THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHREYER HONORS COLLEGE

SCHOOL OF THEATRE

DISCOVERIES OF A DEVELOPING DIRECTOR:
AN EXPLORATION OF THE ART AND CRAFT OF
DIRECTING FOR MUSICAL THEATRE

ROBERT MAXON MONTGOMERY
SPRING 2014

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements
for a baccalaureate degree
in Musical Theatre
with honors in Musical Theatre

Reviewed and approved* by the following:

Cary L. Libkin
Professor of Theatre, Head of BFA Musical Theatre & MFA Directing Programs
Thesis Supervisor

Susan Russell
Associate Professor of Theatre
Honors Advisor

* Signatures are on file in the Schreyer Honors College.
ABSTRACT

The craft of modern theatrical direction has been well documented by a great number of experienced directors since its inception over one hundred and fifty years ago. However, there are far fewer, if any, published examples of a nascent director’s discovery and exploration of this art. This written thesis is the documentation of a young director’s experience leading up to the rehearsals of his premiere production. It explores the basic principles of directing, the process of developing an approach for the realization of a production from the selection of a show through the end of pre-production work, and the direct application of all these elements to a production of the musical *john & jen* by Andrew Lippa and Tom Greenwald.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements........................................................................................................ iii

Chapter 1 “It’s All in How You Set It Up”................................................................. 1

Chapter 2 Creating an Approach ............................................................................. 8

Chapter 3 Research and Re-Discovery ..................................................................... 14

Chapter 4 The Casting Process ................................................................................ 22

Chapter 5 Coordination and Realization ................................................................. 28

Chapter 6 The Next Step............................................................................................ 34

Appendix A Preliminary Event List for john & jen .................................................. 35
Appendix B Preliminary Character Analysis for john & jen .................................... 40
Appendix C Character Breakdown john & jen .......................................................... 42
Appendix D Call Back Music Cuts and Scenes for john & jen .............................. 43
Appendix E Rehearsal Schedule for john & jen ....................................................... 44
Appendix F Scenic Breakdown for john & jen .......................................................... 45
Appendix G Ground Plan for john & jen ................................................................. 46
Appendix H Sample page from the Blocking Script of john & jen ......................... 47

Works Cited .................................................................................................................. 48

Works Referenced........................................................................................................ 49
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project would not have been possible without the wonderful oversight of Professor Cary L. Libkin and guidance of Associate Professor Susan B. Russell. Additionally, any emerging artist must necessarily stand on the shoulders of the masters who have come before. The writings of Harold Clurman, William Ball, Michael Bloom, Alexander Dean, and Lawrence Carra have been essential to my developing understanding of the craft of directing.

Special thanks to T, for everything.
Chapter 1

“IT’S ALL IN HOW YOU SET IT UP”

“[Theatrical] direction is a job, a craft, a profession, and at best, an art. The director must be an organizer, a teacher, a politician, a psychic detective, a lay analyst, a technician, a creative being. Ideally he should know literature (drama), acting, the psychology of the actor, the visual arts, music, history, and above all, he must understand people. He must inspire confidence. All of which means he must be a ‘great lover.’”

–Harold Clurman, On Directing (14).

Harold Clurman, director of many esteemed Broadway productions including A Member of the Wedding, Heartbreak House, A Touch of the Poet, and Uncle Vanya, lays a great challenge upon the aspiring (and established) director in this excerpt from his book on the subject. Fellow director Elia Kazan claims that On Directing is “the most influential book on direction ever written in this country” (Clurman, cover). How can one person, especially a young director, possibly fulfill all these demands – some of which may take a lifetime to develop? I asked myself this question nearly two years ago when I first considered exploring such a career. I desired to try on the different professional “hats” a director must wear, to learn the knowledge he must know, and to love the art, process, and people he must love. As a student of the theatre at the Pennsylvania State University, I had access to a many powerful resources that would aid me as I explored the idea of pursuing this profession. I will endeavor to share the experiences I enjoyed and the knowledge I absorbed in the process leading up to the first rehearsals of my directorial
debut and Schreyer Honors College Senior Thesis: a production of the musical *john & jen* by composer Andrew Lippa and lyricist and book (script) writer Tom Greenwald.

* - The Production Process from the Actor’s Perspective -

As a student and young professional of Musical Theatre, I have already acquired a functioning knowledge of the theatrical profession and the production process as a whole. Experience working at several professional theatres during the past two summers and participating in seven full productions within the University environment has given me ample opportunity to learn the process in detail. In *A Practical Handbook for the Actor*, a text that I studied in an acting class with Professor Jim Wise, the actor’s job is very concisely described: “To put it simply… the actor’s job is to find a way to live truthfully under the imaginary circumstances of the play” (Bruder & Others 5). There is, however, a great deal more practical detail to the job that will give context to my directing experiences.

It all begins with the audition, where actors interested in working on a specific production (at times multiple) share their abilities with the director and creative staff. After receiving a call from the theatre and signing a contract comes pre-rehearsal preparations. Reading and analyzing the script, looking up any unknown words or phrases, learning the lyrics and music (in the case of a musicals), and delving into personal acting preparation are all key steps that should be taken before rehearsals begin. At that point, it is the actor’s job to absorb and personalize the director’s blocking (the physical movements through the space that an actor makes on stage). Additionally, the actor must take any notes or adjustments the director gives, and commit himself completely to their execution. An actor must also be emotionally and personally available in the work, and he should “wipe his feet at the door” and leave any personal issues outside the rehearsal room. There may be times when an actor’s suggestion is appropriate and useful, but an actor’s ultimate duty is to the director, and it is his job to at least try to his best ability every suggestion, no matter how foolish it seems. As the show is being blocked
(physically staged), actors should be memorizing and internalizing the work, so that when a
certain scene or section is returned to, the work is retained and even refined. Eventually the
rehearsal process will end and “tech” rehearsal will begin. This is a process in which the
technical elements including state management, sounds, scenic designs, props (objects used in the
show), and lights are coordinated with the actors to produce a unified and technically effective
story. After tech comes the dress rehearsal, where costumes, make-up and any finishing touches
are added. Then follow previews, which are full runs of the show before a paying audience after
which notes and adjustments may still be made. There may be final rehearsals that happen
during this period, but eventually these will come to a close and the show will open. It will play
for the length of its run (which is sometimes predetermined and others open-ended), and upon
closing an actor returns any borrowed items (including scripts and scores) and starts auditioning
all over again. Knowledge of this process from the acting side would incredibly useful to me as
a director, but to truly begin to understand the depth of the directing process, it was necessary to
seek out professional guidance.

- Study Opportunities -

The fall of my junior year at Penn State I enrolled in an independent study with Assistant
Professor Robert W. Schneider to explore the theoretical practice of directing. Through this class
it became clear to me that this was more than just a dabbling interest, so I sought out the next
step. Craft, or technical skill, required for any artistic profession is not found in books or through
study. It is honed through direct observation, apprenticeship, and the experience of doing the
work itself. I had the opportunity through another class taught by Assistant Professor Matthew
Toronto to direct a staged reading of a new piece written by fellow Penn State student Russell
Jordan Poole. In the fall semester of my senior year, I enrolled in the graduate level class
“Introduction to Directing” with the three first year Master’s Directing Degree candidates and
Professors Cary L. Libkin and Susan H. Schulman. With so many opportunities to explore, I fell
deeper into my pursuit and decided that the next logical step would be to direct a full production. To do this, however, I would first have to choose a show to direct.

- Selecting a Show -

How might I begin this process? There exist hundreds, if not thousands of available titles, many of which I had never made contact with before. As I began my search I recalled the words I heard in a thesis discussion meeting with Penn State Associate Professor of Theatre Dr. Susan Russell: “Why this show? Why this audience? