

An Exploration and Celebration of Storytelling:

Directing The Arabian Nights

by

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Abstract

An Exploration and Celebration of Storytelling: Directing the Arabian Nights, explores my directorial practice and the challenges presented in staging The Arabian Nights as part of the UBC Department of Theatre and Film's season at the Frederic Wood Theatre, March 17 – April 2, 2016.

As presented in the following pages, my primary objective was to present a wholly entertaining, clearly directed production of The Arabian Nights by Mary Zimmerman. My practice explored the process of directing a large cast through a variety of disciplines including dance, live music, physical theatre, monologue and ensemble based storytelling. I believe that the combination of all of these disciplines can have a tremendously powerful empathetic effect on an audience while communicating clearly the story and the intentions of the playwright. I also explored the process of working with a Sound Designer to create a live musical score for the production. A particular challenge was working on a text translated from the tales of a different culture. Through the process of research, consultation and collaboration, I was able to better understand the challenges, pit-falls and rewards on working on this type of project. In the process of these explorations, I was able to engage with different aspects of theatre directing than I have in the past, expanding my theoretical and practical vocabulary towards my practice of directing theatre. This thesis includes my director's preparation of the script, the journal chronicling my production process, production photos and a chapter containing my reflections on the experience in its entirety.

Preface

This dissertation is an original, unpublished and independent work by the author, Evan Frayne

Fraser Lendrum

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Dedication

To my parents, Larry and Linda, for their love, encouragement and compassion.

Introduction

The Arabian Nights, the westernized version of the collection of Middle Eastern and South Asian stories known as One Thousand and One Nights, was originally translated into French by Antoine Galland in 1704. Mary Zimmerman's adaptation of the One Thousand and One Nights, based on Powys Mathers's translation entitled The Arabian Nights, was written in 1992, originally playing in Chicago and moving to Broadway in New York in 1994. Our production played at the Frederic Wood Theatre, University of British Columbia, running from March 17th to April 2nd, 20016. The cast featured Elizabeth Willow, Francis Winter, Mariam Barry, Riley Bugaresti, Daniel Curalli, Rowan Denis, Seamus Fera, Tai Graumen, Bronwyn Henderson, Sarah Hicks, Stefanie Michaud, Sophia Niewerth, Sachi Nisbet, Cassandra Phillips Grande, Selene Rose and Parmiss Sehat.

Our stage manager was Benton Neufeld, assisted by Megan Lavergne and Linda Yang.

Our production design team consisted of: Heipo Leung, Scenic Design; Sophie Tang, Lighting Design; Nicole Bairstow, Costume Design; Andy Horka, Sound Design; Gwendolyn Loi and Courtney Verwold, Assistant Scenic Design; Tory Ip, Assistant Lighting Design; Lizzy Fu and Nicolette Szabo, Assistant Costume Design; and Jessica Lai, Assistant Sound Design.

Contributing greatly to this production were also: Professor Stephen Malloy, directorial advisor; Professor Jacqueline Firkins, costume design advisor; Professor Robert Gardiner, set and lighting advisor; Brad Gibson, voice instructor; Marijka Asbeek Brusse, stage management advisor; Lynn Burton, head of props; Jim Fergusson, technical director; Lorraine West, scenic artist; Jodi Jacyk, head of costumes; Andrea Rabinovitch, communications and marketing; Jay Henrickson, production manager and Cameron Cronin, department administrator.

Chapter 1: Directorial Analysis

“The soul wanders in the dark, until it finds love. And so, wherever our love goes, there we find our soul.”- Mary Zimmerman



Figure 1: P. Sehat- Dunyazade, E. Willow- Scheherezade, F. Winter- Shahryar Photo Credit: Emily Cooper

1.1: What drew me to the Play-Initial Impulse

The play feels like a celebration- a celebration of storytelling. There is a joy here with an undertone of strong passion and emotion. I was confused at times in my initial reading as to what the story was (Core Story) and how each story was being told. The layers of the story are very interesting. I wonder what the “moral” of each story is? If Scheherezade is building/teaching/reminding Shahryar of empathy, what is the path to empathy? Do we need to

track that? Why were these stories chosen from the original source material over others? Even the framing story is different (is only one of many framing devices in the original source material). I was uplifted by the story- I felt positive, light. I laughed. I believe the depth of the stories, from all these different sources is what intrigued me most about the play. I strongly connected to the storytelling in the piece and I was moved by the depth and variety of story, the different kinds of stories in the piece. I also thought that it was fun to read and would be fun to act in, to direct and to watch as an audience member. There is something about a piece of theatre which includes both the ridiculous and the serious that I am drawn to and this has those two gestures throughout. I love to laugh and I want to work on something in which laughter, is essential.

1.2: Significance of Title

The title is directly connected to the source material, One Thousand and One Nights. I believe Zimmerman's impulse to connect the piece to the, at the time, current war in Iraq (1993), was a large impetus to add the word "Arabian" to the title. Placing it in a specific geographical space would allow for the audience to get a sense of the place and give Zimmerman the opportunity to make a connection between the time and place of the stories of the play and the current events of that time (War in Iraq, circa 1993). "Arabian Nights" is also the title of the first English edition- so in a sense Zimmerman is working against the idea of appropriation by choosing an English adaptation as her source material. By adding the title "Arabian" she has, for better or for worse, given us a sense of place. Also it has pulled us, ever so slightly away from the fantasy and otherworldliness of the source material.

1.3: Theme (Central Theme)

The central theme of the piece is that storytelling is essential to fostering and developing empathy for self and others. The intention of every story is to expand the listener's sense of empathy- to expand their consciousness to the trials, challenges and experiences of other people. That we are a part of a larger fabric of life than just ourselves. Scheherezade is re-introducing Shahyrrar to the world, after he has shut himself up, and begun with his reign of terror over the women (and men) of his kingdom. The frame story is used to introduce Harun Al-Rashid- the prototypical king who is seen as the ideal leader and someone to aspire to. Scheherezade is purposeful in including him into the stories- to give Shahyrrar someone to aspire to, to emulate and to use as a gauge on how he is doing as a king. Most of the stories including Harun Al-Rashid also involve Al-Rashid working to alleviate some personal malaise- In one tale Al-Rashid has a weight upon his heart, in another he simply can't decide which girl he wants to "finish" with. In both instances he overcomes his troubles by listening to the people involved or by getting away from his usual routine, by doing something other than his habitual pattern. We are reminded of the importance of accepting where you are in life, to give in, to give up control over those things that we cannot control.

1.4: Type or Genre

A Drama (with comic overtones) with Music- I say that because the frame story of Scheherezade and Shahyrrar is very serious and although many of the stories are light and frivolous, we are always taken back to the deadly serious situation of, "will Shahyrrar or will Shahyrrar not kill Scheherezade at the end of the night". The music is so intimately connected to the story-telling that to not include that in the genre would be a mistake.

1.5: Style



Figure 2: T. Grauman- Fifth Man, E. Willow- Scheherazade, P. Sehat- Dunyazade, C. Phillips Grande- Perfect Love, B. Henderson- Sixth Woman, R. Denis- Slave Girl, R. Bugaresti- Fifth Woman. Photo Credit: Javier R. Sotres

The style of the piece is Poetic (songs and heightened language) though a lot of the language is colloquial. The language switches throughout from a narration or storytelling style to a common speech style. The storytelling and narration push us into a slightly “Brechtian” style- meaning that the actors are aware of the audience to a certain extent, and that there is sometime a slight remove from the character.

1.6: Space/Design

The play calls for an open, transformable space that invites the audience in. We have the unique challenge in that the Frederic Wood Theatre is a prototypical proscenium arch theatre which

favors imagery and pictures as opposed to connecting the audience to the performance in an immersive way. We are working to keep the space as open as possible and to soften the scenic elements in a way that allows us to imagine ourselves in the chamber of the king. We want the space to remain as open as possible so that we can quickly move from story to story- the piece demands a fluidity and a transformative quality which we are striving to achieve. We are highlighting the storytelling aspects of the piece by giving each actor a “base” costume which can work both for a specific character and as a layer for another character. This way we can add or remove pieces to help with the doubling of each character track. We are taking influences in the dress from a variety of different cultures, elements of traditional dress from the Arabic, Persian and South Asia cultures. For our sound Design we are creating a “band” from the cast which will play all the music in the piece and the actors will sing all the songs. In the same vein as the costumes, we are playing with influences from many different cultures and incorporating them into the design to create of fusion of the diversity within both the play and the stories from the original source material.

1.7: Ball/Serban Action Analysis

What follows is an analysis of the action of the play, looking at the Core action, the Unusual Action and the Unifying Objective of the piece.

1.7.1: Core Action

The story of the Arabian Nights begins with the telling of the frame story of Scheherezade and Shahryar. King Shahryar, after the betrayal of his first wife with another man, has been marrying, sleeping with and murdering the women of his kingdom for three years. After the king’s Wazir tells him that there are no more women to bring to him, Shahryar orders him to bring his own daughters to the palace. The wazir’s daughters, Scheherezade and Dunyazade,

come to the palace with a plan, which Scheherezade shares with her father. "...I have a plan by which I will save the daughters of the Mussulmen (Zimmerman p6). Duniyazade and Scheherezade convince the king to let Scheherezade tell him stories, claiming wonderful and satisfying tales and also the promise of sleep afterwards. Shahryar claims he never sleeps (Zimmerman 10) and allows Scheherezade to tell a story which sets the play into motion. The play is ultimately a survival tale, of one woman who, in the face of her own impending, certain death, concocts a plan to tell the king stories and slowly, but gently lead him back to the path of empathy. Through telling her seemingly unrelated tales, Scheherezade teaches Shahryar to be a better lover, leader, to appreciate whimsy, to reward generosity, and to avoid coveting anything, including people. The Core Action of the play is therefore, Scheherezade's use of Storytelling to coerce, convince, educate and help build empathy within Shahryar for himself and for the people of his kingdom, especially the women.

1.7.2: Unusual Action

After the inciting incident of the play, we are set off on a journey through the stories that Scheherezade tells, each of which hold a lesson for Shahryar to learn through the telling. Although we only get small glimpses of their life together, over the years Shahryar softens towards Scheherezade and Duniyazade, but they are never truly safe until late in the play, when Scheherezade tells the story of Aziz and Azizzah. In the story, Aziz (played by Shahryar), is loved by his cousin, but falls in love with another. His cousin dies of heartbreak, and Shahryar continues to live only for sensual desire with not one, but two other women. After cheating on his first mistress with another woman, his mistress has his manhood cut off of him, making him undesirable to the other woman. Aziz finally understands his folly in not loving his betrothed, his cousin, from the beginning. So he disguises himself and pretends to be the khalifah of Baghdad

and live in a pretend world, where he doesn't have to deal with the pain of losing his love. After hearing this story, Shahryar compels Scheherezade to tell him to "Tell me stories, many stories. Tell me quick." (Zimmerman 109). Scheherezade tells him a cacophony of stories and Shahryar is changed by them. He tells Scheherezade that she has lifted the veil from his heart, that she is safe, and that he will not kill her (Zimmerman 122). The unusual action is that Scheherezade goes on to tell him one more, final story even though she is safe. Scheherezade realizes in that moment, that even though she is safe, that Shahryar is covetous of her and that if she, her sister, her father and her children are to not only survive, but thrive, that Shahryar must learn (or re-learn) that the greatest things and people in life are to be shared with others and that everything that is good comes from god and must be given up freely.

1.7.3: Unifying Objective

In almost all of the stories of the play, someone is seeking to lighten someone else's heart. Many of the stories are about how the king is weighed down by a depression of some kind. In the frame story, Shahryar is obviously living in the trauma of finding his first wife in the arms of a slave and cannot get past that moment. In the story of the Madman, Harun Al-Rashid tells his wazir, "Brother and Wazir, my heart is heavy" (Zimmerman p 11). He goes on to describe how he has tried to get out of this depression by observing his wealth, through the company of women and through sport, though none of these pass times alleviated his sadness (Zimmerman 11). The wazir convinces him to visit the madhouse so that he may listen to the wisdom of the mad, as they "behold differences and affinities which are hidden from common men..." (Zimmerman 11). Later after living together for months, perhaps even a couple of years, Scheherezade opens her next story with, "One day, as Harun al-Rashid was sitting in judgement and feeling more than the usual weariness of his soul- ", again setting up the idea that by telling stories, one can

have their heart and soul lightened. Everyone is seeking to teach someone something by example in order to unburden the listener's heart.

1.8: Turning Points of the Play

Stasis: A young king from the area of the world what we now call the Arabian Peninsula and more specifically Baghdad, takes a wife and they begin their lives together. Ruling the kingdom of the Mussulmen.

Intrusion/Turning Point 1: King Shahryar finds his wife in the arms of a slave, so he kills them both. From that point forward, for the next 3 years, every night he marries, loves and kills a virgin girl, and when she dies anything of him that she might have inside also dies.

Turning Point 2: King Shahryar demands that Scheherezade is brought to him that evening. Scheherezade tells her father she has a plan – Dunyazade and Scheherezade trick King Shahryar into letting Scheherezade tell her a story so she can sleep. The story is so compelling to Shahryar that he allows Scheherezade to live one more day.

Turning Point 3: Scheherezade tricks King Shahryar into believing that he is the lead character in one of the stories- King Shahryar confesses that Scheherezade has “lifted the veil from his heart” and swears that she is safe now and that he will not kill her. King Shahryar tells Scheherezade to go home and comfort her father in his old age (because her and Dunyazade have been away for so long)- Scheherezade says she cannot abandon her children and Dunyazade shows him their three small children.

Turning Point 4: Scheherezade and Shahryar begin their new life as a family, and the kingdom is free of Shahryar's reign of terror.

1.9: Turning Points in Each Story

Below are each of the individual stories that Scheherezade tells over the course of the play. This is an analysis of the turning points in each of those stories.

THE MADMAN'S TALE

Stasis- The “Madman” was a well-respected merchant and son of a merchant. He was well known for being serious, honest and chaste.

Intrusion/Turning Point 1- The Madman is visited by a Slave Girl bearing a love letter from Perfect Love for the Madman- he beats the girl for presenting such a lewd letter to him and sends her back to her master.

Turning Point 2- After tricking the Madman to pledge himself to Sheikh Al-Islam's hideous daughter, the Madman begs Perfect Love and her Slave girl for forgiveness- so they concoct a plan to convince the Sheikh to absolve the marriage to his daughter.

Turning Point 3-After Harun Al-Rashid hears the entire story, he releases the Madman from his chains, claiming that he “is well rested and ready for anything”.

Turning Point 4- Perfect Love agrees with Al- Rashid and she and the Madman live together for the rest of their lives.

THE PERFIDY OF WIVES

Stasis- The Jester lives a life of solitude while working in the court of Harun Al-Rashid.

Intrusion/Turning Point 1- Harun Al-Rashid conceives a keen desire to see the Jester married and arranges the marriage with a modest seeming young bride.

Turning Point 2- The young bride's secret lovers all visit on the same day and they are caught by the Jester- The Jester bring all to Harun Al-Rashid for judgement and they each plead to Al-Rashid to allow them to tell a fantastical story to save their "eggs". They engage in a contest to see who can tell the most absurd story.

Turning Point 3- Each of the lovers tells a more absurd story than the last- until finally the Clarinetist tells the story of Abu al-Hasan's enormous fart, which, implied by the text but not stated explicitly, allows all the lover to keep their "eggs".

Turning Point 4- There is nothing in the text that tells us what the new status is, but either the Jester and his wife continue to live together or Harun Al-Rashid permits the Jester a divorce and he lives alone.

THE DREAM (THE PASTRYCOOK'S TALE)

Stasis- The poor man lives in Baghdad with nothing to show for himself but a little hut at the end of a cobbled street and a gray stone courtyard containing a dry, cracked little fountain with a design of birds upon it.

Intrusion/Turning Point 1- A man comes to the poor man in his dream and tells him that his fortune lies far away in Cairo and that he should seek it there.

Turning Point 2- After many hardships, the poor man is beaten and arrested by the police and he tells the Chief of Police of his dream. The chief of Police tells him that he has had a similar dream about a fortune underneath a dry, cracked fountain with a design of birds on it in Baghdad.

Turning Point 3- The Poor man searches underneath the fountain back at his home in Baghdad and finds the fortune that the chief of police spoke of.

Turning Point 4- The poor man finds his fortune and lives a good life.

THE CONTEST OF GENEROSITY (THE BUTCHER'S TALE)

Stasis- In the city of Baghdad there is a boy and a girl from different family backgrounds who love each other.

Intrusion/Turning Point 1- The boy's family fortune rises, while the girl's falls and they reach an age where the girl is to be married to a sheik that she has never seen.

Turning Point 2- The girl tells the sheikh that she is in love with another, and he tells her to give herself to the boy and to return and live as his daughter.

Turning Point 3- After surviving the robbery attempt on the way, the girl and boy arrive back at the Sheikh's home and he gives them the house, all his goods and goes to live in another city.

Turning Point 4- The boy and girl live in the sheikh's home together.

THE WONDERFUL BAG (THE GREENGROCER'S TALE)

Stasis- The Kurd and the Persian are living their lives in Baghdad.

Intrusion/Turning Point 1- One day in the middle of the marketplace, someone let fall a little bag and walked away from it. The Persian picks up the bag and is confronted by the Kurd.

Turning Point 2- The Kadi intervenes, stating that the true owner will best be able to describe its contents and tells them both to tell him what is inside.

Turning Point 3- After hearing their description of what is inside the bag, the Kadi empties it on the floor- revealing a little orange rind and some olive stones.

Turning Point 4- Both the Persian and the Kurd acquiesce to the other, giving up the bag.

ABU AL-HASAN'S HISTORIC INDISCRETION (THE CLARINETIST'S TALE)

Stasis- Abu al-Hasan is a great merchant, a man of exquisite refinement of perfect and complete manners who is very well respected.

Intrusion/Turning Point 1- Abu al- Hasan decides it is time to take a wife and holds a great wedding, inviting all the most important people in Baghdad.

Turning Point 2- Just at the pivotal moment before he was to be married in front of the most important people of Baghdad, Abu al-Hasan, full of food and drink from the wedding, bends over and lets out an enormous fart, which leads Abu al-Hasan to flee in embarrassment.

Turning Point 3- After a long period of self-imposed exile, Abu al-Hasan returns only to discover that the day of his indiscretion has become a date on the calendar and he flees his home again.

Turning Point 4- Abu al-Hasan lives the rest of his life in the bitterness of exile.

SYMPATHY THE LEARNED

Stasis- Harun Al-Rashid is sitting in judgement and feeling more than the usual amount of weariness of his soul.

Intrusion/Turning Point 1- Sympathy the Learned arrives at his door, challenging Harun's masters of art and science to a contest of Knowledge, in which, if she wins, she claims all of their coats of honor and if she loses, she will become Harun's slave.

Turning Point 2- Sympathy defeats the three sages and Harun asks to examine her. Harun engages her in a battle of wits and logic.

Turning Point 3- Sympathy appeals to Harun's humanity, stating that her brother needs her and that Harun does not need Sympathy, that less fortunate men do.

Turning Point 4- Harun allows her to leave with her brother and the coats of honor from the masters of arts and science.

THE MOCK KHALIFAH

Stasis- Harun Al-Rashid, dark within his heart, desires to walk the streets of Baghdad in disguise as he has done so many times in the past.

Intrusion/Turning Point 1- Harun and his men meet an Old Boatman who claims that the Khalifah, Harun al- Rashid is already on the river and has issued an order forbidding anyone to be upon the water, with the penalty of having his head cut off.

Turning Point 2- The "Mock Khalifah" admits he is not who he says he is, and admits that he is playing make believe for a purpose, which he goes on to tell Harun and company.

Turning Point 3- After he is abandoned by his lover and "unmanned" by her slaves, he returns to his mother who observes that he has sufficiently grieved for Azzizah- and gives him her suicide note.

Turning Point 4- Aziz beats himself (hence the scars on his back) and pretends to be the Khalifah so he can dream he is khalifah- because it would be perfect to be someone else.

AZIZ AND AZIZAH

Stasis- Aziz and Azzizah live together as cousins and are betrothed to one another due to the wishes of Azzizah's dying father.

Intrusion/Turning Point 1- On the day of their wedding, Aziz loses his way and falls in love with another woman. He misses their wedding day and they are forbidden to marry for a year.

Turning Point 2- Heartbroken that Aziz loves another, Azzizah dies of a broken heart, leaving a note for Aziz which her mother is to give him only if he sufficiently grieves.

Turning Point 3- After learning that Aziz has cheated on her with the girl in the garden, the other woman has her slaves "unman" Aziz for his infidelities.

Turning Point 4- Aziz beats himself (hence the scars on his back) and pretends to be the Khalifah so he can dream he is khalifah- because it would be perfect to be someone else.

THE CONFUSION OF STORIES-

Stasis- Shahryar is listening to Scherezade's stories every night, under the threat of killing her.

Intrusion/Turning Point 1- Scheherezade is told the story of Aziz and Azzizah.

Turning Point 2- The wazir arrives at the chamber with Scheherezade's Shroud.

Turning Point 3- Shahryar tells Scheherezade that she has lifted the veil from his heart and that he won't harm her.

Turning Point 4- Scheherezade proceeds to tell Shahryar one final story.

THE PRINCE AND THE TORTOISE

Stasis- A king and his three sons are living out their youth in their kingdom.

Intrusion/Turning Point 1- The king, wanting his sons to marry and believing that against the decree of destiny there is no provision, that each boy will blindfold himself, spin around many times, dance in all directions and then shoot an arrow. Whichever woman the arrow lands closest to, the son will marry.

Turning Point 2- The youngest brother's arrow lands next to a tortoise.

Turning Point 3- The king falls ill from chagrin that he has a tortoise for a daughter-in-law.

Turning Point 4- The tortoise cooks a soup that cures the king, and once poured over her head, changes her into a princess and covered her in emeralds.

HARUN AL-RASHID JUDGES OF LOVE

Stasis- Harun Al-Rashid is in bed with two fair girls making love.

Intrusion/Turning Point 1- Harun loves the girls equally and cannot decide which one to finish with.

Turning Point 2- Harun responds to the first girl that he cannot decide who to finish with.

Turning Point 3- The first girl quotes Muhammad, making Harun reconsider and satisfy both of the girls.

Turning Point 4- Harun and the girls are satisfied.

ALA AL-DIN ABU SHAMAT AND THE INFAMOUS PEDERAST BILATERAL

Stasis- Abu Al-Din, the fairest young man on earth, is living in the cellar of his parent's house.

Intrusion/Turning Point 1- One day, Bilateral catches a glimpse of him and decides to trick him into journeying out to the desert.

Turning Point 2- Tricked into coming into the desert, Al-Din is set upon by thieves, robbed and Bilateral blames himself for the boy's misfortune.

Turning Point 3- Bilateral tries to kiss Al-Din- A-Din says that he is not interested and that if he is ever so inclined to kiss a man, he will give it to Bilateral for free.

Turning Point 4- The two live in friendship.

A SONG FOR TWO EXPERIENCED WOMEN

Stasis- The two woman are living their lives.

Intrusion/Turning Point 1- The women feel compelled to warn young women against the different kinds of men in the world.

Turning Point 2- They state that young girls think that men are all alike because they all wear turbans. But they are all different.

Turning Point 3- The woman warn that some men are like vultures.

Turning Point 4- The women continue to live their lives.

PRINCESS BUDUR

Stasis- The two genies are flying through the air.

Intrusion/Turning Point 1- Both genies claim that their charges are the fairest, and after seeing each other's charge, they take the sleeping princess to be with the sleeping prince.

Turning Point 2- The sleepers meet while sleeping.

Turning Point 3- Both the princess and prince compliment and praise the other and they fall in love.

Turning Point 4- They sleep together.

HARD HEAD AND LITTLE FOOT

Stasis- A boy with a hard hear and willful temperament and a girl with a tender soul and delicious feet live together with their mother.

Intrusion/Turning Point 1- Their mother dies, telling the girl never to go counter to her brother's will.

Turning Point 2- Hard head lights farmhouses on fire and beats and kills two little girls, enraging the farm families and sending them running.

Turning Point 3- After they are saved by genies, hard head tickles a genie's belly, which cause him to fall and land on top of a ghou, killing it. The king is grateful, and give hard head the hand of his daughter, and take little foot for his wife.

Turning Point 4- They all live happily ever after!

THE FORGOTTEN MELODY

Stasis- Ishak of Mosul visits his friend, Harun al-Rashid.

Intrusion/Turning Point 1- While visiting Harun al-Rashid, Ishak of Mosul meets Sheikh Al-Fadl, the grandson of the most accomplished musician of their age.

Turning Point 2- After listening to the most famous of the songs, the sheikh leaves, but Ishak cannot remember the song. So he decides to go across the desert to find the Sheikh and learn the song again.

Turning Point 3- Ishak meets three women on the road, one of whom promises to teach Ishak the 43rd song, only if he agrees to sing it to anyone he meets on the road and not to keep it for himself.

Turning Point 4- Ishak hears the song, and feels a connection to the rest of the world.

1.10: Character Analysis

What follows is a character analysis of the main characters of the play. This analysis follows the guidelines of Francis Hodge in his book, *Play Directing: Analysis, Communication and Style*.

1.10.1: Scheherezade

DESIRE- Scheherezade wants to save the daughters of Mussulmen (synonym for Muslim) including her sister and herself.

WILL- Scheherezade level of strength is incredibly high with regards to attaining her goal. She has made it her life's work to achieve this goal. Her inner strength is very high. She is forced to formulate a very elaborate series of stories to help King Shahryar regain his sense of empathy.

MORAL STANCE- Scheherezade is a very moral person and very honest with people. She has a strong sense of what is right and wrong and bases her decisions on this moral barometer. She is not entirely honest with Shahryar because she is working to re-integrate him back to life after the trauma that he has suffered. She has a strong sense of moral responsibility towards others. She has a strong sense of integrity.

DECORUM- Scheherezade is described (along with her sister) as "in the matters of beauty, charm, brilliance, and perfection are unrivaled except by each other" by Shahryar. She is poised, confident, has clear direction and sees opportunity when it is put in front of her.

SUMMARY LIST OF ADJECTIVES- honorable, strong, responsible, brilliant, determined, focused, resourceful.

1.10.2: Shahryar

DESIRE- To protect himself from ever being hurt again in life.

WILL- Shahryar has an incredibly high will when it comes to achieving his goal. He has married, laid with and murdered a woman every night for 3 years to the point which there are only 2 young women left in the city, his wazir's daughters.

MORAL STANCE- Shahryar's moral barometer has been compromised ever since his wife had an affair on him. He allowed that lapse in judgement on someone else's part to affect how he views the world and how he treats other people. It is said of him that "his soul grew sick".

DECORUM- Shahryar is acting like a terrible king. He has enacted a reign of terror on his kingdom ever since his first wife's indiscretion. While we are not privy to his dealings with the



Figure 3: F. Winter- Shahryar, E. Willow- Scheherezade. Photo Credit: Javier R. Sotres

rest of the kingdom, we do hear his telling the Wazir that all women are “filled to the mouth with deceit” and that “only a miracle bring a man safe from love”. He tells the Wazir that he should “trust not at all in women” and that love “will give way to madness”.

SUMMARY LIST OF ADJECTIVES- stubborn, sick, murderer, determined, habitual, powerful, bitter, angry, covered, veiled

1.10.3: Dunyazade

DESIRE- Dunyazade wants to help her sister to save the daughters of the Musselmen including her sister and herself.

WILL- Has a very strong will- she endures 1001 nights and days in fear of losing her sister and, presumably, she will be next after her sister dies.

MORAL STANCE- Dunyazade has a strong moral character, being the daughter of the Wazir who is described as both “noble” and “faithful” by the king. She also has a strong person to model herself after, her sister Scheherezade.

DECORUM- Dunyazade is described (along with her sister) as “in the matters of beauty, charm, brilliance, and perfection are unrivaled except by each other” by Shahryar.

SUMMARY LIST OF ADJECTIVES- beautiful, charming, brilliant, stoic, determined, patient, emotional, opinionated

1.10.4: The Wazir

DESIRE- The Wazir wants to serve the king to the best of his abilities.

WILL- The Wazir is a noble and faithful servant to Shahryar and is willing to follow his will and do his bidding even at the cost of his own daughters.

MORAL STANCE- The wazir has a strong moral compass, as demonstrated by his bringing up of daughters who are described as “in the matters of beauty, charm, brilliance, and perfection are unrivaled except by each other” by Shahryar. His morals are compromised only when in conflict with his duty to the king- then he wavers which puts his daughters in danger.

DECORUM- The Wazir is, by all accounts, a wonderful servant to the king. He is described as “noble” and “faithful” by Shahryar. He arrives dutifully every morning to the king’s chamber with his daughter’s shroud.

SUMMARY LIST OF ADJECTIVES- faithful, noble, dutiful, stoic, follower, respectful

1.11: Core Objective and Repeated Action- All Characters (Within Stories)

What follows are the Core Objectives and Repeated Actions of all of the characters within the stories that Scheherezade tells over the course of the play.

Act 1- The Madman’s Tale(p11-38)

Harun Al-Rashid- Seeking to lighten his soul- alleviate his depression. Unsatisfied with his life.

Jafar- To guide Harun Al-Rashid towards comforting his soul.

Chief of Keys- To assist Harun Al- Rashid in his search for wisdom into happiness.

Madman (Shop Assistant)- To advise Harun Al- Rashid against living the way he has (which has landed him in the madhouse).

Slave Girl- To deliver the ode from her mistress.

Perfect Love- To teach the Madman (shop assistant) a lesson for chastising her and her slave girl.

Dancing Girls- To assist Perfect Love in seducing the Madman (Shop Assistant).

Sheikh Al-Islam- To sell off his daughter in a way that won’t destroy his honor.

Prince of Fools- To convince the Sheik that he is a relative of the Madman (shop assistant).

Fools- To convince the Sheik to not to allow her daughter to marry the Madman (shop assistant).

Figure- To be with her new husband.

The Perfidy of Wives(p39-74)

Jester- To avoid getting married at all costs.

Harun Al-Rashid- To decide whether or not the Pastry cook, greengrocer, Butcher and clarinetist should be pardoned.

Jester's Wife- To keep her affairs a secret from each of her partners.

Pastry cook- To convince Harun Al- Rashid to spare his "eggs" and be pardoned.

Greengrocer- To convince Harun Al- Rashid to spare his "eggs" and be pardoned.

Butcher- To convince Harun Al- Rashid to spare his "eggs" and be pardoned.

Clarinetist- To convince Harun Al- Rashid to spare his "eggs" and be pardoned.

The Dream- The Pastrycook's Tale(p49-53)

Man in Dream- To guide the poor man to his fortune.

Thieves- To gain their fortune.

Family- To protect themselves from the thieves.

Police- To protect the family from the thieves.

Chief of Police- To rid the city of crime.

Poor man- To seek out his fortune.

The Contest of Generosity- The Butcher's Tale(p54-63)

Boy- To marry the girl and live their lives together.

Girl- To marry the boy and live their lives together.

Butcher- To convince Harun Al-Rashid to pardon him.

Sheikh- To honor the girl that he has been married to.

Robber- To convince the girl to be with him.

The Wonderful Bag- The Greengrocer's Tale (64-67)

Kurd- To convince the Kadi that the bag is his.

Persian- To convince the Kadi that the bag belongs to him.

Kadi- To discover the true owner of the bag.

Abu Al-Hasan's Historic Indiscretion- The Clarinetist's Tale(p69-74)

Clarinetist- To convince Harun Al- Rashid that he should be pardoned.

Woman- To help Abu Al-Hasan maintain his dignity.

Abu Al-Hasan- To be the most honorable man in the land.

Friend of Abu Al-Hasan- To comfort his friend.

First Child- To discover when he was born.

Mother- To explain to her children about the day of their births.

Second Child- To discover when she was born.

Third Child- To discover when she was born.

ACT 2

Sympathy of the Learned (p76-92)

Sympathy of the Learned- To defeat each Sage in the king's company and win their coats of honor.

Harun Al-Rashid- To investigate this woman to see if she is as smart as she says and to maintain the honor of the kingdom.

First Sage- To win the contest of knowledge with Sympathy and gain the favor of the king.

Second Sage- To win the contest of knowledge and gain the favor of the king.

Third Sage- To win the contest of knowledge and gain the favor of the king.

The Mock Khalifah (p93-99)

Harun Al-Rashid- To discover who the imposter is and why he is doing what he is doing.

Jafar- to help the king to relieve his heavy heart.

Old Boatman- To make a living and to respect the wishes of the khalifah.

Aziz (Mock Khalifah)- To relieve himself of the lie he is maintaining.

Woman- to help the Mock Khalifah to maintain his illusion.

Aziz and Azizah (p99-108)

Aziz- to follow his heart and marry who he wants to.

Azizah- to do what is best for her love, Aziz- to counsel him in his pursuit of the other woman.

The Other Woman- to seduce Aziz.

Aziz's Mother- to honor Azizah's last wish and wait until Aziz had grieved to give him her letter.

Girl in the Garden- to convince Aziz to be with her.

The Confusion of Stories-#1 Prince and the Tortoise (p109-112)

King- to have his son's marry women that chance decrees worthy as long as the bride is good enough for his son.

Prince- to marry whoever chance deems worthy.

First Sister in Law- To make fun of her brother and his new bride.

Second Sister in Law- To make fun of her brother and his new bride.

Tortoise- To honor her husband and his family.

#2- Harun Al-Rashid Judges of Love (p112-113)

Harun Al-Rashid- To decide which of his girls he should finish with.

Harun's First Girl- To convince Harun Al- Rashid to finish with her.

Harun's Second Girl- To convince Harun Al-Rashid to finish with her.

#3- Ala Al-Din Abu Shamat and the Infamous Pederast Bilateral (p113-115)

Bilateral- To convince Ala Al-Din to sleep with him.

Ala Al-Din- To travel and see the world.

Friends- To sing and be marry.

Desert Thieves- To steal from anyone who ventures into the desert.

#4- A Song for Two Experienced Women (115-116)

Experienced Woman 1- to convince young women not to marry the wrong man.

Experienced Woman 2- to convince young women not to marry the wrong man.

#5- Princess Badur (p116-117)

First Genie- To make sure his cousin Budur is safe.

Second Genie- To assist his friend in taking care of Budur.

Princess Budur- to woo her husband (even in his sleep).

Kamar Al-Zaman- to woo his wife.

#6- Hard Head and Little Foot (p117-122)

Hard Head- To destroy everything he comes in contact with.

Little Foot- To follow her mother's wishes to never go counter to Hard Head's wishes.

Mother- To make sure her children stay together.

Two Little Girls- to have fun with the other kids.

Farmers- to catch the villains that burned their houses and killed their children.

King- To discover who killed the ghoul.

Genie- To protect the children.

The Forgotten Melody (p123-128)

Ishak of Mosul- to play the song that the sheikh Al-Fadl played for him (from his grandfather, the most accomplished musician of their age).

Harun Al- Rashid- to encourage Sheikh Al-Fadl to play one of his grandfather's songs.

Sheikh Al- Fadl- to help Ishak of Mosul to learn the 43rd song.

First Woman by the River- to convince Ishak of Mosul that he has a responsibility to play the 43rd song for whoever wants to hear it if she teaches it to him.

Chapter 2: Production Journal

Saturday, May 9, 2015

“Nothing to be done”. For some reason, I thought this may be an appropriate Waiting for Godot quote for this moment. I was wrong. There’s a lot to be done.

I’ve e-mailed Nancy Hermiston to enquire about potential collaborators for composition and sound design of Arabian Nights. I have concerns that I won’t find anyone and wondering if I should contact a colleague to do it. Also I am planning to meet with Cathy Burnett to talk choreography and how to create the physical world of the play- the goal is to have a few workshops early in the year to explore some compositions and to go through how to create some of the stories physically. I have also been considering the casting of the play. What if I cast all women in the roles, except for Frances? I suppose what would be interesting about this choice is that one of the themes of the play is the healing nature of storytelling. If Shahryar is killing young women across the kingdom, wouldn’t it be a strong choice to have every woman play the people in the kingdom (who come from Scheherazade’s stories?). The idea is interesting and needs to be developed more and I will talk to my advisor Stephen about it.

Thursday, Sept 10, 2015

It is September and we are scheduling auditions. I am thinking that we can use the auditions (these are movement auditions) as a workshop to start exploring some of the stories. I was also thinking that Cathy Burnett Burnett and I could schedule some movement workshops over the next couple of months to explore the physical life of the play. From some of the research I have done about Mary Zimmerman’s original productions, the piece was created over quite a long period of time, so it makes sense to start developing it with Cathy Burnett Burnett a vocabulary

right away. I will be meeting with Cathy Burnett Monday to discuss the choreography and Stephen on Wednesday to do our initial talks about the play and the process of working together. I need to read the play a couple of more times before those talks. I also need to get my book for the play organized before that meeting. I began looking at some of adaptations of One Thousand and One Nights and I will track down a couple of the films adapted from the stories and watch them. From early research it also looks like the different editions and translations of the original story (again, an immense list of translations) appear to vary wildly. Some highlight different aspects of the original story and some focus on the sexual aspects of the tales. Some tell the stories from a colonial viewpoint as well as many other versions of the tales. There is a lot of research potential with this and I am just wondering what my angle should be and what would be most useful in terms of telling this story, here, now.

Saturday, Sept 12, 2015

I sent a message to my colleague, James Coomber to enquire about his interest in joining the Arabian Night's Team as a sound designer/music director. I am developing a relationship with James and feel very confident in his abilities and his sensibilities with regards to the piece. It remains to be seen if I will be able to bring him on board for various reasons, including money, but I am excited at the prospect.

I have begun to dig into the text again and am becoming very excited as to the possibilities that it provides. The action of the play moves very quickly from story to story, and the stories within each other are interconnected nicely, but each unit is clearly fleshed out so I am starting to see the seams between the actions. Also as we get closer to auditions and discussing the physical world of the play, it is starting to become clearer as to how we can create and rehearse the

physical action. I am meeting with Cathy Burnett on Monday to discuss how to organize and execute the movement auditions.

Tuesday, Sept 15, 2015

I had a fantastic first meeting with Cathy Burnett yesterday about how we are going to work together and what she needs as a collaborator on the piece. Essentially we talked about *how* we are going to work together, what she needs and how our time together will be most useful. She said a couple of things right away which were useful. She requested that I be specific with what I want, that I know what images I want and that I know what story I want to tell with the movement. She said one way to start the work would be to give her an image, with or without music, and then she would come up with ideas. This tells me that music is imperative: even an approximation of where the sound of the music is going. So I need to make some decisions about what to do in terms of working with a music director and composer. I also talked to Cathy Burnett about workshopping the movement and whether or not it would be useful to do anything prior to the start of rehearsal. Cathy Burnett wasn't sure; she doesn't have enough information to know if it will be useful to her or not. We talked about how to tackle the auditions tomorrow(movement). The goal is to get to know the actors more- so the idea is to come with some music close to what the music in the show will be. I will pick out some scenes from the play (movement sequences) and then we will have the actors improvise the scene with or without music. We can also use the music to improvise the style or movement/dance as well. Another goal for the workshop is to learn which actors can do what kinds of skills, and then take that information forward into the individual casting sessions.

I just read through the play with the movement auditions tomorrow in mind. There is a lot of text, songs, and movement in this play. The action of the play is directly connected to all of these

elements. I have some ideas for exercises to run through tomorrow with the intermediates. three different sections to improvise.

Wednesday, Sept 16, 2015

I met with Stephen today to have our first discussion about The Arabian Nights and to discuss the overall structure of the analysis. It was a good discussion, and we have a working plan moving forward. I am excited about the work and looking forward to digging into the play. I feel like my preparation for plays has not been as comprehensive as it could be prior to this. This is a wonderful opportunity to refine my process.

Cathy Burnett and I met with the intermediate acting class to have a movement audition today. We did three short improvisations based on sections of the play; the enormous fart sequence, we created a camel caravan and we created a dance which incorporated three everyday gestures (putting on a shoe, folding a shirt). They were asked to come up with these things on their own and I was very encouraged by their ability to work with purpose and come up with ideas together. It gave me some hope for our ability to come up with these compositions together. Some of the actors stood out for me, particularly Cassandra and Stephanie for their dance abilities, Daniel's athletic ability, Sarah was also very confident in her choices. Tai has wonderful comic ability.

Thursday, Sept 17, 2015

Today I am working on the agreement between Stephen and I regarding the analysis and schedule we will be working with for the Arabian Nights. I plan to have it sketched out and sent off by the afternoon.

"The stage is humming. Energy coming from the stage".

Tuesday, September 22, 2015

I found a great resource online today for some entry points into the source material of the play:

www.learner.org.

The site is full of information, it has a short video with some producers of material based from the original text, including Mary Zimmerman, as well as links to materials that may prove useful later in the process including maps of the Persian empire at the time. I picked up a copy of the N J Dawood translation (he is an Iraqi scholar) so I can start digging in to the original stories.

Wednesday, October 7, 2015

I met with Stephen and Stephen to discuss the possibilities for design and potential candidates for the job. I am going to meet with Andy Horka to see if it's something that he is interested in and is capable of pulling off.

Saturday, October 10, 2015

I am looking towards casting soon and am considering how to choose the ensemble. Talking through the process with Stephen, his early advice is in casting for diversity (ie different hits in terms of body, head and heart). He says to consider each actor in terms of these things and to provide as many colors or flavors for as much possibility as possible. My biggest decision is to choose which actors I want in the lead roles. Who will play the male characters is clear; Francis as Shahryar and Shamus as the Wazir. The women are more of a challenge because there are more options. I feel like Libby or Parmiss are the best fits for Sheherezade. On one hand I feel like Libby is in the best position to "carry" the action of the play, but Parmiss is the best fit for the character or at least my vision of what I would like the character to be. I'm also starting to

consider how to work with the women to create “male characters” and how to possibly allow for men to play “female characters”. It is the largest decision of the production so far, choosing to cast the play with mostly women due to the composition of the acting classes. There needs to be some kind of progression to the casting choices. The core story should have men playing men and women playing women, but then there is also a progression throughout of women playing men, and eventually men playing women. What is the action of the play? If I can nail this down, it should inform and instruct when making these casting choices.

Wednesday, October 14, 2015

There have been many great developments today. I met with Andy Horka to discuss the Sound Design/Composition of the project and he has agreed to work on the project. It has been a good learning experience to have certain expectations as to how my team may come together, and due to forces outside of my control, having to make another choice, which, could be equally as exciting and appropriate as the first idea. Andy and I are on the same page and off to a good start.

I also have been in contact with Richard Payment and picked up some films based on One Thousand and One Nights. The two films I picked up look really interesting and like strong interpretations. The Adventures of Prince Achmed by Lotte Reiniger and Arabian Nights by Pier Paolo Pasolini. I’m really excited to see how the story is interpreted by these filmmakers. I’m also looking forward to checking out some of the more conventional takes on the story.

Friday, December 11, 2015

It has been a long time since I have journaled. A lot of things have happened since. I have had initial meetings with my set designer, Heipo Leung, about possibilities with the set and an initial meeting with Robert Gardiner about the lighting design. I have arranged a meeting with all of the

principal designers next week to get everyone on the same page, and to have a clear concept and direction so that they can work on their designs over the break. I also have discussed the challenges of all live music with Andy Horka and he has suggested a triggering system which will allow the performers to play the music, but not on some of the more intricate instruments. It is an interesting idea and I am looking forward to seeing how it plays out.

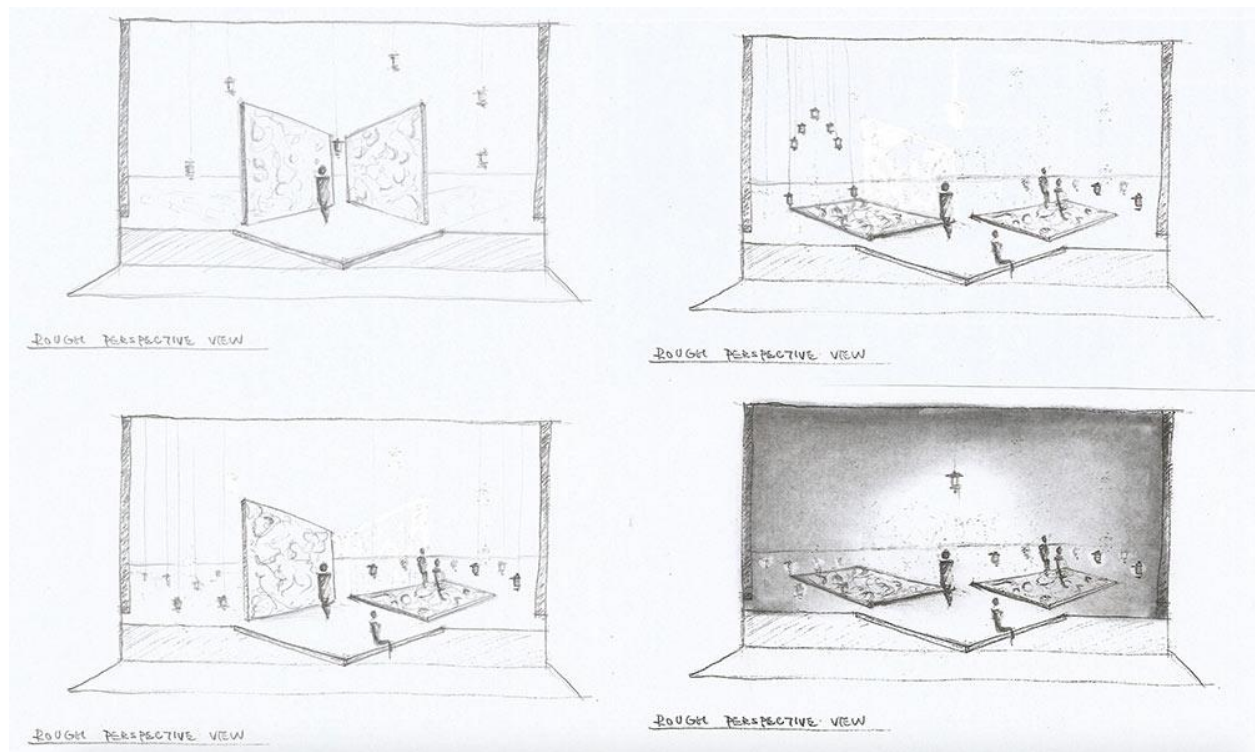


Figure 4: Early Set Design Concepts. Designed by Heipo Leung

I have been considering the idea of representation in the play. The fact is that we have a predominantly Caucasian cast playing characters from a different culture than ours. I have also recently spoken to Steven Liu who has directed me to some material which may aid me in my work. I will continue to touch base with him moving forward. I want to make sure we are representing this culture with as much reverence and respect as possible. I also think I will consult an expert on Islamic cultures and ideas. I am also meeting with Camyar Chai in the next couple of weeks to discuss the question of representation and Islamic culture.

Saturday, December 12, 2015

I've come across a book that looks at the embedded exploration of the Islamic culture in the Arabian Nights. I believe that there may be a carry over into the adaptation so I will explore this text in order to find if there may be connections.

I feel to a certain extent that I am getting wrapped up in the politics of the nature of the piece as opposed to directing the piece.

Tuesday, December 22, 2015

I spoke with Kirsty Johnson and Selena Couture and I have decided to go ahead and adjust the concept for the Arabian Nights. The new direction is to use costumes that are evocative of the time and place of the action of the play, to eliminate any culturally significant items and in their place, integrate modern elements. So eliminating things such as niqabs, veils, and turbans so that we are not representing that culture on stage. Especially since we have a predominantly Caucasian cast, we need to be very careful about how we engage with this material. Representing this culture on stage is akin to if we were to portray the Musqueam people in their traditional garb. I would never do the piece if we were a predominately Caucasian cast pretending to be First Nations. So why would I do that in this case if we place the action of the play in a historically accurate Abbasid world? We will continue to explore the use of colour, layers of clothing, and patterns and to infuse some modern and western elements into it.

Monday, December 28, 2015

I've been having some good conversations with Nicole Bairstow about costumes for the Nights. She has been sending me drawings and images that are inspiring her based on the concept readjustment and I think we are getting closer to the mark. I have concerns that a modern look

will not give us the feel of the world of the play. Nicole also mentioned that she is finding it difficult to design the costumes without knowing the character groupings for each performer (which actor is playing what) as well as if women will play men's parts, and men play women's parts. I will be working on that over the next day or so, deciding the casting and we'll see how it works out.

Sunday, January 17, 2016

There have been quite a few developments since the last journal entry. I have had meetings with colleagues around the issue of representation in the Arabian Nights. I met with Camyar Chai, discuss my concerns, talked about the play and listened to his point of view around intercultural theatre. It was an enlightening discussion and I came away with some more knowledge and a little less fear around doing the wrong thing. My set designer Heipo, costume designer Nicole and I also met with Rachael from the office of Equity and Inclusion on campus to discuss the production. She suggested that we hold a forum to present our ideas and to listen to the community. The forum is happening tomorrow and I'm looking forward to presenting some material and to interact with the students and hear their thoughts on what we're doing.

We have re-adjusted the design and I am feeling much better about where we are headed. We're going with a costume design which reflects the incredible diversity and richness of the source material and of the Abbasid Caliphates during the time of the play (roughly the year 900-1000). It is exciting to see the sketches come in and it feels much more in line with the text as opposed to the concept we were going with prior. The set is similar to before except we are adding period touches and room on stage for the band's instruments. We're also playing with having a "home base" to create the sense that we are always in Shahryar's chamber throughout. I am not entirely sure where on stage is the best place for this to be, but we will figure it out. Musically we are

going to push to do it all live as I think it will add a lot to the piece and it is a good challenge for the performers.

Tuesday, January 19, 2016

We had a forum for the Arabian Nights yesterday and invited members of the UBC community, hoping to have some interchange about the piece and representation of Muslim faith on stage and in our design. Heipo, Nicole and I showed up, as well as our moderator Rachael from the office of Equity and Inclusion and Stephen Heatley and Jay Henrickson came from the department. We talked about the direction and design, looked at some images from the designers and talked about how we could continue to have students engage with this question of representation on stage in our piece. Some suggestions to allow for discussion were to create an online resource which could allow community members to view our design ideas, and comment on their thoughts. Another idea was to invite classes to the crew view prior to our tech, with basic set and costume looks, and then to have a discussion afterward about the direction and design choices with regards to representation.

Heipo, Nicole and I also continued to discuss the design. There are questions about how many costumes we have and where they will be placed on stage when not in use. There is a concern that we will have too many changes but I am asking Nicole to consolidate ideas where possible and to count up the changes in each act so we have an idea of the numbers going forward in the pre-production planning.

Friday, January 22, 2016

I met with Heipo today and refined the set design with her. We clarified what the concept was. We decided that instead of moving set pieces from place to place, we will be set in Shahryar's

chamber for the duration of the play and use the lights and lamp positions (and perhaps some projection) to give the audience the sense idea of a change in place and time. It is closer to what the script calls for and is a better approach to keep the action of the play moving and fluid.



Figure 5: Set Design. Design by Heipo Leung

Monday, February 8, 2016

It is the First day of rehearsal today! It feels great to get started. I was pleased with the first steps. We had a short design presentation, did a first read and then discussed some things. We ended the day with an hour or so of music. We sent the guitar and saxophone home with the actors that will be playing them so they can get comfortable with those specific instruments. The read was 2 hours and 8 mins which is actually shorter than I thought it would be. It is exciting to think that we could possibly perform the play in 2 hours total.

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

We had a very full day of work today. We had Camyar Chai come in to the rehearsal hall and talk about, and answer questions about the Muslim faith, intercultural theatre and other things. It was a very positive discussion and it really informed where we are heading. The discussion also showed the importance of getting on our feet. Originally the plan was to do a day of table work, but we will instead start working on our feet. We can talk about action when we read through the scenes. We also rehearsed the music today with Andy, which is a great way to give them a solid foundation moving forward.



Figure 6: Scheherezade Costume Design. Design by Nicole Bairstow

We had a discussion around representation and the implications of playing characters from cultures that we are not. One or two of the actors expressed concern that we were perhaps doing some things that were concerning to them in terms of representation. I did my best to express my understanding of these issues and to help open the dialogue around these things. The goal is to keep a dialogue open throughout the process and to educate ourselves and the company as much as we can throughout the rehearsal period. What we learned today is that the music is going to take more time than I thought. We will re-adjust our schedule to make sure we are touching on the music at least once every two days. What we do need to do is to make sure that we are moving as efficiently as possible through the blocking. I have to look at the rehearsal schedule and make sure we can get through three passes of the text.

Wednesday, February 10, 2016

Today we started blocking from the first page. There are challenges to blocking this play because the stories stack and there is a desire to want to have the characters to actually listen to their stories. I feel like it's not always necessary, except for Shahyrrar. The blocking is moving steadily. The company is working towards finding a cohesive style for the piece.

Thursday, February 11, 2016

We had a productive day today, as we continued to block through the play. The actors are continuing to explore the style, even with a lot of text to navigate. I have to remind myself that they are students and to help them and remind them to play the actions and objectives. Though it is early, it seems that we are telling the stories in similar way. We need to begin to explore different ways of telling the stories and be conscious of trying some different approaches.

Saturday, February 13, 2016

Great day today- we continued blocking (pages 43-71) and working through the first Act. We're also adding some rehearsal props so the actors can begin to incorporate the objects into their performances. We're also bringing to be more confident in our use of the stage- some of the stories are working with a bit more variety. We had Francis join us in rehearsal today and he stepped on to some of the scenes. Francis's recovery is on schedule so we will expect him on the agreed upon date. At the end of the day we rehearsed some of the music sections.

Monday, February 15, 2016

We spent an hour this morning in the Freddy Wood which gave the actors the opportunity to explore the space with our progress so far in mind. Each actor memorized a 2 to 3 sentence "story" from the play and they told their stories, one after the other. We talked about their experience while they did it and then their experience watching the other actors. Afterwards the actors repeated the exercise and there was a marked improvement. The exercise was useful in demonstrating the expansiveness of the Frederic Wood stage as compared to the rehearsal hall. The actors were able to see the possibilities of the performance style in the Frederic Wood and to not limit themselves in the relative intimacy of the rehearsal hall.

We are almost rough blocking the play (We worked on pages 71-100 today). We have some physical theatre work to do Abu Al-Hasan's enormous fart as well as the Confusion of Stories. I suspect we will get through the play tomorrow and then start back at the beginning.

Tuesday, February 18, 2016

Today we blocked pages 104-131 of the play. We discovered the need for padded handles on the "boats" as lifting each of the actors is proving difficult for the actors. We're continuing to add props and discovering sections that may require short underscoring or melodies in the stories.

Wednesday, February 17, 2016

We are starting to put together the physical theatre sections and add music to the piece and it is coming together. Andy has created some really evocative songs and they are playing well with the action. We have finished a full pass of the piece, and are beginning our second pass of the text. The actors are becoming more comfortable with the text, the action and the physical life of the piece so they are more capable of taking direction. The actors are also listening and responding to each other quite well.



Figure 7: Harun Al-Rashid Costume Design. Designed by Nicole Bairstow

Thursday, February 18, 2016

We are starting to block and refine actions from the beginning of the play, with pass number two. Now that we have had a full pass of the play, the details of the scenes are starting to come out. Most of the actors are continuing to work well and refine their work and others are having some challenges with the style and finding their way through the action of the text.

Saturday, February 19, 2016

Today we continued working through scene, explored and refined some of the physical theatre sections of the play and rehearsed some of the music. We are starting to add some rehearsal set pieces (blocks standing in for the short tables) which are helpful in helping to define the space. The actors are finding more specifics within the scenes and more props and costumes are being added and requested from production, including rehearsal robes.

Monday, February 22, 2016

Today we worked exclusively with Cathy Burnett Burnett on choreography and the dance sections of the piece. Cathy Burnett showed us three sections of choreography and the actors worked through those sections. We also presented short bits that we had worked on independently and Cathy Burnett helped the actors to refine those sections. It was a very productive session and hopefully we can have more time with Cathy Burnett added to our rehearsal schedule.

Tuesday, February 23, 2016

Today we got back to doing scene work and continuing through our second pass of the play. As the actors refine their actions we are discovering where props and costumes are adding to the

specificity of the scenes and where they are muddying up the action. Most often, the actors are discovering the need for a prop that is essential to telling their portion of the story, in which case we are adding where necessary. The actors are starting to be scheduled for fittings. I am still not sure whether we are going to go forward with footwear, or if the actors will be in barefoot for the production. Some sections feel like they want the actors to have shoes on (specific scenes) and other sections (the physical theatre sections) seem to favor keeping the actors barefoot.

Wednesday, February 24, 2016

We had a productive rehearsal session tonight. Our vocal coach, Brad Gibson, was in and we ran a portion of the play for him. Brad then gave vocal notes- it was a great reminder for the actors to do their homework, to do a thorough exploration of the text and to commit to their choices.

Having Brad there was useful for the actors insomuch that he could give them both specific and general notes about the style of the piece and the demands of the text in a vocabulary that they have been learning from Gayle Murphy (the Voice Instructor of the program).

Thursday, February 25, 2016

We worked to the end of the first act tonight. I feel that we've found more dynamics in the staging of the first act as well as have utilized the chorus a bit better. It will be good to sit back and watch it from beginning to end and see how it develops and how I can continue to keep it interesting visually. As we work through the scenes we are discovering more and more specifics with regards to action and the physical nature of the production.

Saturday, February 27, 2016

Today we ran Act 1 which ran at one hour and fifteen minutes. We also went on to work scenes in the second Act and Andy came in to work with the company on the music. After watching a

run-through of the entire Act we are able to find which props are absolutely essential and which ones are superfluous. My desire is to cut props that are not absolutely essential, so that the action is as clear as possible. More actors are attending costume fittings and those sessions are informing the actors well about what to expect once costumes are incorporated into the production. There are some costume pieces which may be cut, including the fans for the Dancing Women in the Perfect Love scene.

Monday, February, 29, 2016

Today Cathy Burnett Burnett joined us again and we rehearsed the dance pieces we worked on the last time Cathy Burnett joined us and she also taught the cast new choreography for sections that we haven't rehearsed yet. The choreography is starting to coalesce and the actors are taking more ownership over their performances.

Tuesday, March 1, 2016

Stephen came in to watch a run of the first Act today. A very useful note was the idea to plant Francis "in bed" down stage, so that he is able to observe the stories and the audience can observe him observing the action. We're going to work to incorporate that idea into the blocking. The action in Act 1 is becoming much clearer. Act 2 is still in need of more work, though the challenges are clear and I know what we need to work on. We are going to start running the Acts so the actors get full passes. This is important as we have a crew view on Tuesday.

Wednesday, March 2, 2016

Today we continued to work through scenes in the second Act. Actors are going back for a second round of fittings with costumes.

Thursday, March 3, 2016

Today the cast ran through Act 2 and we worked scenes for the balance of the day.

Saturday, March 4, 2016

Today we ran the entire show; the first Act ran 1:15:48 and the second Act ran 48:06. The entire run time, taking into account a 15-minute intermission was 2:18:54. I am confident that the run time can be cut down once the actors trust the work and move more briskly through their actions. It is the last day in the rehearsal hall today.

Monday, March 6, 2016

Today is our first day of rehearsal in the Frederic Wood theatre. We were joined by Brad Gibson and he spent the first section of the rehearsal working with the actors, to get them attuned to the space and to explore the demands of the space. The actors are discovering the need to clearly articulate their speech on the Frederic Wood stage. We continued to work on stage and it helped to inform the actors as to how to continue the work from this point moving into dress rehearsals. The actors are learning a lot of new information due to the spacing of the stage and props which are different from the dimensions of the rehearsal hall. We spent the bulk of the evening working through the group scenes, finding the spacing and adjusting the set configuration. We are discovering some elements of the piece that we staged are slightly different than we had imagined due to the actual set and space dimensions and are making adjustments. We are also discovering where to place the microphones so that they will pick up the actor's voices, but not be kicked or knocked during the performance. We are also making discoveries in terms of the physical theatre portions of the play and how they may or may not affect the lighting. Today I

will spend some time with Heipo, solidifying the table and pillow positions and making sure we're on the same page for the physical set, including creating the king's "bed" with pillows.

Tuesday, March 8, 2016

Today we had a "Crew View". I made a lot of discoveries today in terms of how I have staged portions of the play and how they read on the Frederic Wood stage. It is clear that sections need to be blocked further downstage. Our days are short and the actors need to be able to run through the play as much as possible, as well as time to incorporate production pieces into their performances. Tonally, it is clear that certain sections need some tweaks in terms of actions. The first story needs to be more bawdy and sexual. Heipo and I are going to solidify the lantern positions Thursday and we have committed to the positions of the furniture, and pillows. The lights and set look fabulous and the design is coming together nicely.



Figure 8: Set Design; Tables and Pillows. Designed by Heipo Leung

Wednesday, March 9, 2016

We went through a levels session and it went very well. As we have live music played in the piece we didn't have any sound levels but we did spend time on both the lighting levels and the lantern positions. The design is feeling very cohesive and is very much creating a very evocative world for the production.

Thursday, March 10, 2016

We started our Q to Q today, which went very well. We ended up spending a substantial amount of time on the top of the show and some of the more technically challenging sections and managed to get through just over half of the play (finished at page 68). There are some challenges to work through, in particular the lantern positions. The crew simply needs some time to get used to operating the lanterns. Overall we are making good progress and the cast and crew are in good spirits.

Friday, March 11, 2016

Today we had day 2 of Q to Q. Another good day, we managed to get through the entire play. This is exciting; the crew did a great job and the actors were professional and supported the work nicely.

Saturday, March 12, 2016

We had a very productive day as we worked on music in the morning and spent the afternoon working on a tech run, followed by some notes and working a couple of sequences in the play. We worked a short section of the Madman and Perfect Love scene and then blocked a section of the Aziz and Azzizah story. Finally, we started to add a small physical bit to that same story

(with Azzizah being lifted into the air). The technical aspects of the production are close to where I want them to be. Some scenes are slightly too dark so it is difficult to see faces well. Those adjustments are being made and we will continue to refine the technical aspects of the production as we move forward.

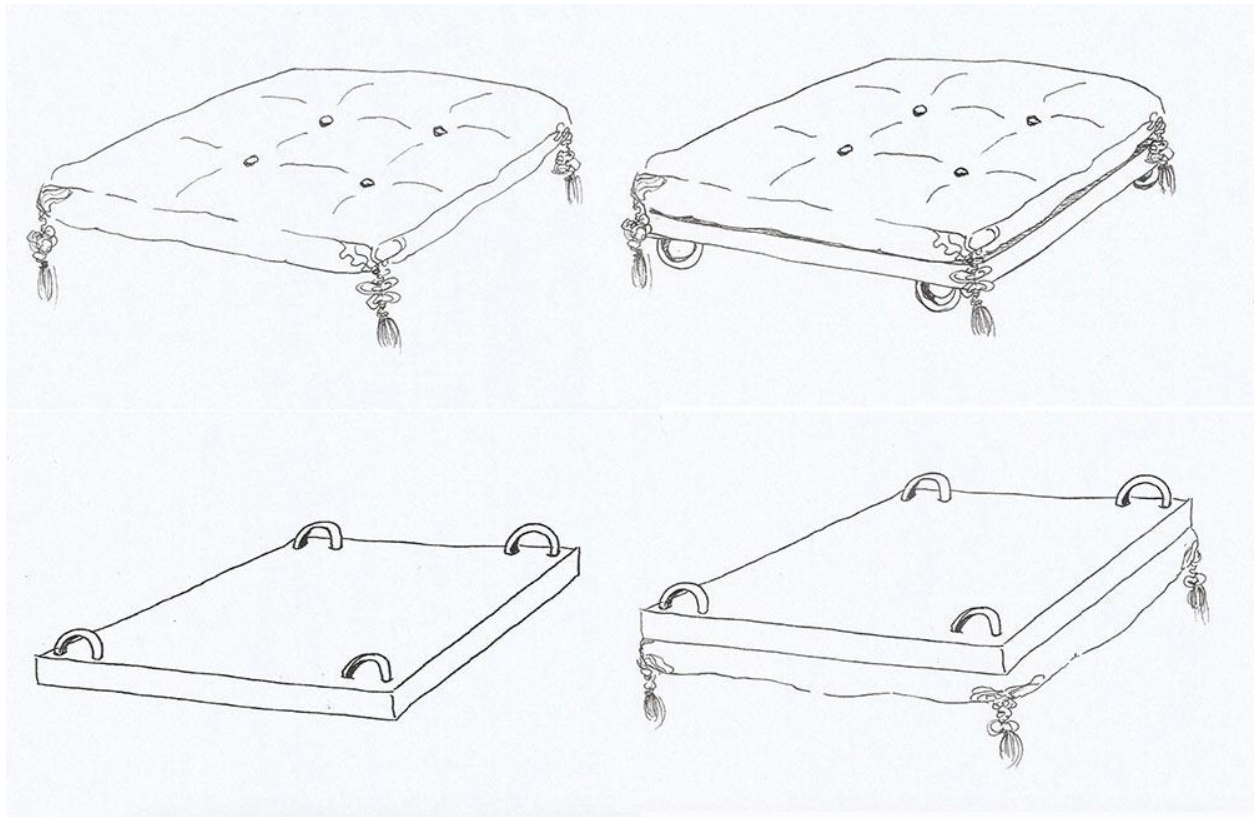


Figure 9: Boat Design with Pillows. Designed by Heipo Leung

Monday, March 14 2016

We had our Technical Dress Rehearsal tonight and it went well. Our first Act ran 1:16:24 and the second Act ran 47:58. The costumes were obviously new for the actors and so there will be a period of adjustment. The show is looking really good from a design standpoint with some minor tweaks being made prior to the Preview tomorrow. We will be cutting the makeup for the men as the eyebrow makeup is too pronounced. The show is also too long- the pace overall is a bit slow and scenes need to be tightened, including actors picking up cues. Two scenes with pacing issues

are the Madman story and the Sympathy the Learned tale. Both need to move forward, and both have a lack of action and stakes overall. We are going to work on both of these before the next rehearsal.

Tuesday March 15, 2016

We had our Dress rehearsal tonight with some extra folk from the department in the audience. Earlier today we spent an hour and a half working on a few sections with the actors; the Madman scene, Sachi and Rowan's song, a movement section with Parmiss, and some other short sections. It was very useful to work with them and I thought the actors took the notes and worked them into the rehearsal very well last night. I have a half of an hour to work with them tonight and I am hoping to do the same thing, including working on some key sections to illustrate what kind of pacing we need. The run went well as the pacing was better in the first Act.

Wednesday March 16, 2016

We had a preview performance tonight.

Thursday March 17, 2016

Opening night. The show went well and I am feeling quite good about the work. There were challenges with the rehearsal process, namely not being able to work with the actors for the last week or so, so things like pacing and building moments are hard to do, as those are some of the things that need to happen when at that point in the process. There are some lagging moments and the actors are not cueing up as much as they need to but my note to them and to Benton was to keep the pace up throughout. There are also some sections where the actors would start to play emotions as opposed to actions. Overall though, I feel good with what we have achieved and confident that the actors are providing a satisfying performance.

It's April 5, and the show closed on Saturday Night. I attended and have had a very satisfying night in the theatre. The show has maintained its shape, but the actors had picked up their cues so well that they have taken minutes off of the run time. The actors have also grown so much in their confidence with the material and style, so many portions of the play were simply a joy to watch.



Figure 10: S. Rose- Masrur, M. Barry- Harun al-Rashid, S. Michaud- Jafar, R. Bugaresti- Fifth Woman, S. Fera- Old Boatman. Photo Credit: Javier R. Sotres

Chapter 3: Final Reflections

The show has closed and, from what I understand, it was attended and received well. I was at the closing night performance and appreciated the progress that the cast had made in terms of finding simplicity, moving forward with purpose and taking the air out of the performance. My final note to Benton, my stage manager, was to “pick up the pace, and make sure the actors keep moving the story forward”.

Looking back on the process from pre-production through to Opening Night there are a number of things that I have learned as a director through the process of working on *The Arabian Nights*. I will grow from these ideas and take them into my practice moving forward. Overall there are three main areas of production that I would like to focus on for this discussion; Pre-production planning, Design planning and Execution, Rehearsal and Cultural Exploration and Education.

Pre-production planning: Upon reflection, I feel that my text analysis was not as comprehensive as it could have been prior to rehearsals. In particular, I feel that my understanding of the structure of the piece was incomplete. I did not fully comprehend the nature of each of Scheherazade’s stories and the purpose and intent of each story. I also did not see the progression of each story and did not see how each “lesson” taught by the last story would inform and move Shahryar closer to fully comprehending his actions and move him towards a life of empathy. I also believe that I could have had a much clearer rehearsal schedule than what we ended up with for our production if I had this extra knowledge and understanding of the structure of the text. I felt the pressure of time even though it was understood that the last week of our rehearsal process would be dedicated to incorporating the technology, costumes and set into the production, I still felt like there were sections of the piece that could have used some work prior to opening because of the given circumstances of the production schedule. I also felt that a clearer schedule

prior to our rehearsal process would have helped support certain aspects of the production better, including the execution of the sound design and the choreography.

Design planning and Execution: Overall I was very happy with the design of the show. The design process overall was the most uncertain and changing, but also the most rewarding aspect of the production, as we did achieve a very evocative design overall. The design of the show went through three different stages and had three different incarnations over the course of our planning, mostly due to the culturally significant nature of the play and how that would be reflected to an audience by a multicultural cast and production team who, primarily, are not of those cultures that we were exploring. The first stage included many fantasy ideas and incorporated some culturally reflective ideas, but the images were indicative of a narrow view of the cultures that we were exploring. For much of this first stage I was focused primarily on the Costume design. After some consideration, I chose to scrap this first idea and to explore a more modern, distanced design concept. In this second stage we explored the actors wearing a base costume, and then using single pieces to transform into each of the characters the actors would play. The set, similarly, would be transformative, but less evocative of the world of the play we were exploring. Again, after some reflection, it seemed to me that this new idea was actually taking us away from the world of the play to the extent that I wasn't able to see the world at all. We then went back to some of the earlier ideas, including finding culturally reflective pieces, but from different cultures and using a very focused color palette. This allowed us to create a cohesive, reflective and evocative design world, without making an attempt to be authentic. I believe that through the process of exploring these different possibilities, the designs became much more refined and purposeful. Overall the physical production was very effective. There are some lessons learned from the process which I will take into my practice. I was the least satisfied

by the sound design that we had for the production. I fully admit that the responsibility be placed squarely on my shoulders for not having a clearer direction earlier in the process. I did not enter into my discussions with my sound designer with a clear purpose and strong enough ideas about the way that I wanted the piece to sound. By the time I found a sound that I was interested in exploring, we were too far into creating the sound to reverse course entirely. So although we arrived at a cohesive sound for the piece, it wasn't exactly in line with my overall desire for the production to be evocative of the cultures we were exploring. Also I didn't fully comprehend what playing music live entailed and never really understood the intricacies of how those challenges would play a part in the performance. In future productions I will consider the performer's abilities more thoroughly and also be more involved in the rehearsal process for the creation of the songs. While I was satisfied with where we ended up with the set design, I would take the lessons learned from this process into my practice. I will also have stronger ideas earlier in the process when it comes to set design. I have found that designers are abler to offer suggestions when they have clear direction from me. If I am able to say what I am looking for earlier in the process, as opposed to waiting for offers from the designers, we are able to move closer to a fully realized design, quicker in the process. I believe that the set could have been more sensual, meaning that instead of the hard floor, we could have had carpets or fabric, and we also could have had other elements which would bring more sensuality to the set design. The thinking was that the costumes would provide a lot of sensuality, which they did, but I think that more attention to this idea in the set itself, would have yielded some great results. I also think that I should have pulled the wall downstage between 4 and 8 feet. I think that this would have made the production a bit more intimate. I think that I was fighting the space at times, trying to

find variety in the staging by placing some of the action upstage. Ultimately if that wall was brought downstage, it would have created a more intimate feeling overall.

Rehearsal: Overall, the rehearsal process was quite successful. I would more closely assess the production schedule prior to our rehearsal so I could plan my rehearsals with a greater understanding the time allotted to us. I also would have clarified the tech schedule and discussed how much time the production team would need over the tech rehearsal schedule. Because costumes requested a large amount of time over our tech schedule, I feel we lost some crucial time over the tech weekend. So knowing that some time would be lost to makeup training and other production needs, I would have adjusted my schedule accordingly. I would also allocate more rehearsal time to the different elements of our production. We very rarely rehearsed the songs with the acting in mind, and we did not start rehearsing the dances until well into our second and third weeks, which were to the detriment to the physical life of the production. I will be more meticulous with the planning of rehearsals when there are a variety of performative elements to work on, in a play like *The Arabian Nights*.

Cultural Exploration and Education: An important aspect of any kind of Intercultural theatre piece is to research and implement intercultural elements from the source text. *The Arabian Nights* could be described as intercultural theatre. I was not as aware of the vital importance of meaningful research and education of the cast and design team when working on a play which explores cultures outside of our own. While I did research and explore some aspects of how culture plays a part in the play, I believe I could have done more to educate the cast and myself to these things. This is the kind of work that needs to happen much earlier in the process and in the future when working on a play which explores a culture other than my own, I will be sure to do extensive research on that culture, as well as work to find some kind of structure with which

the members of the cast and production can have a meaningful exchange of ideas with members of the culture that we are exploring. If a company does not have the means or if I cannot find the support to create this structure to allow for a meaningful exchange of culture, I will more than likely, not do the project.

