But I’m not sure that would be possible. I am assigned a student sound designer and that would sort of leave her out of anything to do. Considering the scale of the show itself, namely the number of locations, props and costumes, I am expecting to be stretching my already limited budget to the limit. In this sense, it is a very different situation to what I usually operate in, creating plays with my own company. We also
have limited budgets, but we also have a *whatever it takes to get it done* attitude, which won't be incorporated here. As I have been informed, if the design departments can't accommodate a need, it simply won't get done.

Obviously I am dealing with student actors, but I am actually looking forward to this challenge. I absolutely love the enthusiasm that they bring to the table. Working with students requires teaching alongside directing, and it is possible this could be a challenge given the sheer size of this play, but most of the actors are in their graduating year, and this will be their final production, so hopefully they can rely on all the learning they have done to date, and I can focus on the myriad of other elements.

Another limitation is the fact that we are performing in a proscenium theatre. Also, the typical audiences and how they seem contrary to the expected type who would be excited about this play. It has a three week run, but with only 4 performances per week. A long rehearsal period, though many of the rehearsals are only going to be 4 hours in length, so it could be a challenge to keep enthusiasm high for such a long process.

Another element that I would include in the given circumstances is the era in which this production is taking place. It is being produced in a theatre ecology that encourages risk taking, and breaking down borders. Having lived in Toronto for five years, there was a feeling there that if an art piece was too comprehensible then it mustn't be worth much. *Ubu* was first produced in an era where the agreed upon rules of theatre were steadfast and loath to be challenged, let alone broken. 19th century French theatre featured

“...psychologically plausible characters whose behavior and motivation could be analyzed and explained in terms of normal ‘rational’ criteria; a coherent set of actions constituting the plot of the play which resembled as closely as possible an episode from ‘real life’; and the creation of sets which endeavored to recreate as convincingly as possible the illusion of the world outside the theatre...” (Beaumont, 20)
So that the choices that Jarry made, such as fully masked and puppet-like performers, made up and crude language and extreme violence were met with outrage. It was such a rigid artistic era that a few countries over, in Russia, where Chekhov was creating similarly revolutionary theatre, it was revolutionary because he was trying to make theatre that was more realistic!

7. **PERIOD**

One of my favourite elements to the play that I have discovered since starting work on it is that there is no consensus as to what Period it takes place in at all. When I first read *Ubu*, I imagined that it took place in a sort of rags and dirt and grass huts kind of era, similar to *Waiting for Godot*, not necessarily a real time period.

I began to question this as my research progressed, not based on anything I found, but more on repeated readings of the play, which revealed incongruities inherent in the script: guns and swords, peasants and kings, caves and palaces. As I started talking about the play to people, I always asked what time period they imagined it took place in. I was amazed and thrilled by the variety of answers. A few folks thought it must have a Shakespearean locale or at least flavor, what with the echoes of *Macbeth*. Some imagined it took place in a more contemporary version of Poland, even though when the play was written there hadn't been a King in Poland for 100 years. The lighting designer said he imagined it in that fantastic and brief historical era where guns and swords were of equal worth. One of the actors thought it took place in barbarian times with loincloths and sabre-tooth tigers!

At the premiere in Paris, Jarry made a speech to the audience to instruct them how to receive this strange new kind of work. As part of the speech he declared “And the action, which is about to start, takes place in Poland, that is to say Nowhere.” *(Selected, 31)* I love this. I think as much as anything it has inspired where I want it to take place. I intend to place it in the sort of nebulous realm the play seems to
have been written in, a mythological time and place, rather than a historical one. I want an element of ‘a long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away’. I will need to find ways to bring this world to life. Introduce the audience to it and commit everything about the production to realizing this world.

I feel like this is key to the production, and particularly the design elements. I think we can support this concept by having costumes of various eras and locales. Some soldiers should have WWII helmets, and some should have Mongolian helmets, and a few Roman helmets thrown in as well. The set and props can support this in a similar, haphazard way.

The schoolgirl world is a different story. I want them to be modern, but not necessarily contemporary. I intend to have them exist in a world that could be the 1950s, the 1910s or even 2010, but to avoid declaring it outright. I am hoping to avoid use of phones and modern technology, so that we don’t pigeonhole them as a specific period, for the purpose of letting the audience see the themes presented as more universal or mythical. If we set them in the 1940s, Hitler immediately comes to mind, if it is set today, we might imagine it is a statement about Rob Ford, and this will limit our seeing the parable in its full power.
Figure 1.2  Ubu’s cardboard crown. (Naomi Vogt as Père Ubu. Photo credit - Nancii Bernard)

8. EMPHATIC ELEMENT

I believe the central element to this play is the character of Père Ubu. If the audience does not form a strong attachment to Père Ubu, nothing else will stand. The performance style is not revolutionary, the set and design will be more functional than impressive, the story itself is derivative of Macbeth – only Père Ubu himself can tie all these elements together and bring the audience along for this wild ride.
I believe the challenge for me as director, and the actor playing Ubu, is to evoke in the audience alternating, or simultaneously feelings of fear and pity, revulsion and tenderness. So it is Ubu himself as the prime element, but more specifically his/her relation to the audience. How can we make them feel all of these emotions about the same character? I feel like it is less important to actually believe that Ubu is going through these events in a truthful way, than it is that he makes the audience feel these things in relation to him, or perhaps in relation to the schoolgirl.

The easiest way to achieve making the audience utterly enthralled by Ubu, is to have the schoolgirl performer evolve as the play progresses. If she starts the play as a shy, unwilling girl and develops into a violent, crude, and greed-driven performer, we, the audience, can form attachments and subsequently challenge them. All of those qualities listed above are present in Ubu. He already has a progression from coward, to tyrant, but I think we can make it even stronger in the schoolgirl character.

With absurdist theatre, indeed with comedy of any sort, I believe the biggest challenge is to keep the stakes as high as possible. In Ubu, we must keep them tied in to this lead character. We must keep them wondering how he will continue to change, how he will shock us next. I want to make them love Ubu, and then have him test those associations by having him enact his various atrocities.

Supporting elements are in this order:

- **Language.** The language in Ubu is so unique and strange that it cannot be discounted, and must be embraced and highlighted.
- **Visual elements.** Assuming we can accomplish the planned costume design for the Ubis, and the mishmash of all the other costumes, it will be quite a sight and quite different from anything else I have ever seen on the UBC stage.
- **The sheer chaos of our chosen concept.** Having 16 actors running around the stage, creating the play in front of our eyes, will be a dizzying sensation for any audience member.
9. THEME OR IDEA OF THE PLAY

I see it as a cautionary tale against greed, violence and gluttony. Above, I mentioned that I see it as being in the form of a tragedy, even though it is, at heart, a comedy. In that sense I see Ubu as having these above qualities as his tragic flaws. I want to avoid approaching it in the straightforward sense of having the audience see these negative qualities so plainly. I think the challenge is to make the audience love him, to feel sorry for him while he acts in these aforementioned shameful ways so that the audience is forced to look inside themselves and their own values to see how or why they could ever feel sympathy for such a beast.

Following this train of thought, and inspired by the fact that we are casting 16 women in the play, each of the above qualities can easily be recast as negative qualities of masculinity. While I don’t think the play has ever been intended as anti-male, it seems impossible to deny that this naturally becomes part of the theme when this story is told by a group of women. I think I need not support this idea too heavily or it will overpower the other thematic elements. I want there to be at least partially a sense that it can mean something different to different observers, this is the power of Jarry’s intended universality or mythical quality.

I think in a more ambiguous sense, the theme is incongruity itself, or smashing of expectations. I think my goal is to let the audience create successive sets of expectations and then to break each of those. The result, hopefully, will be that the audience feels unsteady and disoriented. Every time they think they get it, or know what kind of a play they are witnessing, or that they understand the character of Ubu, we surpass or contradict those expectations and smash through their preconceptions. This is tied into what is written above about the audiences’ feelings towards Ubu.

The question of the play in our version is - Can Ubu stop the spiral into chaos? Or will he succumb to his own greed, violence and gluttony?
10. ACTION OF THE PLAY

The Ubu Story

STASIS – It’s a beautiful aspect of this play that the opening stasis of the action lasts exactly four lines. Mère and Père exist together in a forever kind of hell, stuck with each other in a pitiful state and they are passionately hateful towards each other. They are also fallen in that Ubu is the ex-King of Aragon. Mère Ubu seems to have bitter resentment that they no longer have such prominence, and plans to do something about it.

ACT 1

TURNING POINT 1 – P.9

Mère Ubu plants the seed of regicide. Mère Ubu says, “it’s not me you ought to do in, Père Ubu, it’s someone else.” (Wright, 9) After some resistance on the part of Ubu, she eventually gets across her point that she wants Ubu to kill King Venceslas and take his place. It takes the majority of the scene for him to understand her meaning; in fact, his acquiescence isn't actually in the script. There are some sub-turning points.

A) She suggests the regicide.

B) He pleads ignorance.

C) She persists by tempting him with a long coat, umbrella, and sausages.

D) He relents and agrees to the plot.

E) He changes his mind and decides not to do it.

F) By the start of the next scene he has changed course again and has decided to do it! The key to this turning point isn’t even in the text!
TURNING POINT 2 – P.24

**They enlist Bordure as a co-conspirator.** They get rid of Bordure’s compatriots and proposition him to join their conspiracy. He readily accepts. Strangely he seems to have already considered this option. “If it’s a question of killing Venceslas, I’m in, I’m his mortal enemy. And I’ll answer for my men.” (24)

TURNING POINT 3 – P.26

**Opportunity arrives.** Ubu is summoned in front of King Venceslas. Thinking he’s been discovered he tries to implicate Bordure. But the King wanted to thank him for his numerous services and to make him Count of Sandomir. Ubu is unswayed. “Yes, well, King Venceslas, you won’t be any the less slaughtered you know.” (30) He also gets his opportunity since the King invites him to stand next to him at the review the following day.

TURNING POINT 4 – P.34

**Determination.** The conspirators make their plan, and swear upon Mère Ubu to “Kill the King properly.” (35) Up until this moment, it seems quite likely that they wouldn’t carry through.

ACT 2

TURNING POINT 5 – P.38

**Into the Lion’s jaws.** Queen Rosamonde reveals to Venceslas that she fears villainy on the part of Ubu based on a prophetic dream she had. “Haven’t I seen him in a dream, smiting you with the force of his arms and throwing you into the Vistula, and
an eagle, like the one in the arms of Poland, placing the crown on his head?" (37)
Bougrelas backs up his mother and makes fun of Ubu. In defiance, Venceslas vows

to go to the review of the troops unarmed and he also forbids Bougrelas and
Rosamonde to appear there.

TURNING POINT 6 – P.41

The King is dead! They, almost unbelievably, carry out their plan and kill the King.

Venceslas

Holy Virgin, I’m dead!

Ubu

I’ve got the crown. After the others now. (41)

TURNING POINT 7 – P.45

Bougrelas escapes. Ubu and the conspirators chase down the Royal Family, they
slaughter the younger two Princes, but when they trap Bougrelas and Rosamonde in
the tower, Bougrelas fights them off and they both escape down the secret staircase.

TURNING POINT 8 – P.49

Revenge! They escape to a cave in the mountains together. Rosamonde dies from
sadness. Bougrelas swears revenge. He also is gifted a huge sword from the spirit of
one of his ancestors to use in his revenge.
TURNING POINT 9 – P.51

**Long Live the King.** Ubu is officially crowned the King. His greed and cowardice seem unchanged. He refuses to give out gifts to the people until it is hinted that they will revolt and not pay their taxes if he doesn't. He shows himself to be greedy, unfeeling and a coward as well.

ACT 3

TURNING POINT 10 – P.60

**Betrayal.** Ubu tells Mère Ubu that he plans to not fulfill the terms of his deal with Bordure, and in fact, he puts him in the dungeon for his troubles.

TURNING POINT 11 – P.63

**Bloodthirsty.** Ubu proves to be a ruthless and bloodthirsty King. He kills all the nobles, financiers and judges, and then goes to the peasants to collect taxes himself. Even Mère Ubu is shocked by the depths of his butchery. “You’re too bloodthirsty Père Ubu.” (67)

TURNING POINT 12 – P.77

**Revolt!** The peasants are so put off by Ubu’s greed that they declare that they are going over to Bougrelas’ side and revolting against Ubu. “To arms! Long live Bougrelas, by the grace of God, King of Poland and of Lithuania!” (77)
Treason. Bordure escapes from the dungeon and goes to Russia. He entreats the Czar of Russia to help Bougrelas get reinstalled on the throne of Poland and defeat Ubu. He accepts. “One of Venceslas' sons, young Bougrelas, is still alive. I would do anything to re-establish him.” (81)

Hurrah for War! Things are not going well for Ubu. He receives a letter from Bordure informing him of his recent actions. The council decides there is only one possible response war! Ubu tries to resist saying, “Yes, and I’ll get knocked about some more.” (87) But he eventually capitulates and agrees to war, “But don’t let’s pay out a sous!” (88)

-----INTERMISSION------

Bon Voyage. Ubu prepares for War and leaves. Importantly, he leaves Mère Ubu in charge. As soon as he is out of earshot, she declares that she is going to “look after ourself, kill Bougrelas and grab the treasure.” (93)

ACT 4

Down with Mère Ubu. Bougrelas dethrones Mère Ubu and takes back Warsaw. Giron is killed, but Mère Ubu escapes into the mountains. Bougrelas is still determined to get Père Ubu.
TURNING POINT 17 – P.115

**Battle of the windmill.** A dozen turns in fortune during the battle, but eventually Ubu is defeated and routed and escapes with only his two Palotins, Pile and Cotice, to protect him.

TURNING POINT 18 – P.116

**A Cave.** They find a cave to hide out in. It is populated by a bear, which they kill and eat.

TURNING POINT 19 – P.129

**Abandoned.** Pile and Cotice decide to abandon Ubu in the cave with the half-eaten bear.

**Act 5**

TURNING POINT 20 – P.132

**Reunited.** Mère Ubu just happens to stumble into the very same cave that Ubu is sleeping in. She sees him first and tries to play a trick on him by pretending to be an angel. He eventually sees through the trick and violently attacks her. This is a low point in our love for Ubu. Not only was he a tyrannical King, and later a coward, but now he is a wife abuser as well.

TURNING POINT 21 – P.152

**Discovered.** Bougrelas and the Russians find the Ubs in the cave and attack. Things look hopeless.
TURNING POINT 22 – P.155

Saved. Pile and Cotice inexplicably decide to come back and save Ubu. They all escape.

TURNING POINT 23 – P.158

Sail away. The Ubs and their entourage sail away to France to start another adventure all over again!

The Schoolgirl Story

STASIS - It is hard to conceive of a stasis for these girls since it is their inciting incident that has sparked the play itself, and it occurs before the play starts. Perhaps we must imagine a pre-stasis where they are unhappily at their school, feeling marginalized by a male-dominated world, without a voice, angry.

TURNING POINT – Preshow

Decide to do the play. In our prologue we state that Tallulah discovered the story of Ubu and suggested that they all perform it. Jean also seems to have had a hand in trying to find something that spoke to the girls as a whole, though it is clear that what it said to each of them was something different. As part of this action, they rent the theatre, prepare the props, and invite some friends or enemies perhaps.
Part 1

TURNING POINT – Prologue

Casting Addy. Vivian, the ringleader declares that Addy, the shyest, most outcast of the girls, should play the lead role of Ubu. She also volunteers to play Mère Ubu. Addy tries to resist, but is forced to comply.

TURNING POINT – P.9

Addy plays along. Over the course of the opening scene there are a few spots where Addy tries to bow out. She takes forever to utter the opening line, she resists saying her second line which is an insult to Mère Ubu, she even tries to defy Vivian by not agreeing to kill the King saying “No, I don’t want to hurt anybody.”

TURNING POINT – P.14

Addy pounds her fist. In line with the actual text, Addy tries to not agree to do violence to the King. In the text itself the moment where Ubu finally agrees is conspicuously absent. There are a few turns back and forth where Ubu agrees, then changes his mind, we have mirrored this with our shadow play as well. In our version, it takes Vivian threatening physical violence by grabbing Addy by the collar before she finally acquiesces and turns to the audience and pounds her fist into her palm to show that she means business.

TURNING POINT – P.19

Addy flexes her muscles. During the banquet scene, Addy tries to play along with the others and tests out her new powers as the main character in the play. At each turn she gets things wrong and is corrected by the others. In the middle of the scene
she takes things a step further and runs offstage to get a toilet brush because she thinks it would be a funny addition to the scene. The others are shocked, but they are forced to incorporate it into the reality of their play. This moment sets the stage for every future plot twist presented by Addy.

TURNING POINT – P.30

**Evil hands.** At this point Addy is starting to have some fun in her new role. She accidentally stumbles and falls, and all of the other schoolgirls laugh at her. After threatening suicide, Addy is forced to evoke the wrath of Vivian if the other girls don’t agree to play nice. At the end of the scene during her line, “Yes, but, King Venceslas, you won’t be any the less slaughtered you know.” (30) Addy gets a little too into the threat of violence. She looks down and sees her hands, Addy’s hands, in a maniacal gesture, and is surprised that there is so much hatred inside her.

TURNING POINT – P.35

**Yes, we swear!** Addy, for the first time, tests her power over Mère Ubu when she suggests that they use Mère Ubu as a makeshift priest so that the conspirators can swear to fight gallantly. The swearing itself is not actually in our imaginary original story, so Addy has not only altered events, but exercises power over Vivian, and has the others play along. As she exits Vivian shoves Addy just to remind her that the power has not shifted completely.

TURNING POINT – P.51

**I don’t want to.** During the joyous accession scene, there are a few turning points. The first one comes as the scene opens and we overhear an argument between Vivian, Scarlett and Addy, which culminates in Addy saying, “No, I don’t want to.”
All three realize their private conversation was overheard, and turn guiltily to the audience. We see that Addy is resisting the powerful forces of both Vivian and Scarlett. If she is going to play their game, she wants to play by her own rules, which include not giving away any money. I imagine she came from a poor family, while some of the other girls are well off. At the end of the scene Addy invites all the peasants inside the castle, we can clearly see on the face of Mère Ubu that this is not planned.

TURNING POINT – P.62

Isn’t it just as good to have wrong on your side as right? Addy really starts testing her power in the bed scene. Firstly, she alters plot points and defends these choices when Vivian tries to correct her. Importantly, Addy denies Scarlett/Captain Bordure as an ally and says, “don’t speak to me of that Buffroon.” (60) Later Addy physically abuses Vivian with some sexual innuendo by pretending to have an erection, wiping imaginary semen on her face and climbing on top of her and humping her. Towards the end of this scene, Addy turns to the others and says, “This is fun.” She has embraced her role as hero, or in her case, anti-hero.

TURNING POINT – P.70

Shut up buffooness. Addy further flexes her power in the nobles scene. Clearly this scene was meant to be in the play, but Addy takes it much further than it was intended to go. Vivian stops her, saying, “you’re too bloodthirsty Père Ubu.” (67) But Addy joyfully soldiers on and shows us that not only does she have a greedy side, but also a violent side. After one of Mère Ubu’s protestations, Addy yells, “shut-up boffooness!” (70) All the other schoolgirls gasp in shock, and Vivian is powerless to stop her. At the end of this scene Addy declares that she will go from village to village to collect the taxes, and Vivian, in defeat, says, “Well, now we need a peasant’s village.”
**TURNING POINT – P.88**

**Now we need your permission?** In the final scene of our first act, the storyline requires that Ubu declare war on Russia. Addy’s Ubu resists, since she doesn’t want to pay the soldiers. This in and of itself is not terribly important, but it does signal a significant change, that the other girls need Addy’s permission to do anything within the world of the play. For most of act one, Addy was playing catch-up to the rest of the girls, it is clearly the opposite now, with Addy making all the rules.

**Part 2**

**TURNING POINT – P.98**

**Lizzy falls.** This is the only turning point that doesn’t involve Addy. It is the first time that something *real* happens in the world of our play. There is an accident and Lizzy, the sound girl, falls from the rafters. She turns out to be ok, but this moment is meant to, at least for an instant, open the possibility inside the audiences’ mind that things could go very wrong.

**TURNING POINT – P.114**

**Tina gives birth.** The pregnant girl, who has been a favourite target of Addy’s since her descent into cruelty, actually goes into labour and gives birth in this scene. Again, the moment is meant to open up the possibility that *real* things are happening quite independent of the Ubu storyline. The secondary impact of this event is that all the girls go backstage to deal with the new bundle of joy. Addy is left alone with Daisy and Lexie to fend for herself, and she immerses herself more deeply into the world of the play.
TURNING POINT – P.126

**Minnie gets her arm chopped off.** In a blatant rip off of Mump and Smoot, while Pile is chopping up the bear, she accidentally lops off the puppeteers’ hand as well. Minnie screams, “this is your fault, Addy!” before she runs out of the theatre. Another *real* moment, followed by a painfully long pause after which Addy does not react to the event at all. She is clearly deep within this alternate universe now.

TURNING POINT – P.151

**The beating.** After Vivian comes on stage to try and save the play, Addy eventually recognizes her as Mère Ubu and threatens to give her a beating. With some quick thinking, Vivian calls for a stunt double and receives a dummy version of herself just in time. The dummy suffers the thrashing that Addy had intended for Vivian/Mère Ubu. We have crossed another line where Addy has absolute power, and not even Vivian can stand in her way. At this stage most of the performers are simply thinking of ways to end the play so that they can get home safely.

TURNING POINT – P.158

**Lizzie gets shot.** After the escape from the cave, the rest of the girls humbly try to end the play, but Addy is insistent that she and her entourage escape by boat. The girls resist and to spring them into action, Addy grabs a prop gun, which happens to have one bullet, and shoots Lizzie. This is the real climax of the schoolgirls story. We have described this moment as Adubu actually killing her old self with this shot.
11. DRAMATIC METAPHOR

I have been thinking long and hard about this question. I think the dramatic metaphor must be tied in with three ideas.

- The Emphatic Element, which is Ubu himself, and how we see him change, paralleled with Addy's journey into Ubu.
- Theme, which as stated above is uncertainty, confusion, the smashing of expectations.
- The action of the play itself, as represented by Ubu taking that first step down a path towards destruction four lines into the play, and how he is progressively spun further and further down the rabbit's hole of chaos.

These elements can all be tied together in the preexisting image of the spiral on the front of Ubu's frock. This spiral represents our spiral into chaos, starting with the initial temptation by Mère Ubu catapulting Père Ubu down his path of adventure. It represents the whirlpool of Père Ubu's alternating changes from a funny, stupid, klutz to the vengeful, murderous, greedy bastard he becomes.

Addy's journey is also represented nicely by the spiral image. She starts at the centre, perhaps even her first few steps are the result of being shoved by the other girls. At the centre of a spiral, the revolutions are so tight that it can be disorienting.

As she travels further and further down her path to Ubu-ness, she gains confidence in the direction she is travelling, but like on a roundabout, the further from the centre you go, the more centripetal force you experience and the faster you travel making it nearly impossible to stop. It also captures nicely the dizzying confusion of our theme, from the beginning of the play we never travel in a straight path, always veering, unable to determine up from down, right from wrong.
12. MOOD

Chaos. I’m not sure that that is defined as a mood exactly, but that is how I think of the feeling of this play.

Ubu Story

From the very first story point, where Mère Ubu convinces Père Ubu that he should kill the King, it is utter and snowballing chaos until the curtain drops at the end. Mère Ubu is the only one with any sense of direction and even she changes her tack numerous times throughout the play. Ubu himself, as our main protagonist, is utterly directionless. He has no rhyme or reason to any of his actions.

- Act One – Ubu is led by Mère Ubu who does seem to have a plan, which leads us the audience to hope there may be some direction for the play in spite of Père Ubu’s considerable ineptitude.
- Act Two – Mère Ubu’s plan is executed, but botched in some key places by Père Ubu and his men. Bougrelas and the Queen escape, leaving some vital loose ends. The regicidal act itself seems so unconsidered that we fear what future acts of brutality Ubu has in store for us.
- Act Three – Ubu is finally King, and he reigns with an iron fist. He is utterly destructive, killing every noble, magistrate and financier in the realm. We cannot imagine to what depths he will stoop. Knowing we are only half way through the play, the audience must be asking themselves, “how much worse can this get?”
- Act Four – Ubu is at the head of a large and powerful army that he wields with the precision of an overripe tomato. The battle scene itself is so chaotic and incomprehensible, that it took me seven or eight readings before I could make any sense of it whatsoever.
- Act Five – The chaos seems to spill out beyond Ubu’s actions and into the action of the play itself. There is a wrestling scene with a bear, a
battle inside a cave, a fire gets lit with no wood, Ubu believes his wife is an archangel and to top it off they sail away in a boat from Poland to France, or Spain, they don't actually agree in the text.

The Schoolgirl story

This world is easier to populate with chaos. If we imagine that the girls have not properly prepared for the production, there will be utter chaos during scene transitions and costume changes. I feel like the chaos at the beginning for the girls is an excited, expectant chaos, where they know what they want to do, they simply cannot execute it in straight lines thus creating the mood of chaos. As the play wears on however, the type of chaos changes to a more out of control, or a this could end badly variety. I think the battle scenes in particular will be an easy place to manifest this chaos, since we can have so much action at once on the stage, and the text in these segments is not vital. There is a wonderful tension when someone is speaking on stage and we cannot hear what she is saying, because we feel like we might be missing something important.

The schoolgirls have other qualities to their mood such as playfulness, mischievousness and a sense of daring or danger.
13. CHARACTERS

Figure 1.3  Ubu on the bear (From left to right: Naomi Vogt as Père Ubu, Morgan Churla as Pile, Nicole Sekiya as Cotice. Photo credit - Nancii Bernard)

PÈRE UBU

• Qualities
  o **Physical** – fat, ugly, bulbous, inhuman, bursting at the seams, asexual.
  o **Personality** - greedy, selfish, dumb, violent, fearful, cowardly, childlike, pompous, shortsighted, a megalomaniac.

• **Metaphor** – He seems to me to be very childlike. He sees no repercussions from his actions. Obviously this plays right into the fact that the play was written by children, and also into the conceit of our particular production.

• **Rhythmic or Musical quality** – He is loud and brash. Jarry once said “Ubu's speeches were not meant to be wise or full of witticisms, as various little Ubists claimed, but of stupid remarks, uttered with the all the authority of an Ape.” (Wright, 174)
• **Major Desire** – In the long history of Héb stories, he was always most interested in loot, or phynance, and there are numerous dinosaurs of this sprinkled throughout the script. However I’m not sure this is Père Ubu’s main objective. He seems to not have the ability to look to his future, and adjust his actions accordingly. In the opening scene when Mère Ubu is trying to convince him to kill the King, the one temptation that proves too much for him, is that he would have a long coat to wear and an umbrella. All this considered he definitely wants gold, and power, and perhaps most of all safety once he has achieved those things. As Lady Macbeth says “Tis is safer to be that which we destroy, than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy.” (Shakespeare, 1237)

• **Main Action** – He repeats a series of *advances* and *retreats*.
  
  o Mère Ubu instigates his action by inciting him to murder, he *retreats* by denying her.
  
  o Eventually he accepts her instigation and *advances* by roping in Bordure and his men to help do the deed.
  
  o He gets summoned by the King and he *retreats* by trying to implicate Mère Ubu and Bordure.

The rest of the play consists of a series of such moves: Confidence and fear, advancing and retreating. He never really changes his stripes or learns a lesson. In the very end when he escapes with barely his life, he is already planning his next move.
MÈRE UBU

Figure 1.4  Mère Ubu. (Sarah Harrison as Mère Ubu. Photo credit - Nancii Bernard)

• Qualities
  o  **Physical** – Fat, ugly, bulbous, sexual, and maternal.
  o  **Personality** – Greedy, selfish, self-interested, cunning, smart, pompous.

• **Metaphor** – In comparing her to Lady Macbeth we find there are many similarities, they both are the ones who initiate regicide, both possess more steely resolve than their husbands and once the deed is done, they both keep a level head. However, once Macbeth is on the throne it is Lady Macbeth who urges him to higher levels of sin in order to maintain the throne. While Mère Ubu actually seems to give her husband quality advice on how to rule wisely (give gifts to the people, don’t kill all the ones who might support you, reach out to Bougrelas to quell his rage). The other main difference between these two is that Lady Macbeth succumbs to her misdeeds and loses her mind,
while Mère Ubu stays mentally alert, but is physically chased out of Warsaw and sent wandering in the mountains alone and deserted.

To summarize Mère Ubu metaphorically, I would say that she represents the conscience of Père Ubu. She embodies and gives voice to his greed, his fears, and also moments where a normal person might feel remorse or at least have thoughts of reining in the butchery. Père Ubu himself is all action. He doesn’t think about a single thing more than a moment before it is out of his mouth. Père Ubu is impulse, Mère Ubu is reason.

- **Rhythmic or musical quality** – One element of Mère Ubu that I would like to explore is the idea that she perceives herself as a sexual being, while no one else in the universe agrees. Failed sexuality, I think, will lend her a direct, swaying quality that will juxtapose the cold reason behind her actions.

- **Major Desire** – She seems to genuinely desire money and power, and she sees Père Ubu as her only method to achieve it. I have the feeling that if Venceslas offered to take her as a mistress, she would abandon her husband instantly. Which begs the question, how much does she really love Ubu? Is she using him? Or is there some deep-seated love or at least affection for him? Perhaps their shared exploits before the start of this play have cemented in them a connection that cannot be broken. I think this play needs to have an element of this. If her main desire is money and power, her love for Ubu can act as an obstacle to her achieving it.

  (I keep thinking of Tom Waits and Lily Tomlin’s lovely characters in the Robert Altman film *Short Cuts*. They are absolutely miserable together, and absolutely cannot live without each other.)

- **Main Action** – Ubu is like a wild animal and Mère Ubu is his trainer. Her main action is to keep him on track, and steer him in the right direction so that she can achieve her goal of riches and power.
CAPTAIN BORDURE

One of the most peculiar questions about Bordure is, why does he say he is Venceslas’ mortal enemy? What is their relationship? It is never referenced again, and no attempt is made to explain it. Obviously it serves a structural necessity in that the Ubs need him onside to kill the King, but why does he come so easily? Interestingly, when he is chasing the Princes after he has killed King Venceslas, Bordure calls them traitors, when clearly he is the one who has committed treason.

• Qualities
  o A malcontent, brave, clever, speaks his mind, quick on his feet, noble, ready to admit when he is wrong, a soldier, power hungry, vengeful, resourceful, blood-thirsty, untruthful (when he claims he was drawn into it by Ubu to the Tsar).

• Rhythmic or musical quality – Military. He is a true soldier. He does things by the rules.
• **Major Desire** – Revenge. Initially it seems like his only goal is to stick it to his “mortal enemy” King Venceslas, but once it happens he is at first a loyal advisor to Ubu and then a loyal servant of the Tsar and champion of Bougrelas.

• **Main Action** – Revenge.
  - 1<sup>st</sup> half: To get revenge on King Venceslas.
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> half: To get revenge on Ubu.

**BOUGRELAS**

**Figure 1.6** Bougrelas storming the castle (Catherine Fergusson as young Bougrelas. Photo credit - Nancii Bernard)

He is clearly the Ubian version of Malcolm and Donalbain from *Macbeth*. The difference I would say is that Bougrelas starts the play as a real spoiled brat, but goes through a change when his mother is attacked and especially after he is visited by the ghost of Seigneur Matthias.
• **Qualities**
  o A spoiled brat, he can see that Ubu is depraved, a skilled swordsman, a skilled insulter, idealistic.

• **Metaphor** – He is a Hamlet character, immobile and unmotivated, until his father (and whole family) is slain, after which he is pushed into noble reaction.

• **Rhythmic or musical quality** – Childish. I see him like a child, putting on the airs of an adult.

• **Major Desire** – Revenge.

• **Main Action** – Revenge.

**The Schoolgirls**

Figure 1.7 **The peasants village** (From left to right: Lara Deglan, Kat McLaughlin, Natasha Zacher, Jenna Mairs, Ghazal Azarbad, Cassandra Szabo, Catherine Fergusson, Charlotte Wright. Photo credit - Nancii Bernard)
The schoolgirl characters evolved slowly and continued to change throughout the rehearsal process. I will include here however our starting points. This chart came out of a simple brainstorm on various categories of schoolgirls. We tried to keep them simple, and based on personality, or ways of being (shy, clumsy), as opposed to circumstantial, or task based (cheerleader, smoker). The names were not decided at this stage, but I will include them here so that it is easy to know which character we are referring to.

**Table 1.1  Character traits**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actor</th>
<th>Character Trait</th>
<th>Grade #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Naomi</td>
<td>Outsider</td>
<td>12 - Addy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah H.</td>
<td>Bossy bitch/Alpha/Queen Bee</td>
<td>12 - Vivian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine</td>
<td>Theatre nerd/immature</td>
<td>8 - Minnie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte</td>
<td>Foreigner/Pleaser</td>
<td>12 - Lizzie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole</td>
<td>Tough/Badass</td>
<td>12 - Lexie, Lucy, Daisy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah C.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morgan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cassandra</td>
<td>Immature/Dumb</td>
<td>8 - Anna and Lana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenna</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercedes</td>
<td>Valedictorian</td>
<td>12 – Jean Evita Sobieski</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lara</td>
<td>Apathetic, too-cool-for-school</td>
<td>12 - Billy Jean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natasha</td>
<td>Crush on Lara, overemotional</td>
<td>12 – Tallulah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kat</td>
<td>Stoner/Class clown</td>
<td>12 - Mary Jane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allyce</td>
<td>Pregnant teen</td>
<td>12 - Tina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bethany</td>
<td>Flirt/Beta</td>
<td>12 - Scarlett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghazal</td>
<td>Violent</td>
<td>12 - Xena</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The schoolgirls that changed the most from this list were the three Palotins, Lexie, Lucy and Daisy, and also Tallulah who ended up more of a straight nerdy type.

**14. STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS**

Ubu Roi is a five act play that in many ways follows the traditional five act structure as laid out by Horace and in Jarry's own era, by Gustav Freytag.

- **Act One – Exposition**
  - This portion is so haphazard and unenlightening that it can hardly be called exposition, yet there are some key pieces of information that come out including the Ubs past royalty, Bordure's hatred for Venceslas, and painting the strange and lumpy outlines of the Ubs characters.
  - This act features mainly the decision to kill the King, and the subsequent planning that goes into it.
  - In *Macbeth*, the inciting incident is spurred by the meeting with witches whose prophecy urges Macbeth to become King. In Ubu there is no such impetus. As mentioned above, Mère Ubu starts the action seemingly without cause four lines in by urging her husband to do away with the King.

- **Act Two – Rising Action**
  - This act indeed sees the action rise. Interestingly, the act shift is between the scene where Ubu and his men swear to kill the King properly, and the scene where Venceslas decides to go to the fateful review unarmed. Clearly the structural act break should be in the next scene where the King is actually killed and the plot is actually set into motion.
  - The inciting incident is the killing of the King, and the action is quite intense for the rest of Jarry's act two.
• Act Three – Climax
  o This is where Jarry seems to veer from the traditional form. Even in modern screenwriting story arcs the point of highest danger is usually the midpoint. Jarry’s midpoint is more of a collection of examples of how he is a bad ruler.
  o Part of the challenge in directing this play is to make the third act really build in intensity, to make it obvious that things are getting worse and worse. But, how is collecting the taxes himself worse than killing every single noble? There is some assistance however since Bordure’s escape to Russia and aligning with the Tsar does raise the stakes for Ubu.
• Act Four – Falling Action
  o This is where Jarry veers from the traditional five act structure. Instead of having falling action here, he has the true climax in the action, the battle between the Ubists and the Russians. This is the moment where Ubu’s fate is the most in jeopardy. There are many moments during the battle where it is doubtful that he will survive, and perhaps surprisingly he does lose the battle, even though he escapes at the end.
  o Having 16 actors I think it will be an easy and fun task to make this battle scene the visual and physical climax of the play as well as dramatically.
• Act Five – Resolution
  o The denouement actually begins in Act Four Scene Five. It is a striking problem with the play that the Ubs fate is sealed not much more than halfway through. In Jarry’s opening night speech he makes reference to the fact that since they ran out of time to rehearse, they don’t actually do the whole play. Even the author realized it was a boring ending! It is the main reason I have chosen to graft a second plot onto this play, to try and keep the stakes high right until the very end.
The juxtaposition of the two heroes (Addy’s and Ubu’s) respective journeys will, I hope, make for a captivating ending. As Addy’s power over the production strengthens, and Ubu’s situation worsens, we fear what she may do to make things better for herself. In the end, she does the worst thing she could have in killing Lizzie.

15. INSPIRATIONS

I have three main inspirations for my early vision of this production.

1. Bertolt Brecht – Brecht sought a kind of theatre that would press audiences to engage with a critical thesis and anti-thesis so that they might seek synthesis beyond the theatre. Many of Brecht’s conflicts considered how best to survive in the material world. Stretching from this idea, he believed that the audience member should never be allowed to forget that they are sitting in a theatre. Actors are always actors on a stage, music should not be too melodious or the audience might get swept up in the sounds and not hear the message of the song. Ubu, to me, is just such a parable, and it needs to be told to the audience in this same, self-aware manner. I want to direct a version of Ubu where the audience knows they are an audience, and the actors are always aware that they are pretending to be these absurd characters we find in Jarry’s pages. It would be dangerous to try and convince the audience that these characters are real. Indeed this is one of the key shortcomings in the first Ubu production I saw, and it lacked a wink.

2. Bouffon – A brand of clown that is bold, grotesque, disgusting and concerned primarily with offending, or at least getting a reaction from the audience. Ubu could perhaps be considered the inspiration for this brand of clown. The play is packed with gross content whose purpose seems mainly to be to make the audience groan. This is linked with the Brechtian concepts in that the purpose of Bouffon performance is to have an affect on the audience. I often
see or hear of productions which are scatologically obsessed, but feel like the poo jokes in *Ubu* are there to serve a purpose – to jolt the audience, to shock them - and are not in fact what the play is *about*. I do want to have a primary awareness of the audience, and our effect on them, which may not be pleasant.

3. Monster Theatre – A bit of a cheat here, since this is my own theatre company. We have developed an interesting aspect to much of our work in that there is often a secondary story in our plays which is the story told about the actors themselves playing the characters in the play. For example, one of our first plays was the complete history of Canada in one hour, it essentially was a sketch show, but the real story was between the three actors (one French, one Western redneck, and a First Nations straight man trying to keep everything in line) struggling to tell the story and get their individual points of view across. I want my *Ubu* to have this aspect. I want a secondary story about the group of women who have come to tell us this tale. I want us to get to know the actors themselves (or at least a version of themselves), as they become the different characters that they play. This is the concept of the *wink*, a sort of *we know that you know that we are just actors putting on a show*. The main purpose of this type of approach is that I believe it can help the audience to put away their critical minds and go along on whatever journey we take them on, knowing that we are not trying to fool them.

I feel like all three of these points of inspiration can come together perfectly in the land of the Ubs.

Something that bears mentioning is Jarry’s later theory called Pataphysics, which he describes in *The Exploits & Opinions of Dr. Faustroll, Pataphysician* as “the science of imaginary solutions, which symbolically attributes the properties of objects, described by their virtuality, to their lineaments.” (22)
Many previous tacklers of *Ubu Roi* have taken inspiration from Jarry's invented philosophy, but I found no link as related to the results I hope to achieve in interpreting his play. I have included it here in my *Inspirations* section of my analysis simply to mark that it had no influence whatsoever.

16. **DIRECTORIAL APPROACH**

The biggest and most unusual choice I’ve made so far is to have cast the play with all female actors. To be honest, it didn’t start as a great idea, it came to me slowly. I was having a discussion with my advisor, Stephen Heatley, about a pair performers and which one would be better to play Mère Ubu, I was arguing for one, and Stephen was defending another. After that conversation I started thinking to myself, it would be great to have them both. Then I started thinking, ‘why not have a female Père Ubu?’ The graduating class of actors that we have to choose from is particularly strong in women, in fact there is one, the one I was arguing for Mère Ubu, who I think could pull off the herculean role of Père. Then I just let my mind wander in that direction.

I have a belief that creativity is best served by not limiting it. Every time I come up with what I consider a great idea, I store it away and ask myself, ‘or, what else?’ With this in mind, I let myself investigate this accidentally-stumbled-upon idea of having a female Ubu. It led me to thinking, ‘what if it was an entirely female cast?’ Considering the notion of wanting it to be a Brechtian piece, in the sense that the play represents a parable and that the actors are here to communicate it to us the audience, the all female idea seemed to be a perfect fit. I started to list all the qualities of Père Ubu himself – greed, gluttony, violence, and selfishness – and realized that these could all be recast as negative aspects of masculinity. So the play could be a group of women gathered to tell us the parable of *Ubu* as a warning against male dominated society running rampant. It made perfect sense to me, in fact, it made more sense than if it was a bi-gender group. I explored the possibility
that it was simply cross cast, but that didn’t excite my imagination. Cross-casting makes it a statement about gender roles from the point of view of how the audience receives the switch, while an all-female cast looks at all the same issues from the point of view of the performers themselves, which is where I am hoping to take this production. Ironically, by casting it with all women, it makes it not about gender.

_Ubu and the audience_

There are two kinds of stories, ‘someone goes on a journey’, and ‘a stranger comes to town.’ _Ubu Roi_ is the latter. The question is in what way does he change the world into which he enters?

The most important element of this analysis is the character of Ubu. I don’t believe it is possible to treat the character as you would a character in a ‘normal’ play, in terms of identifying his objectives, feelings, action or inner life. Instead, I intend to focus on his effect on the audience. I want to always be aware that we are telling the story of Ubu for the audience, to have an effect on them.

A. How does Ubu make them feel about humanity?
B. How does Ubu make them feel about themselves?
C. How does Ubu make them feel about theatre itself?

The simplest way to make the audience ask themselves these three questions is to first make them care about Ubu.

- Make him a victim of Mère Ubu’s schemes.
- Make him so dumb that no one can blame him for his own actions.
- Make him funny. Let the audience laugh at him; this will engage their pathos.

Secondly, I must transform this Ubu, this character they have grown to love, and make them fear him.
• Make Ubu seem so unbalanced that no one can possibly know what he may do next.
• Endow him with great joy when he watches others suffer.
• Give him absolutely no remorse or pity.
• Find ways to turn his violence and malevolence on the audience themselves.

If I can accomplish these tasks, I believe I can create a feeling of unbalance in the audience. The character we loved has turned out to be a monster, and that monster is attacking us. They must feel to a certain extent that they had a part in creating him.

Once Ubu is dethroned and stuck in the cave with his wife, we feel like he has gotten a bit of what he deserved. Of course, in any morally just world, Ubu should be punished much more severely, but this play is so unorthodox that I believe the audience will feel it is relatively just to the crimes he committed since we see most of his victims spring up to life again. I am hoping we can elicit sensations of culpability in the audience. So that when the play finally ends with Ubu sailing off unharmed to start the whole cycle over again, they feel like they were the ones who unleashed this beast on the world, and perhaps they will look to themselves and question morals that they had believed to be firmly planted. When Ubu finally sails off at the end of the play, and on the tail of the boat is painted “Ubu Wuz Here”, I want the audience to feel that, yes, indefinitely, our world has been altered by the visitation of this strange and brutal man.

The actors and the audience

It is one of my fundamental beliefs that we can never convince the audience that they are not in a theatre, and that we must absorb them in a moment-to-moment engagement from the moment the curtain goes up to the instant it drops. True to both Brechtian theory and Monster Theatre practice, if we are pretending to do
something, we must pretend to pretend it. I never have a moment where the audience can see something onstage that we do not intend to be seen in that way. If we hold up a door, we let them see us holding it up; we do not pretend that it is a real door.

In the previous versions of *Ubu* that I have seen performed live, this is the main element in which they failed in my opinion. The first one I saw was in Ottawa in 2002, a four-hander that never acknowledged such absurdities like the fact that Mère Ubu and Captain Bordure were played by the same actor. I wanted a wink, or a smile to let us know that they knew that we knew that he wasn’t really Mère Ubu.

This isn’t to say that it is impossible to perform a play as a character and still have that moment-to-moment engagement. My first directing project at UBC, *The Russian Play* by Hannah Moscovitch, didn’t have this element of play within a play, but it was written in such a way that we could bring the audience into that imaginary world and keep them there from curtain to curtain. My argument here is that the play *Ubu Roi* is so strange, and so disconnected that it is impossible to convince the audience that these characters exist. Perhaps if it would be possible with a cast large enough for no double casting, and a set and theatre so magic that you could realistically (inside that unreal world) create that universe and exist truthfully within it. Perhaps it would be, but not with the resources available to me.

For this reason, I believe it is necessary to perform the play, or rather to perform performing the play, always aware that the audience is watching.

**Schoolgirls and the audience**

The question then becomes, on the basest level, who is doing the performing? A group of University students? Possible, but why? On that level of reality we know that they have not chosen the play, we know them as people, they told us when they were cast, etc. so we cannot believe that they are performing the play for any purpose other than performance itself.
I was attacking this question at the same time as I was beginning to consider casting. When the possibility of an all-female cast came up, it inspired an idea for how to solve this question.

_Ubu Roi_ was originally conceived by Alfred Jarry and two schoolmates, Charles and Henri Morin, while attending boarding school in Rennes. There was a teacher there named Félix-Frédéric Hébert who was the butt of decades of schoolboy pranks. It was something of a tradition to write stories about poor Hebert (Heb, Père Heb, Père Ébé) casting him in fantastical adventures, one of which featured him killing the King of Poland and ruling there. Jarry and the Morin brothers adapted this tale into a play and performed it with marionettes secretly, first in the Morins house, and later in Jarry's attic. These performances were crude and adolescent, but they were the direct predecessors of Jarry's life work. I imagine a group of schoolboys gathered in an attic watching their peers dangling puppets and making crude jokes about longsuffering Père Heb.

It is this that inspired the image of a group of schoolgirls (perhaps modern, perhaps contemporary, perhaps timeless) hijacking a theatre to perform their own version of this strange tale. It immediately answered some problematic issues:

- Who is telling the story?
  
  Schoolgirls are universally recognizable, we don’t need to know which school, or what town they are from. In identical uniforms they have ample need to tell this story of a man who doesn’t fit in anywhere, and indeed, even when he rises to the top of the social ladder, he still is persecuted until he is chased out of town.

- Against what authority are they rebelling?
  
  Part of what is so exciting about the Lycée Rennes origins of _Ubu Roi_ is that it was done against the rules. I imagine that there was a constant threat of discovery: while they were writing his strange adventure, while they crafted the puppets,
and especially while they were performing it. Perhaps there was a student set at the door to act as a guard? This rebelliousness against authority is inherent in the play itself, and the schoolgirl concept also supplies this automatically. There is playfulness and danger to having a group of schoolgirls do anything really. We, as a society, understand that school children are troublemakers, and that they are the lowest rungs on the totem pole of authority. Everyone has been in trouble in school, even if it was many years ago, and everyone can identify with these schoolgirls need to tell this story. There is a universal authority that is evoked by the schoolgirl uniforms. Otherwise, I must cast the audience as the authority figure, and I far prefer to have them complicit in our troublemaking.

- Where are we?

In the Frederic Wood theatre, obviously. But the universality of the schoolgirl concept allows it to be broader, more general. They don’t attend this school, they attend a school. We are in a theatre. It’s the kind of concept you could tour to different cities; different cultures and not have to change a thing to still have the same effect. The same possibilities are inherent in the play itself. It is not about Poland or Europe. It is about humanity.

From the point of view of these schoolgirls then, whom are they performing for? In this little fantasy, whom does the audience play? Is it their parents whom they’ve invited? Are they audience members who thought they were coming to see something else? Are they fellow students? Are they teachers and representatives of the group they are debasing?

Really all of these are possible answers. I think it can also be a sort of combination of a few of these. If the audience plays, simply, themselves, the people who showed
up at the theatre that night, the girls could be ecstatic that anyone showed up. They feel like they have an important message that they have to tell the world, and these are the ones who are going to hear it. In this version, the audience is on their side, they can join together to make fun of authority. At the same time, I think there must be an unspoken threat that the real authority could come and shut down the theatre at any time. This will put a ticking clock of urgency on the whole production, as well as raise the stakes since if they get shut down, this will be the last time they get to tell this story.

**Chaos and the audience**

How do we achieve this feeling of our central metaphor, chaos, specifically the spiral into chaos, in the audience?

I have a belief about performing comedy, that the audience must trust you; they must feel that they are in safe hands if they are to laugh. If the first joke in a comedy is weak, the audience will never be fully won over, if the first joke is a hit, they will relax and allow themselves to be taken on your journey. I performed my first one-man comedy play *(Confessions of a Class Clown)* once in a juvenile detention centre, and was shocked to find that there was almost no laughter, even though the subject of the play was rebelling against authority. It occurred to me laughter makes one quite vulnerable, to laugh out loud in public at something means you approve, you agree with what is being said. It was the first time I realized that to laugh, one must feel safe, that laughter makes you vulnerable.

Conversely, with this version of *Ubu Roi*, we are hoping to throw the audience off balance, to intentionally make them feel insecure, unstable, and unsafe. The question here becomes, how can we make the audience feel safe enough to laugh, but still achieve the overriding sense of chaos?

I think the answer must be to start with the former and then move towards the latter. In fact, it may make it easier to achieve the chaos if we take their guard down
by offering an easy, light beginning. I think there will be a sense at the beginning that the seams are barely held together, that the whole enterprise is perhaps not very well planned. But once we get into the play proper, it looks to be quite funny, and that we have a charming lead character to follow along his journey.

As the play progresses however, I must chart out a blueprint of when this sense of order begins and progresses in unraveling. The locations are progressively impressive, so these will in fact counteract the sensation of chaos. I think it must have to do with the actors’ relationship to the audience. How does the play leak into the audience? How do we change their sensations from being safe, to being in danger? How do we make them question by the end whether they will emerge from the theatre unscathed? Many of these questions remain unanswered and will have to be a focus of my upcoming investigations.

**Things to avoid**

There are some common elements to productions of *Ubu Roi* that I feel are either results of misreading and misunderstandings of the play, or simply do not belong in this interpretation.

- **Poop.** Many versions have made feces a focal point of the production. To me, the repeated references to *Merdre* are there to incite the audience to anger, or to shock them. I do not believe the play is *about* poo.
- **Bourgeois politics.** In many readings of *Ubu Roi* it is considered a diatribe against bourgeois concerns and lifestyle in general. Jarry's intent was less to bring about a new society, and more to shake up the theatrical world itself. He argued for new forms, and a theatre of symbols, and action as opposed to the current theatre of lavishly presented realism. His most direct theatrical offspring was Antonin Artaud, who argued for the exact same thing. While Jarry may have
despised the ruling and middle classes (where he came from), his main objective was a revitalized theatre.

- A straight comedy. Also I do not believe that the play is meant to be purely funny. Jarry had quite definite goals in creating this play, and I believe that the humor inherent in the piece was seen by Jarry as a method to accomplish his goals as opposed to a goal in and of itself.

### 17. THE WORLD OF THE PLAY

This play exists in two worlds – the world of the schoolgirls, and the world of the Ub’s – each one has its own laws which govern there.

- Schoolgirl world
  - They are telling this story for the benefit of the audience.
  - Presentational style. The girls can look right into the eyes of the audience. They are here to tell the story directly to them after all. They can check in to see if their jokes get laughs. They can lift a wig to acknowledge that it is still them playing a new character. They can put on a costume in full view of the audience. They can go right into the audience and sit on their laps, or kiss them, or slap them.
  - There is an unspoken offstage authority, which is a constant threat to the continuance of the performance. The feeling that the play could get shut down at any moment.
  - They have never rehearsed the play. They may think they know what is supposed to come next, but they will be constantly surprised.
  - They are having fun.
  - They have internal relationships with each other, quite separate from the play’s relationships.
• Ubu’s World
  
  - Objects can be used for things that are not their intended purpose. A cucumber might become a sword, etc.
  - Once killed, they can pop up again and become a new character.
  - This world also has a presentational style, but more akin to the performance style of French theatre of the late 1800’s. For example, lines are always spoken facing directly downstage, gestures are grand and obvious, and there is a dominant staginess to everything they do.
  - They can embody anything and everything. If someone has to play a horse, then they become a horse, no questions asked.
  - They exist in a world where it is feasible that a man like Ubu could become King.
  - There are men and women in this world in spite of the fact that they are all played by women.
Chapter Two: Rehearsal Journal

Sept 26, 2013

Last night I went and saw a production at SFU of *Ubu Cocu* or *Ubu Cuckolded*. It was great to see someone else’s take on the world of the Ubs.

The play itself felt inferior in a lot of ways to *Ubu Roi*. For one thing, there were low stakes. In *Ubu Roi* he is murdering Kings, becoming a King himself, and fleeing for his life across the snowy plains on Eastern Europe, while in *Ubu Cocu* he overtakes a scientist’s house and worries that his wife is cheating on him. Not only that, but nothing resolves. In *Ubu Roi* he flees for his life, ending up in a cave with Ma Ubu worse off than when he started but escapes the cave with Madame his female and sails away in search of more adventures on a boat from Poland to Spain. While in *Ubu Cocu*, the ending, as I understood it, was that after he confronts his wife a giant snake emerges and then he simply announces the play over.

As far as the execution of the production, it inspired in me many ideas. The style of the performance was, I suppose, absurdist. The actors were stylized in every movement and piece of text; admirably, they were utterly committed to the physicality of what they were doing. They seemed more like caricatures to me than like living, breathing characters. I understand the impetus; the play is so weird that it’s easy to believe the characters must be strange too. There were directing choices that followed this line of thinking, every time one of the characters said the word Egypt, the lights changed and he delivered it straight to the audience dramatically like Scarlet O’Hara, even though there was no specific reason for this in the story. One character in a shadow play scene has a long wooden stick shoved up her ass, she is literally impaled upon it, when she eventually frees herself, she walks back onto the stage as if nothing has happened, unaffected by the torture she had endured. Stakes are reliant on consequences. All in all, even though the actors did some things designed to connect with the audience like sit on our laps or speak their
lines directly to us, as an audience member I felt disconnected with the story, such as it is, and the characters.

I understand that it is an absurdist play, but it seems to me that the only way to perform it is to fully create the world of the play, and make it as strange as you want, but then to create characters who exist truthfully within that world. This is the challenge of directing this play, not the task of making it strange, but to commit to that strangeness, to create characters that the audience can feel sympathy for, can love, can hate. Another challenge is to keep the stakes high. It would be easy to play up the stupidity of Ubu, so that everyone else on stage sees how utterly incompetent he is and treats him as a fool. However, the play must take place in a world that they really do decide to let him be King, for some reason Bordure comes on board with the plan, and his fellow conspirators stay by his side even after he has proven to be an idiot and a tyrant. Why? He must be so fearsome that they fear for their lives if they cross him, or they are brainwashed by him, or they really believe he could be a good leader, or they are so greedy that they stay with him as the only means of advancement for themselves.

With all this in mind, I think I want to try to treat it not as an absurdist piece so much as a historical drama that happens to take place in a world where people like Ubu can become King and men wrestle bears and you can sail a boat from Poland to Spain. Once that world is created, I intend to find a way to allow the actors to commit a hundred percent to existing within that reality truthfully.

**Sept 27, 2013**

I tried to get the department to let me do an original adaptation of Ubu. I was encouraged to simply focus on directing. This leaves me with finding directorial ways of overcoming some of the main issues with the script. At this stage I see these as:

- Making sense, or embracing the nonsense, of the language in the script.
• Finding a way to keep the stakes high in spite of the 50-page denouement.
• Keeping the audience’s interest and the stakes high during long sections of word jokes, especially at the end.
• Dealing with the zillion characters. If I had adapted it, I would have combined numerous roles and given them each clearer arcs. As it is, characters pop up for no reason and disappear as suddenly.

When I think about how to perform Ubu, I wonder about how I can tell this absurd story in a realistic way. I wonder if it is possible to get the audience to believe in these people and these situations.

I know the original version had a few purposes. The character of Ubu was originated by Jarry and two classmates to mock a specific teacher at their school. The poor fellow was, “physically grotesque, flabby and pig-like, lacked all dignity and authority, and had been the butt of schoolboy humour for years before Jarry’s arrival at Rennes.” (Wright, V) Clearly this purpose is not easily repeatable 120 years later with an audience who doesn’t share the same educational history. So part of the challenge is, how can I recreate that same sense of mischievousness, that same sense of thumbing ones nose at authority. It may have been specifically created in the first place to make fun of a specific teacher, but Jarry did all he could to make the play universal, to make it an attack on the nature of humankind. In this regard I think it is possible to recreate some of his original intentions. It doesn’t have to be about 19th century French society.

The other main objective of the original piece was a slap in the face of the theatrical establishment of Paris in the late 1800s. In this case there are a few similarities to Vancouver in 2014. There is an established way of producing theatre, which involves opening night parties, plush seats, fifteen-minute intermissions, and pre-show speeches to thank the sponsors. Jarry had an easy way to shock his audience, he swore. Swearing and violence do not incite the same kind of fury nowadays.
however. I will have to strive to create a piece of theatre that smashes those pre-conceived notions of theatre in the same way that the original did 120 years ago.

This then must be one of my primary goals with this production, to make the establishment-smashing-reality of the original, relevant to our audience.

**Nov 10, 2013**

Casting is complete. What a challenging process. The play itself is such a jumble. There are not complete character lists before each scene, sometimes characters are listed but don’t appear, and some characters appear which aren’t listed, and he asks for performers for characters like the de-brainer and the phynancial horse. It was a herculean task to get through all of this. On top of that, there are so many soldiers from various armies, and so many people die that it was almost impossible to decipher. I’m pretty happy with my choices. I’m confident that my Ubu is about the only one in the department who could pull off this role. I feel a little like I was too kind in the process, in making sure no one felt left out, making sure everyone has at least a few decent parts, and in giving almost all the bigger roles to the graduating class. Here is my breakdown of the casting for reference of its complexity.
There are only two girls in the department who I did not cast in Ubu. I feel very bad about this, but I was asked to not take the entire pool of female actors since there are numerous other productions in the department at the same time. Both had been cast in the Seagull, which is why I chose them. I would have gladly cast both of them if I could have.

**November 11, 2013**

One of the earlier productions in the UBC season was inspiring to watch. It was a pair of Italian plays presented in the Commedia dell’arte style. Many of the cast members are also now cast in *Ubu*, so I think some of the techniques they used will be of use in our production as well. Of particular interest to me, were the aspects of physical commitment, direct relationship to the audience, and also the sheer vulgarity of the piece.
Having worked with all of the commedia cast previously, I was very impressed with how far they had come in terms of their commitment to high physicality in their characters. Not only were the characters diverse and interesting, I felt like numerous of the cast had taken great strides in making bold choices and committing to those choices. This type of character development will be crucial to Ubu.

Commedia dell’arte is a pre-Brecht, yet very Brechtian form of theatre. This production had a designated narrator character. She delivered all her lines directly to the audience. She was quite good at this, even incorporating that evenings’ audience members for ribbing. Sadly she is one of the two girls not cast in Ubu. The rest of the characters also had contact with the audience. Commedia is a very presentational style that seems to always be aware that the audience is there, just a few feet away. They executed this fairly well. From time to time the fourth wall would pop up and a scene or two would go by before we were noticed again. I feel like this is something I will have to be aware of in Ubu, to not let the connection to the audience dip when it isn’t obviously present in the script.

Lastly, the filthiness of the commedia piece was present, but it could have been much more. Ubu has an aspect of fart, snot, sex and poo jokes – so this is another problem I will have to solve. I felt like, although the jokes were present, they were not fully embraced. The performers didn’t revel in the gross-out-ness of the content. The swearing and sex seemed incidental to the play. I’ve been thinking of how to attack this in Ubu. I’ve thought about ways to get a group of girls to bring the filth, and to enjoy this realm that is often reserved for pubescent boys. One idea is to have dirty joke competitions at rehearsals, or even have a round of ‘The Aristocrats’, which is a popular joke in which the details are adapted by each teller to make the joke as dirty and offensive as possible.
November 14, 2013

I had a meeting with my advisor Stephen Heatley yesterday to go over the analysis for *Ubu*. I had a moment of inspiration while I was there.

I was thinking about the world of the play, and what function it was originally intended to serve. It was a sort of nose thumbing at the establishment both in the theatrical sense and in the social sense. But I think that it is easy to overlook that there was a purpose to *Ubu* before its theatrical opening, even before the character was called Ubu. At the age of 14, Jarry went to attend a boarding school and met two brothers named Morin. They had created the character based on one of their professors named Hébert, and the basic plot seems to have already been in place when Jarry arrived. His name was shortened to Père Ébé, and later changed again to Ubu by Jarry himself.

This was the original purpose for *Ubu*, mischievousness, misbehavior and a rebelling against the authority of a single teacher. So, in thinking about the world of the play, I started wandering towards having this play a larger role in the production. Perhaps I could find a way to weave this origin story into the tapestry of the play itself. It seemed to fit so well into the elements I had already identified as wanting to focus on: misbehavior, a group mentality, connection to the audience, awareness of the parable nature of the story, and a certain overriding childishness.

It opened a can of possible design related ideas. What if it was at an all-girls school that are having a go at one of their teachers? What if we, the audience, are the teacher being made fun of? What if the audience members are the rest of the classmates watching the performance? What if the teacher is present in some other manner? What if the set is a giant classroom that gets slowly taken apart and transformed over the course of the play? What is the intermission then, does the teacher return and the show must continue the next day? Has this been done before?
November 15, 2013

Every single day there is discussion about Rob Ford in the press. He is the Mayor of Toronto who was caught smoking crack, refused to admit it, abused his power, then a video came out about him threatening to murder someone. He incidentally, is quite rotund. I feel almost a compulsion to make my version of Ubu about him in some way, the grotesque buffoon who seizes power and proceeds to misuse it. However, I don’t really want to give this idiot any more airtime than he is already getting. I want to strive and find what is universal in the Ubu story, as opposed to reducing it to a comment on current Torontonian civic politics.

November 19, 2013

I read the introduction from the Barbara Wright translation that we are using for our production. There is some interesting background information. I’ll include some highlights in note form.

- “Neither is strictly humour or strictly parody. It is not related to any other form of literature.” (Wright, V)
- Jarry had a strange way of speaking – relentless, without inflection or nuance, with an equal accentuation on all the syllables, even on the mutes.
- He lived with two owls (once alive, later stuffed), a guitar, rotten flowers, and a giant stone phallus.
- “Talking about things that are understandable only weighs down the mind and falsifies memory, but the absurd exercises the mind and makes memory work.” (VIII)
- In 1907 no one saw him for two days. They found him in his room covered in filth, and paralyzed from the waist down. He was taken to hospital and died on November 1st.
- “Many of his theatrical ideas were considered innovations when practiced much later.” (IX)
Jarry’s recommendations for a production of *Ubu*.

1. A mask for the character Ubu.
2. A cardboard horse’s head which Ubu would hang on his neck, as they did in the old English theatre, for the only two equestrian scenes, all of whose details are in the spirit of the play, as I intended to make it a ‘guignol’.
3. Adoption of a single set, or rather of a plain backcloth, doing away with the raising and lowering of the curtain during the single act. A conventionally dressed character would appear, as in the Guignols, and hang up a placard informing the audience of the location of the scene. (Note that I am certain that the written placard is much more suggestive than scenery. Neither scenery nor supers could represent “The Polish Army marching in the Ukraine”.)
4. No crowds; these are a mistake on the stage and hamper the intelligence. Thus a single soldier in the review scene, a single one in the scrimmage where Ubu says: “What a gang, what a retreat”, etc.
5. The adoption of an “accent”, or rather, a special “voice” for the chief character.
6. The costumes should give as little as possible the impression of local colour or chronology (this renders better the idea of something eternal). They should preferably be modern; and sordid, to make the play appear more wretched and horrific. (X)

A few things strike me from this list. One is the phrase, “the idea of something eternal”. To me it is exactly why this play can still be important and powerful. If we reduce it to being about a current government, or about a specific authority figure, we steal some of its power, however, if I can find a way to make it ring true about humankind, then we have something worthwhile on our hands.
November 20, 2013

I read Questions of the Theatre, an article written by Jarry himself and placed at the end of the Wright translation. There are some interesting tidbits. He says the only reason to write a play is because you have created “a character whom one finds it more convenient to let loose on a stage than to analyze in a book.” (Wright, 173)

Well, Ubu is certainly such a character. It is so much more shocking and pleasant to actually see him unleashing his terror than to read about. He talks about a lot of what his critics complained of with regard to Ubu. He brushes each of these off with accusing the complainer of idiocy.

In reading this article I am surprised at how Brechtian he is in his approach. I wonder to what extent Brecht was influenced by Jarry, and find it ironic that I would then use Brechtian theory to stage Jarry’s original play.

He intended the play to act as a mirror, for the audience to see themselves, or their, other-selves.

He says that Lugne-Poe, the director, originally wanted to rehearse it as a tragedy. I find this very interesting. Much of this play is in the shape of a tragedy, except that they sail away at the end unharmed. I’ve always subscribed to the theory that in comedy no one really gets hurt, they can die, but they’ll pop up again, while in tragedy characters actually get hurt. In our version of Ubu, I think this is the main point that makes it a comedy as opposed to a tragedy.

“The public are a mass, inert, obtuse and passive, they need to be shaken up once in a while.” (175)

It ends with this wonderful quote,

We too shall become solemn, fat and Ubu-like and shall publish extremely classical books which will probably lead to our becoming mayors of small towns where, when we become academicians, the firemen will present us with Sevres vases, while they present their moustaches on velvet cushions to
our children. And another lot of young people will appear, and consider us completely out of date, and they will write ballads to express their loathing of us, and there is no reason why this should ever end. (176)

It really speaks to the futility of making revolutions in art last. There is a challenge in taking a play from the 1800s and not only making it relevant today, but also making it as essential, and as shocking as it was back then.

**November 28, 2013**

I completed another reading of the play where I simply write down every single question I had. Some are answerable, and some are not. Some are answered immediately in the next line. But it is interesting to mark what will be going through the audiences mind. I have only included some of the questions here.

**ACT ONE**

**Scene 1**

- Why does he say Shitter at the top? What sparks it?
- What is their house like? Shambles?
- Why does Mère come up with this plan then and there? Has she thought of it before?
- What happens between scene 1 and 2. She goes shopping? Gets stuff for dinner? Other actors supply the groceries?

**Scene 3**

- Are the conspirators sneaky when they arrive?
- “I’d have stove in my chair?” – what the hell does that mean?
- Do they really like the food when they exclaim how good it is?

**Scene 4**
• Where does everyone else go? Are they watching this scene through a window?

**Scene 6**

• What is the King like? A drunk, too?
• Why does he give him the toy whistle? Why does he have a toy whistle?

**Scene 7**

• Why does he want to poison the King? Ignoble. Why poison?
• In my pocket? What does that mean? How is that a threat?
• Do Bougrelas and Ubu have a special history? He insults Ubu in the scene before, and Ubu says, I specially recommend Bougrelas.

**ACT TWO**

**Scene 1**

• Why are King and Queen not getting along so well?
• Does the King really believe Ubu is so noble?

**Scene 2**

• “A Palotin explodes” Who is it? How? Can we actually stage this? Which Palotin?
• What are the Palotins like?

**Scene 3**

• Can they be chasing them the whole time, while the other scene is being played? Then, lights up on them, somewhere?
• I guess it’s meant to be action offstage. But maybe they can just be somewhere overlooking it all? Maybe it is replayed with vegetables?
• Ubu seems so brave in this scene… Is he really? Or is it an anomaly?
• Rips open Ubu’s boodle. What is a boodle?

**Scene 5**

• How does she know she only has two hours to live?
• Can we give the royal family a feature? Bushy eyebrows? Bumpy elbows? Long noses?
• Do they deserve to be Royal? Is that what this play is saying? Or are they snoots too?
• Is there any nobility in this world before the Ub's arrive?

**Scene 6**

• What does Ubu think is going to happen after he is King?
• Are Mère Ubu and Bordure friends? Allies? See on the same level?

**Scene 7**

• Are the people really pleased about Ubu being King? Or faking it?

**ACT THREE**

**Scene 1**

• Is Mère Ubu having an affair with Bordure? That's why she defends him?

**Scene 2**

• What are the nobles' hook, book, coffer, knife? Real?
• Where is the trap door? Can they run back around it to get thrown in again?
• Is he making up these rules on the spot?
• What do the Palotins think of it all?
• When he says, 'oh shitter', does he really believe that he has made a mess of it? Sometimes it seems to mean 'damn', sometimes 'yay', sometimes it just means 'oh well'.

**Scene 3**

• What are the peasants doing in this scene? Resting? Making hay? Playing checkers?
• At the top of this scene, what do they think of Ubu? Bougrelas?
• Are the tax collectors really on Ubu's side, or are they reluctant? When do they realize that he is an asshole?
Scene 4

- Is horngibolets a twitch? Reaction to something? Can't think of the right word so he just says that?
- Is Ubu illiterate?
- Is he making up the rules as he goes along?

Scene 5

- Can we have dancing rats? Maybe Bordure can ride them to Russia?
- Maybe just a wall of bars, he walks around them?

Scene 6

- What is the Czar like? Does he have an apple for a head? Is he noble? Gross?
- Does Bordure actually have the detailed plan of the town of Thorn? On a napkin?

Scene 7

- Are his advisors afraid of him? He seems like he could change course in a moment.
- Who are the dogs in woolen stockings? Actual dogs? Or soldiers?
- He is afraid.
- Do they really think war is noble?

Scene 8

- Long Live Père Ubu! Do they really think this?
- What are you robbing me? Mère lowers her eyes. Is this the first that has been said of robbery?
- Where does this scene take place? A tent? A field? The courtyard of the palace?

INTERMISSION?

ACT FOUR

Scene 1
• Where is the tomb? Below? In the audience? In one of the lighting booth thingies?
• Do we really need this scene?

Scene 2

• Is Bougrelas really brave? Or is he pretending?
• Do others really think he is brave?

Scene 3

• Are they actually marching? Or stopped?
• Does he actually have all the things he refers to? Shitter-pick, constitution stick? Or are they the same thing?
• Isn’t the top of the hill the preferred locale for a fight?

Scene 4

• What does toper mean?
• What is happening in the battle that makes Ubu say “victory is ours” (Wright, 110) right after it seems to be the exact opposite?
• Does something actually hit him when he freaks out? Or nothing at all?
• He tears Bordure to pieces. Really? How can we do this?

Scene 5

• Fancy metaphor of the scythe and the poppy? What is he saying here? Does anyone know?

Scene 6

• Look up the Latin in Ubu’s prayer, I assume it is full of jokes...
• Where is his explosive knuckle-duster? Is that in the original?
• Is he trying to convince himself, or them, that he saved them with his prayers?
• Are they ready to kill him? Why do they stay with him? Or rather, why do they come back?
• Can we do a Mump and Smoot thing, where they cut up the bear and end up with an arm of one of the puppeteers? The rest of the play she has only one arm? Catherine? She has one more scene as Bougrelas, with a sling?

Scene 7

• Maybe cut some of this? Or all of it?
• If not, how can I make this active? It is really boring...

ACT FIVE

Scene 1

• Maybe Giron is totally grossed out by her, and barfs every time she talks to him, while she flirts all the time?
• How sexual is Mere Ubu?
• Puppet version of this story? It is quite long, and a lot of it has already happened.
• What is Heliotrope?
• What is the relationship between Mère Ubu and the horse? Why is she to blame for it dying? It gets mentioned a couple times. Does she bring in the horse? Maybe I need to add a line: Have you fed it well? Ay.
• What is a Palmiped? A - web-footed water fowl
• How does he torture her? Beat her? Fake beat her? Never get around to it?
• He tears her to pieces. Can we substitute a different Mère Ubu for this scene, and have him actually do all these things to her? That would make this scene a lot more interesting! Is this too violent to do? Am I chickening out?
• She runs back on, throws off the puppet, “Mercy!”

Scene 2

• How small is the cave? Can we actually make it sort of crammed? So that there isn't quite enough room for all these people in there?
• “To have done...” reference to Macbeth?
• Do they kill them all? Jean Sobiesky doesn't actually seem to die here...
  Maybe he is on their side? Does Bougrelas die? He dies earlier, but comes back to life?

Scene 3

• Do we need this scene? It's not really separate.
• How many are left in the cave?
• Why don’t they follow the Ubs when they escape?

Scene 4

• How do we make a boat? Either it is the most realized? Or the least, back to the original style.
• Real water? Someone spraying them? Buckets of water? Fabric?
• Erudition? The quality of having or showing great knowledge or learning; scholarship.
• How does it end? What is the final image? Sail out over the crowd? Do they sing the debraining song? Sing a different song?
• What if they sing all the music in the play?

Nov 29, 2013

Who is Naomi? How does her schoolgirl character fit in with the other students? Maybe she is the nerd that they all bully into playing Ubu. She starts by playing her role nicely, properly, and then gets into it. Gets carried away. She slowly becomes Ubu-like.

Nov 30, 2013

Finished initial, individual meetings with designers. Group designer meeting tomorrow. I have never had the incredible opportunity to collaborate with so many different artists on a project. I often have a sound designer and that's about it. At
the meetings I chose to let them talk about their impressions of the play before I talked about what I wanted to accomplish, so I didn’t influence them. I’ve separated my notes into their thoughts, and my thoughts.

Sarah Melo – Set Designer

Her initial thoughts on the play:

She liked the grossness of it.

She saw it as taking place in one location, so as not to interrupt the flow. Very fast.

She had this idea of a magical moving door, you walk through it and poof, you’re in the Palace!

She wants to find a way to get height and levels onto the set.

Compared the style of the play to Ren and Stimpy, but with high stakes.

She talked about the idea of the play being a mirror to the audience.

There is an urgency to the play, which begets confusion.

She asked, what does the space feel like?

Where do bodies go when they die?

Absurdism – wants to use everyday objects in unusual ways...

We talked about the breaking down of reality.

How Polish is it?

My thoughts:

I like her. She had some great ideas!
One location is interesting. I feel like it needs to have a sense of travelling, though. So, not a super defined original space. Something that can become many things. Perhaps the initial space is just the theatre? Walls are carried on? Etc.

I want each of the locales to be created. Sometimes as they are said, sometimes before, but sometimes after – “the windmill” and the girls rush to put together a kind of windmill.

Magical door idea is kind of neat. But I think we want more to create the spaces, than just have imaginary spaces.

What is the background onto which we built this world?

Mirror to the audience. Can we use this somehow? Actually use mirrors? Need to workshop? Play with? Are we allowed to do this?

What does the space feel like? Hmm. A great question. A skeleton. A place they can play on. I want us to witness the creativity of the girls, I think, as opposed to creating a crazy world for them to inhabit.

There should be a homemade quality to everything. A constant looking over the shoulder to make sure we don’t get caught-ness.

Absurdism – using objects for things they are not. I love this. Fits right in with the creating the world before their eyes.

There should still be some magic, though. We wheel out a cave; show the back, then, suddenly a bear comes out of it.

Era? Shakespearean/18th/19th century Poland.

Single walls. Prison can be walked around. Windows are held. Doors held by people.

Needs to explode out of the proscenium. Use the lighting jutties? Booth in the house? Action in front of the stage? Battle scene comes out into the audience?
Gilt proscenium?

**Kate De Lorme – Sound Designer**

Score? Just between scenes? SFX?

We talked about Carl Stalling and Charlie Mingus as potential inspirations.

Booth in the audience? Sound operators dressed as school girls?

We are sort of stalled on how to proceed. In following the concept that the schoolgirls are making it up as they go along, how can they have pre-recorded sound? How prepared can it possibly be? We have resolved to go our own ways and ponder this dilemma.

**Amelia Ross – Costume Designer**

*Her Thoughts:*

Are the Ubs the only gross ones, or is everyone ugly and disgusting?

Is the any dignity in this world?

Monochromatic and dirty.

Cardboard badges of honor.

*My thoughts:*

Great questions.

I think they all have a base, grotesque schoolgirl costume.
On top of that base, we create all their other characters. They have the appearance of homemade things. Creative, grand, weird, gross, with rough edges. Homemade looking.

Families of characters – Ubs, Palotins, Polish soldiers, Peasants etc.

**Chengyan Boon – Lighting Designer**

*His thoughts:*

He sees the world as taking place in a sort of fairy tale time, feudal. He had a great way of putting it, “in that magical era where guns and swords were of equal value.”

Colours – Red and Green.

Spirals.

**Dec 1, 2013**

*Notes from our first designers meeting.*

Present, all four designers and the sound advisor. None of the other advisors came which I found a little disappointing. It was nice to get everyone together in a room and talk about the ideas behind our production. Some very good ideas came out of this meeting.

Is it a “someone goes on a journey story” or a “stranger comes to town story?”

Stranger comes to town. In which case, Ubu needs to have an effect on this world that he is entering. Is it somewhat sane before he and Mère turn it upside-down?

Someone had the analogy that these people were pretending to be normal human beings.
Dressing up like this is what they think they should look like. Aliens. Sort of like *Galaxy quest*?

Someone also had the analogy that it is like driving through a tunnel, the walls are getting tighter but you can't turn around, it's uncomfortable.

The sound designer asked a question – do we want the audience to feel uncomfortable? I said yes, but now that I am thinking about it, I’m not sure that is the right choice. Perhaps only at the end?

Can we get the audience wet? Can we have a splash zone?

*Universe – Fairy tale/Mythical/Lemony Snicket.*

Is the audience expecting to see *this* play?

> How does the program inform them? Is it written by the girls themselves?

They are presenting what they have learned in school.

They have raided the props department, and made their costumes at home.

*Found objects.*

Intermission – are the girls running the concession?

I suggested, what if we have a nun, or teacher, whom they are making fun of, who they carry on at the top of the show tied up, plop her down in the centre stage, and perform around her? Or in the audience?

Intermission, she escapes? Dies?

The only issue with this idea is that it makes the whole thing about a specific teacher, as opposed to a statement on humanity, universal, mythical.

Description of the Ubs

- Bulbous
- Greedy
• Ugly
• Violent
• Fat
• Bursting at the seams
• Not quite human
• T-rex arms?

Dec 10, 2013

UBU ROI by Keith Beaumont

Selected notes.

• “All successful revolutions end of course by becoming part of an established order, and Ubu Roi is no exception.” (Beaumont, 9)
• Except maybe Godot, no character is as differently interpreted.
• “…could never have come into existence without the vast and shapeless mass of schoolboy legend and fantasy out of which all were created. In the fullest possible sense – and this perhaps provides a key to much of its appeal - Ubu Roi is the fruit of a collective schoolboy imagination, an authentic product of a collective, ‘primitive’ creativity, in a far more real sense than what much of what in our culture passes for ‘popular’ or ‘folk’ art.” (13)
• In the original stories, the chief goal was for phynance or plunder. He had a big sack that he put stuff in.
• Jarry was really the director. He cast it, designed props, found the composer, arranged the press campaign, etc.
• There were more theatres in Paris than in the rest of France.
• Technically, theatre was at a high point, artistically it had reached a nadir.

Three ways to combat realism are found in Jarry’s writings on the theatre.

1. A theatre based on the principles of extreme simplification, and even abstraction.
a. No realistic sets. Backdrops that indicate a feeling
b. Props should be brought onstage in full view of the audience
c. Get rid of reality
d. Actors are “objects which uselessly encumber the stage. If human actors are to be used...” (22) he should hide his personality with a mask.

e. He wants the audience's imagination to be used.
f. Apparently he was the first to talk about the theatre or even art where the audience is not passive, but is a co-creator. This concept is key to all the theatre that Monster Theatre creates.

2. The need for the theatre to concern itself not with merely contemporary but with universal themes and preoccupations.
   a. Archetypes and mythology
   b. Ubu becomes an everyman, and the nowhere of Poland, becomes an everywhere.
   c. Costumes are intended to be incongruous and incoherent.

3. The need for an overwhelmingly visual, as opposed to narrative and psychological theatre
   a. The goal of theatre should not be to tell a story, or the analysis of character, but the theatre should concern itself with the projection and visual manifestation of archetypal images, which will strike the imagination of the spectator and imprint themselves firmly on his memory.

• Description of the character Ubu
  i. Vulgar – curses, toilet brushes, pooping his pants
  ii. Sadistic cruelty - threatens violence against all and enjoys seeing others in pain.
  iii. Cowardice – also fickleness and treachery
  iv. Gluttony and Greed
v. Dumb – doesn’t understand a thing when Mère is convincing him to kill the king. Other characters comment on this far more than any of his other traits.


- His contemporaries saw the play as a satire on the Bourgeois, but no one is treated well. The peasants are as greedy as Ubu. Jarry didn’t want the audience to see the play narrowly, and neither do I.
- There is “no reason to expect a character as patently stupid as Ubu to come out with successful jokes and witticisms.” (47)
- “Jarry is inviting us to laugh – and to laugh heartily – at ourselves and the grotesque monstrosity of our own lives.” (57)
- There is a fascinating section on previous and seminal productions. Here are some highlights.

1. Theatre de l’Œuvre, 1896 – the Premiere
   a. Only performed twice, including the dress rehearsal
   b. The set was painted by local artists, including Toulouse-Lautrec
   c. Set included palm trees, snow, inside, outside, a snake around a tree as Eden, a skeleton, an elephant astride the sun, a bunch of owls…
   d. Nobles, magistrates and financiers were mannequins, he had 40 made and costumed.
   e. Actors all had different accents
   f. Stiff and jerky actions of marionettes
   g. An actor represented the prison door, he was given a key and clicked to open the door. The audience apparently protested this.
   h. To quiet the protesting crowd Pere and Mere changed from the marionette style performance to more pantomime style, and danced jigs, and blew into horns… which, I guess worked! Amazing that Jarry’s actual planned production only lasted for one word!!

2. Theatre Antoine – 1908
   a. 4 months after Jarry’s death
b. Gemier again played Ubu, and was in charge of the production

c. Backdrop was painted like a kids plaything.

d. Placards to show scene changes

e. Mère Ubu played by a man, frills and clown-like

f. Overall way more fun, and jokey

g. Added opening and closing scenes. They ran on and hit each other at the beginning, and all came back to life and started snoring at the end.

3. Theatre de l’Œuvre – Lugne Poe – 1922
   a. Current events were placed in it

   a. Critics said is was far surpassed in horror by the actual events of WW2, so that the play seemed to have lost it’s power to shock.

   a. Combined scenes from Enchained and Roi.
   c. Huge band, a bunch of different styles
   d. Focused on the stupidity and brutality of Ubu.

6. Cherry Lane Theatre, NY – 1952
   a. Eventually more English productions than French
   b. Sets of brown paper, costumes of rags

   a. This is the translation I am planning to use.

8. Royal Court in 1966
   a. Labels painted on things themselves, Phynancial Horse is written on.
   b. Merdre was kept in French
   c. As most other versions, added Music hall and extra jokes.
   d. Ubu himself was jovial and self-aware.

   a. Inspired by the drawings in Barbara Wrights translation drawn by the artist Franciszka Themerson
   b. Half-human, half-puppet actors.
10. 1970 – Phenomenol Theatre
   a. Ubu is ejected from a giant anus at the top of the show
   b. Added many sexual elements as well. The more I read the play, the more I notice that there is actually very little sexual content.

11. Peter Brook – 1977
   a. Used the original text, except after act 4, he substituted Sur la Butte. (So, Peter Brook also thought the end was boring.)
   b. Enchained followed after the intermission
   c. Bare dirty walls, bare stage
   d. No wings, actors could be seen in the wings, or enter from side doors, trap doors, windows, or the audience
   e. Audience interaction – Mère Ubu crawling under an audience member’s chair to get the treasure
   f. Costumes were more like rags.
   g. Brook vs. Jarry
      i. Jarry says the actor must become a puppet, unimportant, lending importance to the set etc. – Brook has the actor as primary importance, and the set and props are incidental.
      ii. Brook’s violence was conveyed to, not directed at the audience. If it is impossible to alienate an audience, perhaps it is better to incorporate it.
         - This is a very interesting idea. Do we want the audience to feel violence directed at them? Or to simply observe a display of violence?

12. 1985 Paris
   a. Satire of the French bourgeois
   b. Modern dining room for the Ubs
   c. This version had a deliberate use of schoolboy-ness in the design.

• Jarry loved the idea of art having different interpretations depending on the viewer. Something upon which we can project. I love this concept too.
• “To laugh at such absurd forms of humour, requires a willingness to suspend the normal habits of rational thinking characteristic of the adult mind, and to enter once again, at least momentarily, into the spirit of childhood.” (95)

• He seems very caught up in the idea that one has to follow Jarry’s original intentions. However, I think what is more important is to be aware of them, and to note and have good reasons for when one veers from them.

• The riots of the original version. Do I need to recreate this? Or do I want rather to inspire the audience to revisit their childhood? To see the universality of this character and the actions of the play?

• Incongruity and incoherence, NOT absurdity

Dec 20, 2013

Alfred Jarry – The Man With an Axe

Another interesting book. More about the life of Jarry, but some of the facts of his life are fascinating. He was sort of like the Hunter S Thompson of the 1890s.

• Describes his Dad as a French Willy Loman. Describes the normalcy into which Jarry was born.

• Dad was an alcoholic. Mom was unique, dressed like a bullfighter; her mother and brother were in asylums.

• Friends at school called him Quasimodo. He was less than 5 feet, walked with a peculiar gait, and had a cutting voice.

• Les Polonaise. They all lived near the school. Some of the marionettes Jarry had gotten for Christmas, his sister Charlotte made the Ubu puppet, Jarry painted the sets.

• 1893 He caught the flu, his Mom and sister came to look after him, and his Mom died from it.

• Pataphysics, his personal system to explain the absurdities in life. The laws which govern exceptions.
Jan 8, 2014

Design Meeting

A promising meeting. This time none of the advisors were there.

Lots of ideas from Sarah the set designer. We stayed after the meeting for over an hour drawing pictures on the chalkboard, trying to solve the case of the cave. Decided on the trap door scene to have them be real traps on either side of the stage. The nobles etc. are shoved down one, then run across and come back up the other side. We have decided to run with the idea that the set is actually a pile of junk that we imagine the girls have compiled from robbing the props department at the theatre. I used the *Les Miserables* barricade as an example. We need to find ways to have playable areas on top of it, and to have it accessible from various directions. But I quite like the idea that it is compiled of things they use in the show. “We need a door! Oh, there's one right here.”

We talked again about the idea of having the operators, or at least false operators in the house. It allows us to have a sound designer as a character who can be struggling to get everything right. An alternate idea was to have them off stage, and every now and then run on with headphones and records falling out of her hands.

Jan 10, 2014

Sound meeting. We decided to have a fake operator offstage (one for lights too? Or the same one? Charlotte?). Every now and then she comes on with a disaster. Foley aspects, coconuts, slide whistle, thunder sheet. In the opening she is on with the rest of them. Then hurries off to put some sound on for the opening of the play.
Jan 12, 2014

I think the theme is incongruity, or smashing of expectations. I think my goal is to let the audience create successive sets of expectations and then to break each of those. The result, hopefully, will be that the audience feels unsteady, disoriented. Every time they think they ‘get it’ or know what kind of a play they are witnessing, we surpass those expectations and smash through their preconceptions.

If the play is a steady spiral into chaos, can we juxtapose that with the opposite effect in our staging so that the big tricks and effects come towards the end? This is a trick from my street performer days, set-up, set-up, set-up, trick! Lower the expectations at the beginning. As Keith Johnstone says, “the audience will lend you their attention, as long as you pay it back with interest.”

Jan 20, 2014

I read another great book with some more in-depth information about poor old Hebert. It talks about how the Père Héb stories all started about his classroom exploits, but over the years as the students tried to outdo each other, they became more fantastical. There is an example of an early story, which describes how Père Héb was born “with a bowler hat on his head and both arms on one side, unlike humans.” (Brotchie, 12)

Feb 3, 2014

Day one! Seems like very good vibes in the room. Everyone is excited. Basically I gave a run-down of the concept and some of the ideas I hope to achieve. I wrote them down summarizing some things from my analysis and previous writings. But once I started I realized that they were far too long winded and I limited myself to the more basic information. I've included the complete notes as Appendix A. Specifically:
• Points of inspiration (Brecht, Bouffon, Monster Theatre)
• Concept (world of the schoolgirls, world of the Ubs)
• Dramatic Metaphor (the spiral into chaos)
• The idea of the play being universal, out of time/place.

I also talked a bit about the way that I hope rehearsals go, in that I want us to be discovering and creating moments together. I told them that the more they contribute, the more they will have to do in the play. I tried to pass on an excitedness about the fact that the play will be partly created in the rehearsal room. It is a definite worry and something that I will have to clock as we go, that I make them feel safe in spite of making the play without a safety net. I intend to try to make them trust me, and take responsibility when things go awry (as they are bound to do!).

I asked if we were able to say the word Macbeth in rehearsal without offending anyone. Both Sarah Harrison and Naomi (The Ubs) were worried, but agreed to let it be spoken without concern. I also talked a bit about the idea that we need to embrace the filth. I said that I wanted a different actor to bring a dirty joke to rehearsal everyday. One of the intermediate girls told the first joke, and it was a doozy, utterly inappropriate to repeat here.

We then read through the play while I assigned stray lines to actors. At first they were quite tight and nervous. Saying the lines as if they were from a Chekhov play, trying to get it “right”. But as the reading wore on, a few of them started making some more bold choices. They weren’t great choices, but I was careful to always smile and never correct, and eventually the rest of the group warmed up and started having more fun.

At the end of the read I opened the floor to questions, and there were many. One wanted to know exactly what I meant by coming to rehearsals ‘open and present’ and if it meant she couldn’t be doing other homework while she wasn’t onstage. Another wanted to know more about the rehearsal process, “are we doing table
work?” The answer is no, there is no subtext to uncover here. They wanted to know about details about costumes and various other things.

I tried to move around the room and have at least a little conversation with everyone. I can already tell that some folks are unhappy with the size of their roles. I want to really try and nip this in the bud. I mentioned to them that the more they are involved in rehearsal, the more they will have to do. But I’ll have to really put it into action. Anyways, it is something to keep an eye on.

I walked home with Sarah (Mère Ubu) and Naomi (Père Ubu). It was nice to have the two of them alone for a while. We talked about the idea that we want Ubu to be lovable and stupid at the beginning, but that as the play wears on, be becomes more brutal and violent and a downright asshole. We talked about how Sarah can support this by being the controlling ‘Lady M’ wife at the top, but becoming more of a victim to Ubu in the later scenes.

Naomi said, “Feel free to make more cuts.” Which I think I will in the cave scene, it just goes on and on and it’s all after the climax of the play. Sometimes I feel like I am struggling against this play. Like, if we are to make a truly great production, it will be in spite of the original text.

Next up is to try and create some characters for the schoolgirls, and also to write and stage the opening scene. I had some ideas on my walk home about the opening scene, so I think I’ll try to write a little text for it, which we can alter when we get there. It’s inspired by something suggested by Stephen, that our opening speech is composed of bits of the opening speech made by Jarry in 1896.

Feb 8, 2014

What a fun rehearsal!

Originally I had decided to dedicate this rehearsal to discovering our schoolgirl characters and staging/writing the opening scene. After a bunch of thought, I
decided to not attempt to stage the opening scene. Inspired by Peter Brook’s theory that you should never try to accomplish anything on the first day of rehearsal, since it is all about getting to know each other and creating relationships, I wanted to allow that to happen. Also I realized that the schoolgirls base characters were a huge part of our show and to spend only part of one day working of them specifically is not enough. In light of that, I have decided to add another day of schoolgirl work and move blocking a day later.

Today we did a little bit of warm-up. We played an improv game called “Yes, Let’s”. The gist of the game is that they stand in a clump, take turns making suggestions, after each suggestion they exclaim loudly “Yes, let’s!” If they find they cannot genuinely yell it enthusiastically, they go and sit down. When it’s over you can ask them when they sat and why, and you can learn lots about narrative structure and sheer entertainment value. I wanted to pass on the idea of a Circle of Expectations, which is a storytelling concept that explains how when a story begins the audience starts creating a phantom story in their heads. If it is a cowboy story they might imagine a horse thief, or love on the ranch, or whatever, but they likely aren’t thinking about elephants or aliens. I wanted us to be thinking of our schoolgirls in this way, to help us brainstorm what types of things are acceptable in our universe.

Next, we brainstormed all the different types of schoolgirls we could think of. We were looking for categories of girls that could be universal, that were not tied to a particular time and place. We also tried to divide ones that were conditions (pregnant, rich) versus ones that were ways of being (shy, mean, loner).

• Pregnant teen
• Bossy bitch/ snob
• Flirty
• Athletic/ tomboy
• Lesbian
• Nerd/ intellectual
• Depressed/ loner
• Do-gooder
• Badass
• Over-actor/ theatre nerd
• Hippie/ stoner
• Dumb
• Valedictorian
• Prom Queen
• Foreigner/ Immigrant
• Overly emotional
• Shy/sheltered
• Fighter
• Class Clown
• Violent
• Raised by wolves

We then did some experimenting with the list we came up with. We played another improv game called Endowments, or Attitudes. We cast a scene with four girls; each girl secretly attributes a quality to each of the other girls. Each girl, for example, assigns a smart one, a violent one, and a perfect one. They then play a scene endowing their scene partners with these qualities. The exercise is meant to help train actors to be outward focused, but we begin to see that some of our list is playable, and some not so much.

We then went back through our list and assigned characteristics to each actor.

We then tried to put these proto-characters into a scene. I used one of my favourite games, The Exclusion Game. I give the instruction, “someone is going to be excluded from the group, don’t let it be you.” Basically it looks like a real high school party, some characteristics are clear, some counteract the game, but in general it is hilarious chaos and releases a lot of positive energy.
We play one other game at the end of the day in character, it is called Making Faces. I set up one ‘boss’ (Mère Ubu) in a chair; two actors sit on either side of her, as her employees. She asks them questions, they respond, if the centre person doesn’t like them, or they give a bad answer, or seem unprofessional, she fires them and someone else replaces them. While she is grilling one, the other makes faces behind her back. We go through the entire cast, again, tonnes of fun, and some of their individual characteristics come out to play.

During the break I spoke with Charlotte about her role as the sound operator. She seems excited about it. I think she liked the idea originally, but it was so vague that she just wasn’t 100% clear. So, it was good to have a little one-on-one.

I expect the schoolgirl traits will alter and shift in the coming days, and evolve once we start applying them to the text. All in all, a great day, very positive feelings all around.

**Monday, Feb 10, 2014**

Another fun day, although we accomplished less than on Saturday. It was the designer presentations and official first read.

Sarah presented a model of the set that had everyone very excited. They literally squealed a few times when Sarah revealed some of our neater tricks. I did overhear one saying “that makes me nervous” regarding all the stairs and ladders. Safety was a priority before, but I’ll have to stay vigilant in making sure the cast, not just are safe, but feel safe as well.

Amelia presented her costume sketches, which also excited the group; I overheard a few conversations afterwards that seemed keen on the designs. Kate *Skyped™* in and gave a brief run-down on the sound design. I wonder if maybe Charlotte, Kate and I should have a meeting to go over stuff sometime? Chengyan also talked briefly about lighting, but there is not much to report on that front yet.
After the design presentations we did another read-through of the script. Again their only direction was to *not get it right*, some embraced it and some didn’t. I tasked the girls to write down any questions they had as we went through the script. It is an exercise I learned from Rachel Ditor in her dramaturgy class that helps you to see the play from the eyes of an audience. Once you’ve read it 100 times there are things you cannot notice, but with access to the questions of a cast of 16 new problems and ideas will become obvious.

After the reading we spent about 45 minutes reading our questions. The only rule was that we wouldn’t answer them. They were purely for contemplation. Lots of interesting things came up, and it was fascinating to see the types of things that they were concerned with. There were a lot of questions about place names, and made-up words, and not a lot about the characters themselves (What does she feel about this? Do they love each other? Why does he say this?).

Here are some of their questions. I excluded repeat questions from earlier:

- How was Ubu the King of Aragon and why did he lose the title?
- Who is the Duke of Lithuania right now?
- Why are we in Poland? What does it mean to the schoolgirls?
- Why is there so much religious reference? Is it suppose to be genuine or an insult to religion?
- Do Mère and Père love each other? What is their sex life like?
- Do the schoolgirls talk and act crudely because of the *Ubu* characters or because of the schoolgirl characteristic dynamics?
- Are all these places in Poland real? Some made up?
- Why does the umbrella turn Ubu on so much?
- Why is Père financially not well off?
- Why is financial/phynancial always spelt differently?
- How does the Queen actually die?
- Why are Pile and Cotice special?
- Does she really have explosive knuckle-dusters?
• Do we see how the characters die? Are the hundreds killed during Ubu’s war an exaggeration or truth?
• Why does Bordure send a death letter warning?
• What’s a pig pinching machine?
• Does Mère’s first meal have shitter in it?
• Why do Pile and Cotice come back to the cave?
• Are there different kinds of currency and what are their values?
• Where did they get the boat?
• Which ocean is Poland on?
• Are the Soldiers good at fighting?

Figure 2.2  Costume design for Père and Mère Ubu by Amelia Ross
Figure 2.3  Set design sketch of the junk pile set by Sarah Melo.

Figure 2.4  Set design sketch of the feast in scene 1.3 by Sarah Melo
**Tuesday, Feb 11, 2014**

Had a meeting with Stephen this afternoon, we discussed lots of things, but one has spurred a decision. He asked to what extent does the schoolgirl world leak into the real world of patrons at the Frederic Wood Theatre. Are the girls running the box office, etc.? Although earlier in the process I was keen to incorporate this element, I have changed my stance and I think I want the play to begin the moment that the curtain goes up, and end when it lowers. I want to leave the audience with a sense that they have been somewhere, and that the somewhere they have been has changed them. In between curtains, the show will leak into the audience and get in their faces, but when it is over they can walk back to their cars and contemplate it as a whole. I still need to dwell on this idea more, but at this stage, this is what I am thinking. I wish I could do the show without an intermission.
This was the extra schoolgirl day I added to our schedule. We spent a chunk of time talking about the schoolgirls and how they fit into the world of the Ubs. Someone asked the great question, “What does the world look like if they fail?” Instead of answering, I turned the question back to the girls and they came up with some fantastic and insightful thoughts.

We ended up combining some of their thoughts into this answer: They are a class of girls who have been in trouble at school, the school year is ending and it’s their last chance to do anything together, so they have chosen this play, snuck into this theatre and are trying to perform it before they get caught. There is a constant offstage threat of getting stopped, or arrested, which acts as a ticking clock for the stakes of the play itself.

The question was asked again, what percentage of the play is performed as the schoolgirls, and what percentage is inside the world of Ubu. I told them that they are the schoolgirl characters 100% of the time, and that it is the schoolgirls themselves who play the characters in Ubu’s world.

We then went around the room and each girl introduced us to her schoolgirl character. We got most of their names, wants, interpersonal relationships, etc. A few of the girls still seem unsure and have some more decisions to make.

After warm-up we played a game that we invented last year that we called ‘clump’. Everyone stands in a clump on the stage. Someone asks a question, such as “are you a virgin?” or “have you ever killed an animal?” or “are you afraid of heights?” If the answer is yes, they step forward, if the answer is no, they step backwards. It was fun for them to start really imagining the lives of their girls. I kept reminding them that we are not tied to decisions made here and encouraging them to take risks since we can alter everything later if we want.

Then we played some status games to show some of the qualities of high/low status and matching status. As with the first rehearsal, I had planned to do a bunch of status work, but I was hijacked by a different game. It started with an idea I had to
get all the girls to line up according to their status, and I wanted to start breaking them up into groups to find more intimate status interactions. But the line-up didn't go as well as I hoped. Some couldn't figure it out, and some were trying to tell others where they should be standing. So, I altered it slightly – I asked one of the girls to line up the others in the order that her character likes them. Then each of the girls did the same. It was totally interesting to see how different the lines were. Someone like Sarah Harrison’s character (Mère Ubu) for example, who is sort of the Queen Bee/Alpha of the group was placed much lower by many of the girls, even though objectively she has that status, not everyone sees her like that. We repeated this for every girl. Each time I went down the line and asked why each one was placed where they were, and a tonne of details emerged about the characters.

We had less than an hour left in rehearsal, so I tried another experiment. I asked them to run through the whole play, without scripts or any actual text, as their schoolgirl characters. It was hilarious, and utterly chaotic. It was interesting in this particular version to see the omnipresence of the schoolgirls, and how the story of Ubu became totally secondary. The main turning point seemed to be when Catherine as the bear’s top half got her arm chopped off.

Tomorrow we begin blocking!

**Wednesday, Feb 12, 2014**

Well, we started blocking today. It is so obviously a much larger and more complex undertaking than I have attempted before. It took a while to get things rolling (as always) but in the end we accomplished all our goals in the time allocated.

We started with a little confusion over the set taped out on the floor. They neglected to tape out the apron of the stage, so the furthest downstage area was the fireline, or immediately in front of the set. So, we had some negotiating as to where we could do the scenes. In the end we pulled up the front row of chairs.
Again we skipped over the initial scene that is not in the script. It took almost an hour to stage the moment of Bethany giving the go-ahead that the Ubs are dressed sending Charlotte to start the first sound cue, to raising the curtain and getting in place for the first scene. There is a technical difficulty in that we need to know where these items are stored to stage it, but that we have to wait until we have the things and the set to decide where they can actually go. We made loose, changeable decisions.

Once we got rolling we had a tonne of fun finding moments to engage the various bits of furniture holders and puppet operators.

The actual playing of the scene was a different beast altogether. The trick seemed to be to decide the moments where they are saying the actual text from the Jarry play, and juxtapose those with the moments where they are improvising, or reacting as their schoolgirls themselves and not in character at all. As we clumped our way through the first scene we found a bunch of moments where they are saying the lines as their schoolgirls. Ubu has a few moments of “I don’t understand” that seemed to work perfectly. But once we went back and ran the scene, I could tell that we had too many moments of that nature and that it broke up the flow of the scene as it was intended. I left it as it was, but added fewer such moments in the following scenes and they seemed closer to my vision.

A few of the girls are throwing themselves into their schoolgirl characters; their work is really paying off. In particular Ghazal’s violent character, Natasha’s nerd, Catherine’s overeager young’un, and Nicole’s tough cool girl. Some of them I will have to keep an eye on to make sure their characters evolve. Some might need some encouragement to keep the schoolgirl characters alive all the time.

I started trying to call them all by their schoolgirl names, but I think I’ll try to play some name games at the top of rehearsals until we get them all, and encourage everyone to use those names during rehearsals.

All in all a good start, and some very funny business we came up with.
I’ll include a chart with their character names and qualities and refer to them using their schoolgirl names from here on. This list was made later in rehearsal, so some of these characteristics evolved later.

Table 2.1 Character traits and names

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Naomi</th>
<th>Shy, outcast</th>
<th>Addy</th>
<th>Père Ubu</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sarah H</td>
<td>Alpha, Queen bitch</td>
<td>Vivian</td>
<td>Mère Ubu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bethany</td>
<td>Beta, flirty</td>
<td>Scarlett</td>
<td>Bordure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lara</td>
<td>Apathetic, too cool for school</td>
<td>Billie Jean</td>
<td>King Venceslas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natasha</td>
<td>Nerd, overemotional</td>
<td>Tallulah</td>
<td>Queen Rosamonde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morgan</td>
<td>Airy fairy, hippie</td>
<td>Daisy</td>
<td>Pile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole</td>
<td>Tough</td>
<td>Lexie</td>
<td>Cotice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah C</td>
<td>Tough, immigrant, ESL</td>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>Giron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine</td>
<td>Over actor, grade 8</td>
<td>Minnie</td>
<td>Bougrelas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cassandra</td>
<td>Over eager, grade 8</td>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>Boleslas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenna</td>
<td>Over eager, grade 8</td>
<td>Lana</td>
<td>Ladislas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghazal</td>
<td>Violent</td>
<td>Xena</td>
<td>General Lascy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercedes</td>
<td>Valedictorian that no one likes</td>
<td>Jean Evita Sobiesky</td>
<td>Various. Gets killed 10 times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte</td>
<td>Outsider</td>
<td>Lizzie</td>
<td>Sound/light designer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allyce</td>
<td>Pregnant</td>
<td>Tina</td>
<td>Rensky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kat</td>
<td>Class Clown</td>
<td>Mary Jane</td>
<td>Tsar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Saturday, Feb 15, 2014

Our first full eight-hour day of rehearsal. We got a tonne done. Again, it took us a long time to get started and arrange the crowds in between scenes. Once we got going we found some very fun moments.

At the end of rehearsal we ran through from the beginning of the play all the way to where we worked that day. It was very exciting to see some of it put together, and I think it helped the girls have a sense of what we are doing. There is a lot of tinkering to do obviously, but I was very pleased with how much we’ve accomplished in such a short time.

Monday, Feb 17, 2014

Another full day that was spent working scenes up to the big nobles kill-off and finished with a run through of everything we worked today. Looking forward to seeing all of act one tomorrow.

Ghazal has taken the biggest risks of anyone and really embraced her “violent” character, Xena. Morgan as well has really found her character, Daisy, and discovered some nice moments. The other Palotins are taking longer to find their schoolgirl characters. Originally we had decided that the three Palotins were a group of tough chicks, but since Daisy has arrived as a real flower child, it kind of changes everything for the other two. Every day I start with checking in with the girls to see if anyone has questions or concerns. It is certainly proving true what I told them at the first rehearsal that the more they are engaged in rehearsal, the more moments we will find for them in the show.

We started seeing the transition of Addy from put down chump, to starting to embrace her role in the title character and manifesting that power on some of the other students. There are a few moments where it is really clear. Vivian is the queen bee of the school, and it is fun to see her power diminish slowly over the first
half of the play. A lot of the work we did creating the schoolgirl characters is making this work easier too. When Addy makes a transition, I can go around the room and ask each of the girls what their schoolgirls think of it, and the answers are all different.

The scene in the cave with Bougrelas and Queen Rosamonde needs more work.

We also came up with a fun idea that there is a second program inserted inside the real program. The insert will be the one made by the schoolgirls complete with bios for their schoolgirl characters.

**Tuesday, Feb 18, 2014**

We got to the end of act one today and ran through the whole thing. It’s starting to tell a fairly coherent story I think. We have painted quite a few of the transitions in Addy’s journey from trod upon outcast to dominating maniac. We have perhaps spent a little too much time creating little comic timing moments, but I have a hard time helping myself with so much fun material, and 16 actors to work with!

Gayle came to watch the run to check on the pronunciations of some of the foreign words. Nick was hanging around and so I invited him to watch our Act 1 run too. I really believe in the importance of showing work long before it is finished. They both laughed lots, but less than we did. Some of which is because we know how the moments are supposed to go with full costume etc., but some perhaps because they are a little inside jokey. Something to watch.

After the run I asked Nick to describe the play as he saw it, he outlined the *Ubu* story clearly, and said he didn’t see a clear journey yet in the schoolgirls part of the story. I am glad he seemed clear on the *Ubu* stuff, because I am starting to think that some of our gags are clogging up the *Ubu* narrative. I warned the girls to prepare themselves to lose some of our favourite gags. We always use the phrase ‘kill your babies’ to refer to moments that need to be cut because they are your favourite
which usually means they are self-indulgent. I chatted with Nick a little more and he could identify the main points in Addy’s journey, so my hunch is it was clearer than he said at first, but that as an acting student, he was focused on acting moments, which were muddy.

Gayle seemed to enjoy it, too. We clarified some of the pronunciations, not necessarily to be correct, but at least so that they are consistent. She said she had doubted I could pull off telling the story via the schoolgirls, but that she thought it very clear already. Her main comment was that the next step is to address the schoolgirls’ relationship to the audience. A good reminder, since that it such a major element of my vision, it is important to not let the show go too long without really working that angle in. Although, I think I will leave it for the second pass so that we can find specific moments to implement it.

In the run, I noticed Naomi started with some of the zeal and confidence that she is meant to gather as the play progresses. I’ll have to keep an eye on her and remind her that her character starts the play as the bottom rung on the ladder.

One last thought is that I think I have all the information I need to create the opening scene now. I’m glad I waited and didn’t dedicate any rehearsal time to trying to make a scene with characters that weren’t fleshed out. Once we are done this pass, I’ll work that scene in.

**Wednesday, Feb 20, 2014**

A tougher day than we have had. Naomi told us during check-in that her grandfather passed away that morning. She seemed ok as it was not unexpected and she said he had had a long and wonderful life, but I could see her checking out sometimes understandably. I chatted with her during one of the breaks and she seems to be handling everything well with a positive attitude.
We planned out our intermission which will feature girls wandering out on stage and doing unassuming activities, some girls smoking and drinking, some doing homework, some listening to music, the pregnant girl trying to knit a sock, which culminates in a dance party that gets interrupted by Vivian and the play resumes. We worked a couple scenes at the beginning of our act two.

Then we moved on to the big battle scene. I have allocated about 4 hours in total to work these ten pages, and I will use every single second. So far I think I have choreographed the large group of actors better than I thought I would have. It is definitely the biggest element of directing this play that I had no previous experience in. This battle scene is stretching my imagination. So far it is acceptable, not fantastic, but I want to try to get it roughly blocked so that I can see what it looks like all together. It will be nice to start the day with coming back to this scene, and have a night to sleep on it.

**Figure 2.6  The Ubs  (Sarah Harrison as Mère Ubu and Naomi Vogt as Père Ubu. Photo credit - Nancii Bernard)**
Saturday, Feb 22, 2014

We had a very productive week. We started and completed blocking Act 2. My original vision of having the chaos increase as the play goes on has most definitely been achieved thus far. Also, part of the reason I wanted to include a sub-storyline of the schoolgirl playing Ubu becoming more emboldened through the playing of role was because the last two acts of Jarry’s play is actually quite dull, it climaxes with the battle scene and then there is the long scene in the cave followed by a jokey escape by boat. I thought having the schoolgirl story resolve could help keep the audiences attention all the way to the final curtain. Again, I think I was successful in achieving this, but not exactly in the way I predicted.

The battle scene is completed, and it is funny to read that I was worried about it when we were only half way through, because now that it is complete it is one of my favourite moments in the show. It is absolute mayhem. I’ve never staged anything so complex before.

Watching the run of everything together was very interesting. I feel like the schoolgirl story is slightly more present than the Ubu story. There are some beats in Act One where the journey of Addy from meek outcast into, what I have termed the joining of schoolgirl and character, Adubu, are fuzzy and can be clarified during our next pass. I feel like some of the actual Ubu story points need to be drawn out a tiny bit more. I’ve taken a few steps to help this happen, and I’ll keep watch for those moments as we work through the play a second time.

During this second pass through the play, I think it is important to dedicate a chunk of our time to mechanical matters like props, sound cues, relevant lighting cues, and important set moments. Otherwise I think it will be too overwhelming to add these elements late in the process. I need to keep myself balanced between these types of details, and the story details and the acting beats.

At the beginning of rehearsal we revisited the question of ‘why are these schoolgirls doing this play?’ We reiterated the ideas that they are in a boarding school together
and have suffered together. The play to them is not about any one specific teacher, or any one specific authority figure, or political system, but rather a battle cry against what they see as the foul and dark elements of humanity. We agreed that this is their last moment together, that each are being sent off to some other school, separated forever, and as a final act of rebellion they have chosen to perform this play.

We also talked about what their understanding of this play is. Have they read Alfred Jarry’s play? Did they make up this story? We decided that it is a sort of fairy tale that they came across, which they roughly adapted into a play, so it is not Jarry’s play they are doing, it is their own adaptation of a story they all are, to varying degrees, familiar with. At the end of rehearsal we spent some time making up what exactly this fairy tale was. As in, where does this version veer from the story they thought they were going to tell? It was a fun experiment and worthwhile because I think it will inform how they react when things go sideways.

See Appendix B for our outline, which shows the moments where they know what they are doing, and the moments where they veer from the prepared play. This was developed primarily by Sarah Harrison.

**Monday, Feb 24, 2014**

We started back at the front of the play today and worked through Jarry’s entire Act One.

I intended to have written the opening scene for the schoolgirls introduction to the play, but I ended up not having time. However we spent the first hour or so of rehearsal talking about it. Again, I let the girls themselves outline what we want to say in this scene. We made a list of things that were important to include.

- Casting. They have to have cast Naomi’s schoolgirl character, Addy, as the lead role of Ubu.
• Who they are. They need to identify themselves as the graduating class (plus three grade tens) of a boarding school who has chosen to put on the play.

• Some dramaturgical information. In our version we imagine that the girls found an ancient (or modern) fairy tale about a character named Ubu who does some of the things that Ubu does in Jarry’s play. We realized that if we are to accomplish the staged moments where Addy veers from the story, we needed to know when we are on it, and what the original story they intended to tell was.

• Why they want to tell it. I found an interesting way to accomplish this, as an exercise I asked Mercedes schoolgirl, Jean, to start an orderly description of what the play is about and why they are telling it, one by one the other girls interrupt her to say where there ideas differ. It culminates in a cacophony of passionate noise, which leads directly into the play. It is quite powerful, and I think achieves the goal that the audience will ultimately have to ask themselves what the play means, knowing that the girls don’t even agree.

• The stakes. Somehow we need to get across the notion of why this is important to them, and what will happen to them if they don’t accomplish it.

After this we went back to the play and worked through Jarry’s act one. On this pass, I wanted to look at all the sound, decide where all the props and set pieces come from and go, as well as clarifying acting moments. I was too ambitious. About halfway through rehearsal I realized that it is too much to do at once. So I focused on the acting moments. Primarily on making sure every girl knows what they are doing at every moment, and when they are their schoolgirls, and when they are characters in the play. Secondarily I want to draw out the plot points and turning points of the Ubu story itself, which I think got slightly drowned out by our rich schoolgirl story.

The Palotins, who were having a hard time finding their characters, had a breakthrough today. I feel like it took some of them a little longer to find their schoolgirl characters, thus had spent no time developing their Palotin characters, so
when they were snapping from schoolgirl to character, they were simply going from schoolgirl to schoolgirl acting. Now they have something to fall back on, and that we can recognize when they are being ‘themselves’ and when they are trying to act.

**Tuesday, Feb 25 and Wednesday, Feb 26**

Another two productive days. Lots of detail being added. Mère and Père Ubu in particular seem to really understand notes as I give them.

On Wednesday I tackled a scene that I was perhaps the unhappiest with my work on, the first ‘cave’ scene between Bougrelas and Queen Rosamonde. They both want to be the overacting types, so I tried to stage the scene as a competition to out-overact the other. For some reason it just wasn’t working. But I think I solved it, the issues lie in the fact that the schoolgirls are bad actors, but the moments of competition (seeing that you have been outdone, determining to out-bad-act the other) are real moments that have to be convincing.

We need to see the cracks between the moments they become their characters. I have been using the analogy of having a spectrum between schoolgirl and character, and asking them to give me percentages of how much they are one or the other.

Today I found a new analogy that might aid understanding. I described it in terms of puppetry. The character is the puppet, and the schoolgirl is the hand, and sometimes we can clearly see that the hand is operating the puppet, but sometimes the puppet can become so convincing that we forget the hand is there. I’m trying to use a technique I learned from John Cooper that the director must have half a dozen different analogies, or frames of reference and you must continue to search for new ones until you can see that one has clicked with the actor.

This is an issue with the Palotins too. Cotice seems unsure of either who her schoolgirl is, or who the character of Cotice is. I’m going to try to find a moment to talk with her privately and encourage her. She is a very smart and creative person and I know she can find something interesting.
There was a funny moment at the very end of rehearsal where I realized that of all the gags we’ve found for Mary Jane the class clown, none of the other girls laugh at them. I asked if the other schoolgirls think she is funny, and there was a huge pause. No one had thought about it. So, I had to repeat my new catchphrase, react as you think your schoolgirl would react. Some should think she’s hilarious, some should think she’s annoying, but all should have some kind of attitude to her.

On Tuesday one of the girls brought up the line-up exercise that we had done on one of the first days and how much they have changed. I cautioned them to not even think back to the line-ups because their relationships have evolved so much since then, and that the exercise was merely a starting place.

I’m torn on whether or not we should go back and re-run all of act one, or if we should push through so that we can have at least looked at everything once before we do the run on Saturday afternoon when a bunch of the designers are attending. I think I will, even though at the end of rehearsal last night I told them we wouldn’t.

I also had a thought about my analysis, regarding the emphatic element. I was thinking about our version of this play, and how some elements have such different focus than they did in the original. This is the result of my having targeted specific goals I wanted to achieve, such as trying to recreate a sense of outrage in the audience, and to create a world in which these people can exist truthfully. And it occurred to me that not only is there an emphatic element (Ubu) but that perhaps what is equally important is to isolate elements that are decidedly not emphatic, or critical to this production. For example, the narrative, or Ubu’s rise and fall, while important in the original, are not actually crucial to achieving my goals. Another unique element to this play are the curses, 120 years ago these were the primary shocking element, but in todays theatre, no one will bat an eye at silly invented swears, therefore it is not critical that I find a way to make these shocking, but rather that I find a way to discover those shocks elsewhere within the universe that we have created. It’s not that these elements are unimportant, but they become incidental to the success of the play.
Thursday, Feb 27, 2014

I changed my mind and decided to do a run of act one, just to try and nail home some of the work we had done earlier in the week. It means we have less time to work act two before the run on Saturday afternoon.

The run went well. It was good to see a lot of the notes had stuck. Naomi is still struggling with the lines, understandably. However, it slows the pace of everything down quite a bit. There are also a few other moments that I have added that I think are going to have to be removed because they interrupt the action. I have been telling the girls about my process which is to add in the beats of every moment, which stretches the play, and once we have all the necessary moments, we squish it back together. *The Russian Play*, my first directing project at UBC was running at almost 90 minutes before we squished it all together and it ran around 45. I’ve never done it with such a long play, so I hope there is time to achieve the effect.

After the run, we started in on act two. The battle scene is still quite fun, though it needed a few tweaks here and there. There are moments where the chaos covers the text too much, and moments where it gets too calm.

Diane today walked me through the tech week so that I only now fully realize how little time I have left to work with the girls. The cue-to-cue lasts for three whole days, plus a tech run, two dresses and a preview. So, essentially I only have next week to work the play. There is so much that I want to do. I am hoping to do a few dedicated passes of the whole play, one focusing on sound cues, one on spacing on the set, one to figure out where props/costume bits go. But I’m not sure I have time. In four days, I think I need to dedicate one to spacing and housing of props, one to Lizzy, the sound and light operator, and then do one day of working act one, and one of act two, finally Saturday can be spent looking at bits and running the whole play.

A nice bit of luck happened last night. As I was packing up, Naomi had forgotten her notebook so she came back to the space. I walked with her to her bus and asked if she wanted to stop and have a beer, and she accepted. I actually believe it’s an
important part of the process to have some time with collaborators not dedicated to talking about the show. Obviously we talked about it a little bit, but also talked about life in general. I learned that she is nervous about the show, in particular about lines. We talked about how her usual process needs to be adapted in our case, since we don't have the leisure to engage a slow-discovery style. She understands that this play is simply too large to trust to that process and that the time is now to find the specificity that is required to carry a show. She said she is nervous, but I'm not, I know she will pull it off.

**Saturday, March 1, 2014**

First really frustrating day! After rehearsal I was washed with sadness. I've done enough shows to know that every show comes with a moment where you think to yourself, “oh god, what am I doing? No one is going to like this! I have no talent. I don't know what I'm doing!” This is that moment. Not to say there won’t be more of them before all is said and done!

We started with trying to truck through the rest of act two. I did some adjustments to the chaos of the fight scene. Then we got to the cave scene between Père, Pile and Cotice.

One of the actors has been having troubles. The girls chose their own characters, they could have chosen anything, and changed it numerous times early in the process, but at this point it is time to start nailing down choices. Her main issue is that she doesn't seem to understand the divisions between playing her schoolgirl, playing the character, and the in between place where the schoolgirl is saying text *through* the character. It is a complicated concept where a huge amount of our work has gone over the last week helping everyone understand and execute. And many of the actors are struggling with it.

After rehearsal this actor came to me and said, “I just don't think I get it. I keep thinking I understand, but then I get the same note, so I don't think I do.” She also
said something that surprised me, that she feels like she is too similar to her schoolgirl, that when people describe her schoolgirl they say the same things they say about her. I think this comment enlightens part of the root of the problem, that she doesn't like her schoolgirl.

I tried going through the concepts again in different terms, but she had such a blank expression on her face I could tell I needed a different tactic. I told her that she had made good strides in act one, and she lit up. “Really?” I’m upset with myself that I didn’t think of this sooner. I told her that we’ll get to the bottom of it, and that we still have two and a half weeks left, but when I left and walked home that was when the sadness hit me. It may be more of her emotions rubbing off on me that actually feeling down about the production, but still, if I can’t get through to her, I’ve kind of failed the production as a whole. I wrote her today to see if she wants to get together outside of rehearsal for some private coaching, or even just to have a coffee and talk about it. This morning I feel more hopeful.

The run itself was actually very good. I had felt at moments that the last week didn’t accomplish much, but once we ran the whole I could feel the work that we had done really taking shape. The actual Ubu story points still need drawing out. The last three or four scenes need more work to tighten them up, but they received less rehearsal time since we had gone back to run Act One. The girls seemed much more engaged throughout. Addy’s journey into Adubu was much more clear than it had been. Another element that I tried to add was giving Vivian her own journey from queen bitch to being a sympathetic figure by the end. Each of the schoolgirl characters gets their moment to shine. I also felt like their connection to the audience was improved. I added a few moments where they turn to the audience and realize they are onstage in a show that has gone off the tracks and react accordingly. So, in spite of my unexplained sadness, I feel quite positive about the show.
Tuesday, March 4, 2014

Nothing much to report here.

Worked privately with the actor mentioned above and made good progress.

Spent two whole rehearsal days working through the play assigning locations to costumes and props, and making sure traffic patterns are all safe. In some ways I feel like we didn’t accomplish anything, but I am hopeful that this work will pay dividends down the road of speeding up our tech and cue to cue rehearsals.

I spoke to Stephen during the run and before rehearsal on Monday and I have a few things that I want to look at as head back into working through the play. Some general things:

- Looking for a bit more diversity in the staging. Using the set a little more creatively.
- Looking for a bit more variety in vocals, primarily by Mère and Père Ubu. Both Gayle and Stephen have commented that they feel they are doing too much yelling.
- Examining the ending of the play – what feeling do I want to leave the audience with?

Other things I want to keep watch for during this third and final pass:

- Re-engage Lizzie in the play. I want to look at all the moments where she comes onstage and plays a cue, or gets blamed for a cue.
- A major task is to speed up the play as a whole. There are lots of moments that seem to drag.
- Clarity of who each girl is at any given moment. Make sure they all know the answer when I ask, are you schoolgirl, or character right now?
- More specificity in Père Ubu’s performance. She tends to paint things with a broad brush, which I feel is what makes it seem like she is just yelling. Part of
the terror of Adubu is the unpredictability in her text and actions. She still has the feeling that since she talks so much, it must be boring, so she rushes.

- I need to find ways to make Vivian more sympathetic by the end of the play. Sarah is a smart actor, but she makes a lot of decisions early in the process and has a hard time changing them.

**Friday, March 7, 2014**

A painfully slow week. We ended up using two whole days looking at sound cues, and working them into the fabric of our play. Also half a rehearsal was spent incorporating lighting cues that require interaction with the actors. It would have been easier if the designers were able to be present for more of the rehearsals themselves, but so be it. Again, this is all important stuff that will hopefully help our cue-to-cue go faster. It wasn’t completely wasted time, though. We were able to look at many acting moments that are interwoven with the technical elements.

**Tuesday, March 11, 2014**

Did a full run through of the show today for the crew. It has really come together nicely. A lot of the *Ubu* story seemed clearer. There are still a number of bits that need actual working. But many of them are delayed since we don’t have the costumes and some of the key props. We don’t have the Ubu costumes, the horses, the castle, the cave, the cow or any of the small costume pieces that will dictate a lot of the pace of the transitions.

All the actors came with such a positive attitude today. I feel like it was a direct result of having an extra day off (Monday was spent with myself and the designers setting levels). Sometimes, a step back is the best way to take a step forward.

The most interesting thing that happened today was that the actor playing Mère Ubu brought in a completely new character. She was physically and vocally distinct to
anything I have seen in rehearsal. It was far too intense, bringing insanely high stakes to scenes with low stakes. During notes, she said that she wouldn't be able to continue with that voice since it was already sore. I felt like we had been creeping towards a successful Mère Ubu, but then we had a huge change in direction today, so we will see where it leaves us.

I have booked some time tomorrow to work with the Ubs, so hopefully we can hash out some of the issues there.

**Wednesday, March 12, 2014**

Final production meeting today had a bit of conflict over when exactly costumes could be ready for rehearsal. They claimed to not be aware that we needed them sooner than the dress rehearsal, stating that usually only bits needed for quick changes or costume *bits* are made ready sooner. We told them that every costume is of this nature. The Ubus, in particular, were needed long ago. At one of our very first meetings I asked for rehearsal versions of the Ub’s, which they said it would be better if they could focus their energy on getting the real versions ready sooner. But when I asked for them, they seemed to not be aware we would want them before dress. After identifying the issue, everyone wanted to talk about whose fault it was and to give reasons why we couldn’t do it. I was asking for them by Thursday, they said there is no way, I said, how about Friday, they said ok. Problem solved. I guess it’s the nature of operating within an institution but it seems like the production department in general is good at problem generating and bad at problem solving.

After the production meeting I went over and had a two hour unofficial rehearsal with Mère and Père Ubu. When I got to the room, the actor playing Mère had some tears in her eyes and was clearly frustrated. So I focused on some of the issues with Père Ubu first. When I returned to Mère, I understood the issue to be a frustration with the process in creating the character and also in the setting of which moments are 100% Mère, which are 100% Vivian, and which are a combo of the two. During
the rehearsal process we have swung back and forth a few times, leaving the actor confused. To discover the moments that work, we had to try it all as 100% Mère, and the same for each of the different states. When we did a run in one of those states and I asked her to try it a different way the next time she was feeling like she had failed the direction, and that we were starting from scratch. The phrase she used today was “every time I take a step forward I feel like I take two steps back.”

We talked more and I think got on the same page that we are narrowing in on something, even though sometimes it feels like we are not. I reminded her that every mistake we make brings us closer to getting something right.

We made a key discovery though, that she has to exist either in 100% Mère Ubu, or 100% Vivian except for the key moments of peak frustration for her character. We only worked the opening scene, but with great detail. I feel like if we can understand the principles under the performance style, it will leak into the rest of the scenes.

Tonight was day one of our cue to cue. I’m hoping we will be able to finish it in two days to allow us an extra day of working before we start dress rehearsals.

At the rehearsal, the actor playing Mère Ubu seemed down. Even though I felt like we left on good terms and with positive feeling, she seemed quite low during rehearsal. Between the two rehearsals my wife brought Felix, my son, and I found where she was having lunch and brought him in for a visit to try and cheer her up. After rehearsal I wrote her an email encouraging her to keep a positive attitude, and reminding her that we are making forward progress. She wrote back in the morning saying that she knew it, and has enjoyed the process even though it has been challenging. As I mentioned above, she is a very smart actress, and I have no doubt that she will put all the pieces together in the end.
**Thursday, March 13, 2014**

Two days into our cue to cue. As always, it is taking longer than anticipated. I was hoping we could complete it in two days and have an extra day of rehearsal to work on the show. Although, the extra time spent working will be beneficial as they are quite complicated.

The sound elements have been incorporated into the show for quite some time. The lights however are brand new and really feel like they are adding an interesting element. Especially in the transitions, they help support the chaos.

I had a good conversation with Père Ubu about the task of carrying a show. It stemmed from a note I gave during our last run on Tuesday, that I felt there was a spot where it seemed like her energy waned a little. I shared my experiences acting in five different one-man shows, and how the performer must learn economy of energy so that the moments that require herculean efforts are supported when you arrive at them. I think this line of thinking will help with the fact that she is yelling for huge swathes of the performance.

**Friday, March 14, 2014**

Finished the cue to cue. There were a few elements to the show that were rushed a tiny bit so that we could complete it all. The dummy fall, and the boat scene at the end didn’t quite get perfected, but we have three more runs to iron out those wrinkles.

It was good to have the time between cues to work with the actors especially on the transition moments. We are still waiting for costumes so there is a huge element to the show that is completely absent. The transitions at this point are very much based on the actors miming through how long they think their costume changes will take. I’m certain that we will have some difficulties when they finally arrive.
With that said, we finally got the Ubu costumes today and they are amazing! Père Ubu, in particular, is very limber and agile, it allows her full freedom of movement. We spent some time between cues just trying things out in the costume. Mère Ubu is more cumbersome, but she has a lot less physical business to accomplish. Her costume, though, looks great. I really feel like these two costumes bring the whole level of the show up a few notches. I think I have been guilty of sometimes forgetting to imagine what they will actually look like in their costumes and directing Sarah and Naomi. But now that they have arrived, they really dominate the stage. We are supposed to get all the rest of the costumes tomorrow.

**Saturday, March 15, 2014**

Started with some disappointing news that we won’t be getting the other costumes today. I think everyone expected me to fight it, but I didn’t have the energy. Plus, I didn’t think it was a bad idea to do a run where the actors could focus on all the changes we have made to the play during cue to cue.

We have only run the play a handful of times in the last few weeks. That said each time we do, it seems to have grown by leaps and bounds. This was true again today. The show is really coming together.

After the difficulties with Mère Ubu in finding her character, and in nailing down the logistics of when she is Vivian, when she is Mère and when she is a little of each, she really took some huge strides today and found a great version of her role that carries through the whole play. She has taken the ‘bad acting’ down a few notches, which is good. She is getting a lot clearer in the transition moments when she moves from Vivian into Mère. I still need to work a little on making her more sympathetic towards the end of the play.

Addy is really coming along, too. The costume has really solidified the Ubu-ness of her. The issue now is that the Addy moments need to be extra clear because she is saying them through Ubu. Her vocal shifts from Ubu into Addy are quite clear, but if
she only has access to physicality in a given moment, it is harder to see the shift because she just looks like Ubu. We talked about bringing the gleeful quality to her second half ‘Adubu’ a little bit away from, what I call, ‘whee!’ fun, and into the more dark and sadistic kind of fun.

There is a note that I gave one girl that I think is echoed in a lot of the girls. The note is that the snaps from Schoolgirl into character are often very clear, but that the snap back from character to schoolgirl are not nearly as sharp. I think the secret is that their schoolgirls, for the most part, are in a fairly neutral physical state, while the character for the most part are exaggerated – so to make the shifts clear I think they need to exaggerate the casualness of the schoolgirls relaxed physicality, at least for the initial moment.

I had another conversation about the boat with Sarah the set designer. We had had a back and forth about it earlier, which concluded with her telling me that she saw where I was coming from, and that as long as we get the sail in the right orientation, that we could eliminate the far side panel if I thought we needed to. At today’s rehearsal I finally cut the far panel, but Sarah and I had a different understandings of where we had left our previous conversation. She thought we had decided to keep it. We danced around it a little, but in the end I apologized and said I had to make an executive decision to cut it, simply for speed of the transition.

We also tried the blood for the first time. I couldn’t actually see it from where I was. It’s a moment we need to look at. Also, Lizzie has the signs that she is supposed to bring in, but she doesn’t know where they are supposed to go, so we need to spend ten minutes looking at those, perhaps during the set-up on Monday.

After the run, I had an hour or so to go over some bits. We staged the two horse slapstick bits, the boat scene, the bed scene, the party scene and the mountains travel section.

All in all, I’m feeling pretty positive about the show. I think the most important thing that could happen now is for them to run it a few times to get the groove and
the feeling of the flow of the piece. I’m a little worried about the audience’s laughter. I think there are some very funny bits that will get laughter, also some bits that will likely get inconsistent laughter, which will vary from show to show depending on the sensibilities of the audience itself, which are hard laughs to plan for.

Still have to stage the bow as well.

**Monday, March 17, 2014**

The first Dress Rehearsal went pretty smoothly. Everything seems to be working. There were numerous moments where the costumes slowed down transitions, but I think they are all solvable issues with a few more runs.

The biggest issue was that the dummy didn’t drop. Apparently something caught on the rope, stopping it from going. So it had actually started to fall and stopped, so the girls from stage could see it hanging from its neck. They weren’t sure how to proceed, so they made a joke about it being Lizzy’s twin sister up in the rafters. God, I hope it works in the show! I didn’t write a note about it, I assume that Keith is aware of the issue.

**Tuesday, March 18, 2014**

The dummy didn’t fall again! Keith wasn’t sure what the actual problem was, but he said he’ll do the drop from now on, and seems confident that it won’t be a problem. I trust him.

The run was pretty good. I am nervous about the *real* moments and wondering how the audience will receive them. The dummy fall, the birth, the arm chopping, the gunshot, are all so different from the rest of our play. But I am hopeful that we were successful in recreating some of the shock from the original, albeit in a different way.
**Wednesday, March 19, 2014**

Preview. First audience. Reacted well to our tricks. Interestingly, they were the only places I was nervous. I find it is actually more nerve wracking to watch a play I have directed, than one I have written. Because when you directed it, you know exactly how every moment is supposed to go. But, I think a testament to the actors is that I was totally relaxed, except for the real moments to see how they reacted to our concept.

**Thursday, March 20, 2014**

Opening night!

Well, we did it. It is a pretty unique, special piece of theatre; certainly different from anything I have ever seen on the UBC stage. The next day a number of audience members reported that they had unusual dreams, which is really cool. They reacted very well to our real moments, in particular the dummy drop and the gunshot at the end. They seemed genuinely shocked.

There are literally hundreds of tiny moments that I wish I could tweak, but I’ve decided to let the play belong to the girls and let them own it and enjoy it.

**Saturday, August 5, 2014**

Closing night. I went and saw the show six times over the run. I just really enjoyed watching it.

During the middle of the run, I had noticed some changes creeping in, and a few people had gone late in the second week and reported extra swearing, and whatnot. I had to write a note to the actors reminding them that they are in charge of keeping the show as clean as I left it, and that adding swears removed the power of the few swears we actually placed in the script, and that any extra business that is not
supporting the action of the play isn’t needed. I did however endow them with the ability to find new moments, and keep it fresh. As a result of this, the play, which had been stretching in time, ran a consistent 2 hours and 6 minutes the entire final week.

On closing they got a little silly again and put on an extra performance for their friends in the audience. Oh well. They were a ridiculously supportive audience.

A few things have struck me this week. One is the fantastic ownership that the actors, and the designers have taken over the play. I just love hearing them saying “when we came up with this idea”. They are very proud, and so they should be.

Another interesting thing is that each and every show at least a few elderly patrons left at intermission, the show was never created for that demographic. Which I think is sort of a success, only in that we saw increases in young audience members steadily throughout the run.

All in all, I am very proud of this show too. The elements that I was nervous about tackling, like the sheer size of the text, and the cast, and the production, were all successfully tackled. I feel like folks will be talking about this play for years to come.
Chapter Three: Conclusion

In the middle of the run a number of the cast members, a few of the designers and myself were asked to speak to a theatre history class. They asked a number of questions, and told us some of things they loved about the show. The last question was, “can you just tell us what it’s about?” I found this awesome. One of our goals was to create something with a universal message which was open to various interpretation, something without a clear solitary message. This was manifested in the opening scene where the schoolgirls each have a short monologue where they describe what the play is about for them, and every single one is different. It’s not about any one class, or government, or type of theatre, or society, it’s about humanity. As Jarry said in his opening speech back in 1896, “you are free to see in Mister Ubu as many allusions as you like, or, if you prefer, just a plain puppet, a schoolboy’s caricature of one of his teachers who represented for him everything in the world that is grotesque.” (Selected Works, 30)

When I first was told that Ubu Roi was going to be my thesis project, I couldn’t have predicted the final form that it took. One of my initial hopes was to create my own adaptation, and thereby overcome some of the vagaries in the text. But I was convinced to just pick a translation, and focus on directing. In hindsight, I feel like the final product would have been much more Ubu-like if I had done my own adaptation. In the end I think I was successful in finding ways to honor the original while at the same time overcome some of its idiosyncrasies. Most productions over the years, including Peter Brook’s who simply subbed in a different ending, and Jarry himself who trimmed the ending, found they needed to adapt the play to make the it workable. I feel like my solution found a way to be more true to the original, both the shock of the Paris premiere, and the adolescence of the Rennes attic escapade. All of this said, there are a number of elements that I feel like I could have been more successful with.

The first and foremost point is the question of ‘why are the schoolgirls doing this play?’ During my analysis and throughout rehearsals I was keen on not having a
clear answer to this question. I wanted the play to have a universal effect. But I think I could have still achieved this, even if the schoolgirls themselves had a specific objective in mind. Universality is a powerful effect to achieve, but an impossible thing for an actor to play.

I feel like I chickened out on the scene towards the end where Père beats up Mère Ubu. In first reading it, it was so violent, that it played a big role in convincing me to cast the play as all women, because I felt like woman on woman domestic violence is somehow less obscene. In the end, I balked at even that, and staged the scene with a stunt dummy that received Ubu’s blows. I think if I had had the courage to stage a horribly violent scene where Addy actually beats up Vivian, her transition would have been more complete, and more shocking.

In my analysis I laid out three main points of inspiration: Brecht, Bouffon, and Monster Theatre. I feel like I was successful in using the Monster Theatre technique of performing the performance, even though it was exceedingly difficult sometimes to teach this to the performers. The Brechtian and Bouffon element of connection with the audience I felt was also successfully executed. The Brechtian concept of teaching a lesson or parable was not achieved as well as I had initially hoped. Part of the failure was a change in direction towards the notion mentioned above that there is no clear one answer as to what this play means, so the clarity of what the actors wanted us to get out of the play was necessarily ambiguous. Also, the Bouffon philosophy of grossing out the audience was not achieved to the level I had hoped.

I’m not sure if this is a failure, but I was surprised at how little status work was done in creating these schoolgirl characters. It seemed so much more important to play their needs as far as completing the play, and the interpersonal relationships seemed to follow naturally.

My technique of adding in and separating every single beat, then later in the process squishing those beats together didn’t really work with such a large play. There was never time to go through it moment by moment and decide exactly when to squish and when to leave the beats as they were.
I do feel like I was successful in a number of key areas. One measure of success was the increase in young audience members, paralleled by a decrease in older patrons.

I think the goal of recreating some of the shock of the original was achieved, although not in the same way that the original did it. Hearing the gasps in the room, and feel the silence after Lizzie was shot was a proud moment for me as a director. I think we were successful in our goal of making the audience relax thinking they were about to see a chaotic but fun comedy, and then surprising them by the end. The other main purpose to this whole secondary storyline was to keep the stakes high right until the end of the play, and I think we were successful in achieving this as well. Another successful element was incorporating the playfulness into the very heart of the play that is so inherent in its origins. Tangential to this element is the concept of the ‘wink’ where the audience never forgets that they are in a theatre watching a play, and that we are letting them in on the joke.

One of the most amazing outcomes of the play was the amount of patrons who told me that they had strange dreams after watching Ubu. Creating theatre that stays with the audience after the curtain comes down, after they leave the theatre, is a personal goal of mine for every play I create, and I think Ubu did this as well as anything I have ever done.
Bibliography


Appendices

Appendix A: Notes prepared for the first rehearsal

• *Ubu* Background
  o Written and first performed in the same year as *The Seagull*
  o Only performed twice, including the dress rehearsal for a few friends.
  o Trying to create a new form of theatre that was universal, symbolic and theatrical.
    ▪ He intended the play to act as a mirror, for the audience to see themselves, or their, other-selves, when the lights came up.
    ▪ Ubu was not meant to be wise or full of witticisms, but of stupid remarks, uttered with all the authority of an ape.
    ▪ The need for the theatre to concern itself not with merely contemporary but with universal themes and preoccupations
    ▪ Create a savagely comic portrait of the grotesqueness and stupidity of mankind itself
  o First version was inspired by Père Heb at school, older versions, and this one performed by marionettes in Jarry’s attic.
  o I had seen a production in 2002 in Ottawa that was a madcap 4-hander that didn’t acknowledge that we the audience knew that there was only four of them. They tried to create a world where Ubu actually existed. I think that’s crazy.

• Three inspirations
  ▪ Brecht
    ▪ Every play has a message and it is the actor’s job to convey that message to the audience.
    ▪ Always aware they we are actors, and that they are audience members
  ▪ Bouffon
• Grotesque, bold, disgusting and concerned almost entirely with affecting or even offending the audience.
• In your face kind of theatre.
  - Monster Theatre
    • Secondary story – the story of the actors, or the character of the actor telling the story.
      o Monster Theatre, Muppets.
    o So – we have a play with the secondary story of the actors that are primarily concerned with making the audience feel something.
• Two Worlds
  o Characters in the play
    • Presentational. You can look right into the audience’s eyes.
    • Huge characters. Nothing is too big!
    • Once killed you can pop up again.
    • They can embody anything, a door etc.
    • They exist in a world where a man like Ubu could become King.
    • There are men and women in spite of the fact that they are all played by women.
  o Schoolgirls
    • Who are the girls?
      • Schoolgirls
      • From out of time, but with access to all time.
      • Cautionary Tale – they think Ubu is the biggest douchebag of all time – Greed, Violence, Stupidity, Gluttony and Masculinity.
      • To Misbehave – they are not allowed to be there! There is an unspoken onstage authority that threatens to shut down the show at any time. A ticking clock!
      • They are adolescent/childish.
• They have internal relationships with each other separate from their roles in the play.

• It is tonnes of fun!

  ▪ They have not actually rehearsed. They all agree on the story, but that is about all. They are constantly surprised by what others say and do.

  ▪ Each locale comes to life in front of the audience’s eyes.

  ▪ There is a do-it-yourself quality. They arrived at the theatre this morning and stormed the props shop, piled junk on the stage, made some hack costumes and are ready to go!

• The central metaphor in the play is the spiral on Ubu’s tummy. It represents the spiral into chaos that the play goes on!

  o The play confronts the audience increasingly.

  o The actors know less and less what they are doing.

  o Everything gets louder and faster.

  o Ubu becomes more of an asshole.

• Comedy/Tragedy

  o I think part of the trick to performing this play is to allow the comedic aspects to free one to give full reign to the violent and dark aspects. We disarm the audience by letting them laugh, but we use their subdued defenses to challenge their preconceptions of theatre and society. It must be funny, but only so that can make it more brutal and shocking.

  o Same with Ubu – we make them like him, and then we turn him so vicious and evil that they want to hate him. But at the end he is sort of likeable again and hopefully the audience will be a little turned around by this.

• It’s dirty. We need to find a way to embrace the filth!
• The world before Ubu has a sort of dignity, or at least order. The Ubs enter that world and destroy it!

• Period
  
  o Shakespearean, Pirate times, biblical, modern, post-apocalyptic, barbarian...
  
  o Universality to everything. It’s not about a specific time period, or social class, or type of theatre

• Journey of discovery together.
  
  o I have two catchphrases when I direct
    
    ▪ What if it’s as simple as...
    
    ▪ I don’t know, let’s try it!
  
  o No choice is too big. Let’s fail together!
  
  o There are a zillion things that we will be adding as we go, so the more involved you are in rehearsal, the more you will do in the play!
  
  o We will have tonnes of fun, but it will also be super hard. It is an incredibly complex play and since we are discovering the majority of moments in rehearsal it will be on your shoulders to take excellent notes, and do your homework of memorization both lines and not-lines!

• Can we agree that we’re allowed to say Macbeth?

• Quotes I find inspiring:
  
  o “We too shall become solemn, fat and Ubu-like and shall publish extremely classical books which will probably lead to our becoming mayors of small towns where, when we become academicians, the firemen will present us with Sevres vases, while they present their moustaches on velvet cushions to our children. And another lot of young people will appear, and consider us completely out of date, and they will write ballads to express their loathing of us, and there is no reasons why this should ever end.” (Wright, 176)
“...could never have come into existence without the vast and shapeless mass of schoolboy legend and fantasy out of which all were created. In the fullest possible sense – and this perhaps provides a key to much of its appeal - *Ubu Roi* is the fruit of a collective schoolboy imagination, an authentic product of a collective, ‘primitive’ creativity, in a far more real sense than what much of what in our culture passes for ‘popular’ or ‘folk’ art.” (Beaumont, 13)
Appendix B: Outline of the schoolgirl’s intended story

Red = Incorrect

Green = Correct

Blue = Original plan

Orange = Questionable

Act 1 Scene 1 ➔ Mere convinces Père to kill Venceslas (Pere and mere plot together to become King and Queen of Poland)

Act 1 Scene 2 ➔ Père Ubu and mere fight over Père’s gluttony, she keeps him from eating all the food, they get in a physical fight

Act 1 Scene 3 ➔ Père has invited Bordure and his men to a feast, they arrive and sit down to eat ➔ the food isn’t very good and so Père Ubu goes and gets toilet brush ➔ a solider tastes it and dies from food poisoning ➔ Père Ubu drives all the other soldiers out by pelting them with rastron ribs so he can talk to Bordure alone (they don’t leave till after the feast?)

Act 1 Scene 4 ➔ Père Ubu has a private meeting with Bordure who eagerly agrees to help kill Venceslas ➔ Père Ubu promises Bordure the dukedom of Lithuania.

Act 1 Scene 5 ➔ a messenger (not Xena) arrives and summons Ubu to the King’s court ➔ Père Ubu panics and decides to turn in Mère and Bordure to the king.

Act 1 Scene 6 ➔ Ubu goes to the Kings court and almost turns in Bordure and Mère but Bordure stops him ➔ the King makes Père Ubu the count of Sandomir ➔ Ubu gives the King a toy whistle ➔ Ubu falls ➔ Ubu vows he will still kill the King.

Act 1 Scene 7 ➔ Père calls everyone together to plan the murder ➔ suggests poisoning the King (reveals his great plan to attack the King at the review) ➔ with pushing from Bordure and Mère Ubu they eventually settle on a plan to kill the King
and the royal family at the review ➔ they swear on Mère Ubu to kill the King

Act 2 Scene 1 ➔ Despite the Queen’s bad dreams, the King decides to take his two sons to the review with him, but to leave his wife and his son Bougrelas at home ➔ the Queen and Bougrelas go to pray in the chapel

Act 2 Scene 2 ➔ Ubu attends the review with the King ➔ He leads the attack and he, Captain Bordure and his men kill Venceslas

Act 2 Scene 3 ➔ Bougrelas and the Queen watch from the chapel as men chase and kill the Boleslas and Ladislas

Act 2 Scene 4 ➔ Père Ubu burst into the chapel with soldier to kill Bougrelas and the queen ➔ Bougrelas injures Père Ubu and he and the Queen escape down a secret staircase

Act 2 Scene 5 ➔ in a mountain cave, the Queen dies of cold and of heartbreak ➔ Bougrelas is visited by the ghosts of his ancestors, who charge him with getting revenge on Père Ubu

Act 2 Scene 6 ➔ Ubu has been made King but does not want to give the people gold or meat ➔ Mère and Bordure try and convince him to give the peasants gold or he will be over thrown ➔ he still refuses until they tell him if he doesn’t, the peasants won’t pay taxes ➔ Ubu agrees to give them meat and money

Act 2 Scene 7 ➔ the peasants get the gold and fight over it, and the Ubs and Bordure have fun watching ➔ Ubu decides to make the peasants race for the gold ➔ they race and he gives away a total of 600,00 gold pieces in prize money ➔ invites in all the peasants for a grand feast at his house

Act 3 Scene 1 ➔ Mère and Père are in bed after their first day as King and Queen ➔ Ubu has ordered a headpiece made of sheep and dog skin ➔ Ubu declares he will not be giving Bordure the dukedom of Lithuania as he had promised ➔ Mère Ubu tries to talk to Ubu about the dangers of making Bordure and Bougrelas angry, and
suggests that he should try and attach Bougrelas to him by “doing good deeds” and being “right” → Père Ubu ignores this advice because he doesn’t want to spend money doing good deeds → he tries to have sex with Mère Ubu, and also threatens to cut her to pieces

Act 3 Scene 2 ➔ Père Ubu calls in a meeting of the nobles and begins throwing them into a pit to be disembowelled so he can take over their money and titles (takes the land of some nobles and throws them in prison?)! → he decides to kill all of the nobles → he decides to change some laws and finance → he kills the magistrates for being unwilling to change law → he kills the financiers for not changing taxes → he decides that he will go himself to collect taxes

Act 3 Scene 3 ➔ (completely not in the script) ➔ peasants gather in a house and discuss what is happening in the capitol with their new king

Act 3 Scene 4 ➔ (completely not in the script) ➔ Père Ubu arrives and tries to make them pay their taxes a second time ➔ the peasants decide to rebel and support Bougrelas’ claim to the throne (was supposed to happen but at a different time?)

Act 3 Scene 5 ➔ (completely not in the script) ➔ Ubu imprisons Bordure.

Act 3 Scene 6 ➔ (completely not in the script) ➔ Bordure escapes to Russia (was supposed to be Bougrelas) and offers to help the Tsar fight Père Ubu and put Venceslas’ son Bougrelas (the Tsar’s nephew) back on the throne of Poland

Act 3 Scene 7 ➔ Ubu calls a council session to discuss the state of the kingdom ➔ a letter arrives from Bordure bringing news that the Tsar is coming to attack the state of Poland and kill Père Ubu ➔ Père Ubu is terrified by this prospect ➔ Mère Ubu tells him the only way to survive is to fight a war ➔ the councilors support this idea ➔ Père Ubu resists because he doesn’t want to fight or spend money ➔ Père Ubu gives in and agrees to go to war against Russia.

INTERMISSION
Act 3 Scene 8 ➔ Mere Ubu helps Père Ubu get ready for War ➔ the horse arrives but is too weak to bear Père Ubu’s weight ➔ Père Ubu accuses Mère Ubu of robbing him ➔ another horse is brought on stage ➔ Ubu gets on the horse and rides off to Russia to fight the Tsar ➔ Mère Ubu declares that now that Pere is gone she will kill Bougrelas and grab the treasure

Act 4 Scene 2 ➔ Bougrelas and a bunch of Polish peasants siege the castle and throw rocks through the windows ➔ Mère Ubu comes out on the balcony and sees this ➔ Giron fights Bougrelas and dies (fights until Mère can escape and then runs and follows her) ➔ Mère Ubu runs away, chased by Bougrelas

Act 4 Scene 3 & 4 ➔ Père Ubu hears about how Bougrelas has run Mère Ubu out of the capitol ➔ Père Ubu and his army first encounter the Russians ➔ they go to the top of a hill ➔ there is a windmill which Père Ubu hides in ➔ they sing the financial song ➔ he is almost killed by a cannon ball ➔ but lives ➔ the Russians attack ➔ the Polish forces cross a ditch ➔ Ubu recognizes Bordure on the battle field and kills him ➔ the Tsar falls in a ditch ➔ the Poles advance ➔ then the Poles retreat ➔ Père Ubu runs off with Pile and Cotice

Act 4 Scene 5 ➔ the three of them talk about the war they just fought ➔ they arrive at a cave

Act 4 Scene 6 ➔ there is a bear in the cave ➔ Pile and Cotice fight the bear ➔ Père Ubu does not help, but instead gets up on a rock and prays ➔ they kill the bear ➔ the decide to eat the bear ➔ Cotice goes to get wood! ➔ Pile cuts off the bears arm ➔ Père Ubu falls asleep ➔ Pile and Cotice run away to find out if Père Ubu has really been deposed

Act 5 Scene 1 ➔ Mère Ubu arrives in the cave ➔ she decides to pretend to be a supernatural apparition ➔ she appears to Père Ubu and tries to get him to forgive her ➔ she confronts him about his misdeeds (in fairy tale it is her ghost who tries to make him repent by putting Bougrelas back on throne? something like that?) ➔ she tells him he must forgive Mère Ubu ➔ the day rises and she is caught (day comes
and the ghost disappears) ➔ Père Ubu attacks Mère Ubu with the dead bear (fairy tale: Mère Ubu is attacked by the bear earlier and dies) ➔ but the bear is dead so nothing actually happens ➔ Père Ubu decides to attack Mère Ubu himself and basically maims her.

Act 5 Scene 2 ➔ Bougrelas arrives in the cave with his men and fights Père Ubu ➔ Pile and Cotice return and defend Père Ubu ➔ all the peasants except Bougrelas are killed ➔ the Ubs and Pile and Cotice escape

Act 5 Scene 3 ➔ Père Ubu and Mère Ubu run away ➔ Bougrelas becomes king of Poland again ➔ they go to escape on a boat

Act 5 Scene 4 ➔ they sail away from Poland on a boat to France... or Spain.
Appendix C: Opening scene, written by Ryan Gladstone

VIVIAN

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to Ubu Roi.

Only half the girls join her.

VIVIAN (CONT’D)

Let’s try that again.

ALL

Ladies and gentlemen welcome to Ubu Roi.

TALLULAH

Roi is French for King.

VIVIAN

Ahem. Lizzie, go turn out the lights.
LIZZIE

Right. Yes. Sorry.

VIVIAN

We are the graduating class of...

MINNIE

Except for us.

LANA

We're in grade eight.

ANNA

But she's her sister (*Points to Vivian*) so

they let us in the show.

MINNIE

I took acting lessons last

summer...
VIVIAN

Minnie?

MINNIE

Mm-hmm?

VIVIAN

Shut-up.

MINNIE

Ok!

VIVIAN

We are the graduating class of the Jarry school for wayward girls (or something).

SCARLETT

It’s a pretty shitty place.
VIVIAN

And we are going to put on a play

for you. The story we are about to tell is

about a fat, ugly, greedy idiot.

TINA

(To Mary Jane) Why are you looking

at me?

MARY JANE

No reason. Three out of four ain't

bad.

VIVIAN

And I think Addy should play him.

ADDY

What? No.
SCARLETT

Oh my God, she's perfect. She

wouldn't even need the costume.

ADDY

No, I really don't think I

should...

LEXI

Don't be shy Addy. You'll be
great.

DAISY

You'll be pretty!

LUCY

You're already kind of stupid so

you don't really have to act.

ADDY
But I don’t even know the story.

JEAN/TALLULAH/MINNIE/TINA/ANNA/LANA

Shouldn’t we pick someone who knows...

VIVIAN

Of course you do. You’ll be great.

Besides, I'll play Mrs Ubu, that way I'll make sure you can't mess it up.

ADDY

No, please don't do this.

SCARLETT

Addy. Addy. Addy. (Others join)

ADDY

I don’t want to. I can't. (etc.)
VIVIAN

Come on Addy, let’s go put on our costumes. Scarlett, come help us.

Jean, explain the story to the audience. See you soon!

JEAN

We should probably explain why we are doing this.

TALLULAH

I agree Jean. They are probably expecting University students doing a University play.

JEAN

Well, basically, we’re breaking the rules.
LEXI

Totally breaking the rules.

DAISY

We’re crazy!

LUCY

Like, if our teachers found out we were here doing this they would be like, oh no you don’t, you are all expelled or kicked out or whatever they do when you...

JEAN

So, we have secretly rented the UBC theatre...

TALLULAH

As our last act together as a class...
TINA

Before we all go our separate ways
and start new lives...

MARY JANE

No pun intended.

TINA

What?

MARY JANE

No bun in the oven intended either,
I heard.

TINA

I don't get it.

BILLY JEAN

Well you did at least once.
(Jean blows her whistle)

JEAN

Since we had to keep it a secret we
didn’t really have time to build a
proper set, or costumes or
anything.

TALLULAH

Although we made fun things for the
Ubs the wear.

LEXI

But everything else is pretty
shitty.

TINA

I worked really hard on the bear...
(Jean blows her whistle)

BILLY JEAN

We also didn’t have time to rehearse.

JEAN

That’s why I’ve got a copy of the story. I’ll keep you on track.

MINNIE

Besides, Vivian will kill us if we don’t do a good job.

XENA

Kill.

JEAN

As valedictorian of our class I have searched for a metaphor, or a
story that summarized our classes
outlook on life, our view on the
world, how we saw humanity.
Something that encapsulated our
dreams and aspirations for the
future...

BILLY JEAN
But nothing like that existed.

MARY JANE
And someone already wrote The
Vagina Monologues.

LEXI
But one day, nerd here...

TALLULAH
My name is Tallulah.
LEXI

That's what I said - found a story that somehow spoke to us all.

DAISY

It said - "Daisy, come in Daisy, I have something to tell you..."

LEXI

In different ways.

JEAN

It was very old.

TINA

Really? I thought it was new.

BILLY JEAN

Same thing.
JEAN
And it took place in a nebulous land of non-existence.

LIZZIE
I thought it took place in Poland?

BILLY JEAN
Same thing.

LEXI
For some reason it really spoke to me because it's an old myth about good and evil. But mostly about evil. And overconsumption. And excess.

DAISY
Or it's more like a fairy tale with unicorns and Russians.
LUCY

Be quiet Daisy, there is no such thing as Russians.

JEAN

It’s really more like a cautionary tale about greed and power and violence and gluttony and masculinity. / What happens when society is overrun with these qualities? (Cont.)

TALLULAH

/The themes of the story are also clearly discussing political issues of the time./ Absolute power corrupts absolutely. There are also clear parallels to Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* both in plot
and in tone... (Cont.)

MARY JANE

/The fuck are you talking about?

It’s a comedy! It’s supposed to

make us laugh. Shitter! Poop!

It’s about poop! / You know what

they say about people who live in poop

houses? How do you know your

sister is having her period?

(Cont.)

BILLY JEAN

/I kinda thought it was more like

an action play. Fighting, and

stuff like that. Like Braveheart.

/ Or the Fast and the Furious. Or

more like grand theft auto. (Cont.)

LIZZIE
/It's about classism. It's implying that the only way someone who is low on the social ladder can climb is by acts of violence, / and that by the very nature of climbing they become sour, or evil or something. (Cont.)

MINNIE
/I don't care what it's about - I think of it more as a vehicle to get discovered. / Oh! Ubu! Pretty good, eh? And I think I am going to be one of the princes, but we haven't decided who... (Cont.)

ANNA
/I just can't believe that we are hanging out with grade 12's. / I am so going to rub this in to the
other girls when I get back to
school on Monday. (Cont.)

LANA

/Oh my god. This is so exciting.

These girls are all so pretty. /

Someday, when I grow up, I want to
be just like them! (Cont.)

LEXI

/Like I said, it's about good and
evil. It's kind of like Game of
Thrones. And the midget guy is
instead like a big fat guy, and
he's all ra-ra-ra, I'm big and fat.
/ And he starts like kind of nice,
even though he's ugly, but then
later he turns into a big jerk.
(Cont.)
DAISY

/Sunshine lollipops and rainbows
everything that's wonderful / is
sure to come your way when you're
in love... (Cont.)

LUCY

/I don't understand! / (Cont.)

TINA

/I just hope we can open some eyes.
Because if my baby has to grow in
the world the way it is now, well,
I just don't know. / There is so
much unhappiness, and misery, and
starving kids in Africa... (Cont.)

XENA

off arms. War. Guns and knives
and swords. Cutting up human
bodies. / Sex. Shit. But mostly
blood. (Cont.)

Chaos!

SCARLETT

They're ready. Go play the music.

LIZZIE

I think I've got the perfect piece.

It's epic, but subtle.

Recognizable, but not too
recognizable. Also, I just want to
thank you for giving me this
opportunity to contribute...

SCARLETT

Finished?
LIZZIE

Yes, sorry. Thank you.

SCARLETT

Amateur.

JEAN

Ladies and gentlemen -

ALL

UBU ROI!