Finally, I am very satisfied with the end result of this project. Many of the elements of this production are disciplines that I have never encountered before as a director including the use and execution of choreography, live music and physical theatre. The cultural exploration and education of the company while working on this piece was fascinating and opened my eyes to a new way of conceptualizing a project. I have also never before worked with such a large cast. My initial outcome, to create a wholly entertaining, clearly directed production of *The Arabian Nights*, was a success. Throughout this process I have had many unexpected and illuminating moments with the incredible group of people that were assembled for *The Arabian Nights* and I am forever grateful for this experience. It is in the unexpected that I found the most education and growth as a director.

This has been an inspirational journey and one that I will recall for some time as I continue in my practice as a director in the theatre.

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Appendix A: Director's Notes from the Program

When I read *The Arabian Nights*, I fell in love with it right away. I was aware of the 1001 Nights stories, but I had never encountered them this way. I found myself mesmerized by the experience of reading these tales layered on top of each other in such a potentially theatrical way, and the mixture of the sacred with the profane. And I was encouraged by the tremendous hope at the core of the play. It was unlike anything I had ever worked on as an actor or a director. And it moved me, which ultimately, is the reason I go to the theatre.

The idea that story-telling is essential to fostering and developing empathy for ourselves and for others is at the heart of *The Arabian Nights*. The intention of each of these stories is for the storyteller to help expand the listener's consciousness to the trials, challenges and experiences of other people. To emphasize and remind us that we are part of a much larger fabric of life than just ourselves. We are reminded of accepting where we are in life and to give up control over those things that we cannot control.

My impulse with this production is to explore and to attempt to understand the diversity and depth of eastern cultures through their history of storytelling. In both the source material, and our play, are stories from such a wide range of cultures, from Persian, South Asian and Arabic myths and histories. The play feels like a celebration of story-telling- there is incredible joy, passion and emotion at the core of these tales. That is what I wanted to tap into- our joy of exploring these stories and this opportunity to share them with you.

I asked a lot of people for their perspective from the beginning of this journey and I am grateful to so many for their insight; Professor Siyuan Liu, Professor Kirsty Johnson and Selena Couture for their knowledge and discussions about intercultural theatre, Rachael Sullivan and the Equity

and Inclusion Office, and Camyar Chai for his perspective on Islam and the practice of intercultural theatre.

Thank you so much to my advisor Stephen Malloy for his support and guidance throughout the process. And to Tom Scholte and Stephen Heatley for their wisdom and unique perspectives on the craft of direction in the theatre.

Thank you to my designers Heipo, Nicole, Andy and Sophie, and to Jay, Brad, Keith, Lynn, Jodi, and all the production students for putting this together. Thank you to Cathy Burnett for her lovely choreography, Brad for his insight and thoughtful approach and Gayle for her constant support. To my wonderful cast for trusting me and joining me on this journey.

And to Susie, my parents, Zoya and Arnie, for their eternal belief in me.

Thank you for choosing to come to the theatre tonight. I hope you enjoy the show!

Appendix B: Name Meanings and Glossary of Terms and Phrases

There are some significant words that are specific to this play text so I will compile these here for reference. Words and their specific meanings with regards to The Arabian Nights by Mary Zimmerman.

Shahryar: Persian Sassanid King who is told stories by his wife, Scheherazade. He is betrayed by his wife, so every night for 3 years he takes a wife and has her executed the next morning. He finally marries Scheherezade, his Vizier's clever daughter who tells Shahryar stories for 1001 nights, over which time he grows into a wise ruler and rekindles his trust in women.

Wazir:(Vizier)- a high ranking political advisor or minister- at first merely a helper, later became the representative and successor of the dapir (official scribe or secretary).

Dunyazade: Younger sister of Queen Scheherezade. Initiates the tactic of cliffhanger storytelling to prevent her sister's execution.

Scheherezade: Legendary Persian queen and the storyteller and narrator of the Nights. She tells her husband a story every night, stopping at dawn with a cliffhanger, forcing the king to keep her alive for another day.

shroud: A length of cloth or an enveloping garment in which a dead person is wrapped for burial.

“You who are sad, oh be comforted; for nothing endures, and just as every joy vanishes away, so also vanishes every sorrow.”: a blessing.

Mussulmen: synonym for Muslim.

Prince of Time: no reference

Ala al- Din: One of the greatest Ghurid kings(Persian)- during his reign the dynasty rose to prominence (went from a tribal chief to king of an empire).

“The Contest of Generosity”- “a good marriage is a contest of Generosity”

“The Dream”- no reference

“The Forgotten Melody”- no reference

Sympathy the Learned- no reference

Harun al-Rashid- the fifth Abbasid caliph (766-809)- surname translates to “the Just”, “the Upright” or “the Rightfully-Guided”. His time was marked by scientific, cultural and religious prosperity.

Jafar- meaning “spring” or “rivulet” is a masculine Arabic name- especially among Shia Muslims.

King of Time: no reference

Allah: Arabic word for God- referring to the God in Abrahamic Religions. Mainly used by Muslims to refer to God in Islam, also used by Arab Christians since pre-Islamic times.

the Faith: the one true faith is Islam

“noble So-and-So”- no reference

Daughter of a Thousand Shameless Horns- no reference

Shaaban- eighth month of the Islamic calendar- this is the month of “separation”- so called because the pagan Arabs used to disperse in search of water.

Ramadan- ninth month of the Islamic calendar- month is spent by Muslims fasting during the daylight hours from dawn to sunset. Gates of heaven open for the entire month; gates of Hell would be closed.

Buffalo cow- no reference

Sheikh al-Islam- honorific title used for outstanding scholars of the Islamic sciences.

Dinars- main currency unit in modern circulation.

“Sounding Brass”- Corinthians 13:1- super spiritual people who express no love. Clanging of brass.

Perfect Love- John 4:18: There is no love in fear. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

Benediction- Is a short invocation for divine help, blessing and guidance, usually at the end of worship service.

Piccolo- small, half size flute.

lord Job- The biblical character, Job.

lord Khidr- is a mystical figure that some believe to be described in the Quran as a righteous servant of God possessing great wisdom or mystic knowledge.

Cleopatra- Last active pharaoh of Ptolemaic Egypt, became a province of the Roman Empire.

The angel Israfil- will blow the trumpet from a holy rock in Jerusalem to announce the Day of Resurrection. Sent to collect dust from the 4 corners of the earth to create Adam. ALSO someone who has the heart of Israfil signifying the loftiness of this angel.

Baghdad (the Dream- look into the geography of the story) Baghdad- founded in the 8th century- capitol of the Abbasid caliphate- along the Tigris river. Significant cultural, commercial and intellectual center for the Islamic world. Garnered a worldwide reputation as the “Center of Learning”. High middle ages considered to be the largest city in the world, destroyed by the Mongol empire in 1258. Commissioned by caliph Al-Mansur, quoted as saying, “This is indeed the city that I am to found, where I am to live, and where my descendants will reign afterward”. House of Wisdom was a major intellectual center during the Islamic Golden Age- founded by Caliph Harun al-Rashid- learned scholars including Jewish and Christian part of this research and educational institute. Translated books into Arabic. Astronomical observatories were set up, center for study of humanities and for science in medieval Islam, including mathematics, astronomy, medicine, alchemy, chemistry, zoology, geography and cartography. Drawing on Greek, Indian and Persian texts the scholars accumulated a great collection of world knowledge, and built on it through their own discoveries. By the ninth century the House of Wisdom had the largest selection of books in the world. Destroyed by the Mongols in the Siege of Baghdad.

Cairo- becomes the next home of the Abbasid Caliphates after the destruction of Baghdad.

Rabwah Valley- in the area of modern day Pakistan- Punjab province near the historic city of Chiniot. Literally means “an elevated place” in Arabic.

Kurd- ethnic group from southeast turkey, western Iran northern Iraq. Culturally and linguistically closely related to Iranian peoples.

Persian- Iranian people who speak the modern Persian language, and closely related Iranian dialects and languages.

Kadi and judge- an official in the ottoman empire- based on the Islamic concept of a judge- involved in administrative tasks and involved in taxation and conscription.

Kohl- ancient eye cosmetic

Basrah- Iraqi city located on the Shatt al-Arab river between Kuwait and Iran.

Hammams- Turkish bath or steam room. Family friends socialize.

Iraq the Earthy Paradise- The Garden of Eden- divine garden.

Abu al-Hasan- a scholar and theologian who founded the school of tenets of faith of Ash'ari.

Malabar Coast- Narrow coastline on the south western shore line of the mainland Indian subcontinent. Sometimes refers to the entire coastline.

the Ganges- the transriver boundary of Asia which flows through the nations of India and Bangladesh. Rises in the western Himalayas, flows south and east through India into Bangladesh into the Bay of Bengal. Sacred river to the Hindus.

twelfth day of Ramadan- gospel was bestowed on Jesus.

Khalifah- Deputy or steward; sometimes translated as vicegerent. Each individual is a Khalifah to god- Muslims in particular must strive to adhere to and advance God's will by establishing a society that reflects human dignity and justice.

Abu Nuwas- One of the greatest classical Arabic poets, who also composed in Persian. Became a master of all contemporary genres of Arabic poetry.

Sublime Book- Most likely a reference to the Quran

Muhammad- Prophet Muhammad- central figure of Islam, regarded as its founder. Last prophet sent by God to mankind.

Mecca- City in Hejaz in Saudi Arabia. Birthplace of Muhammed and the site of Muhammed's first revelation of the Quran. Holiest city in the religion of Islam. Pilgrimage to(Hajj) is obligatory for all able Muslims.

Holy War- justified by differences in religion.

The Evil One- Most likely a reference to Satan.

Moses- former Egyptian prince to whom authorship of the Torah is attributed. Most important prophet in Judaism.

Masrur- Proper name.

Chamberlains- No reference

Amirs- No reference

Tree of Job- No reference

Father of Patience- No reference

Tigris- River through Baghdad.

Ala al-Din Abu Shamat- no reference

Vagabonding- a person who wanders from place to place without a home or regular employment or income.

Bilateral- Pertaining to or affecting two or both sides, factions, parties or the like.

Turban- customary headwear based on cloth winding. Many variations.

Prince Kamar al-Zaman- No reference

Maabad of al-Hijaz- No reference

Shazaman (king's brother)- Shahryar's brother.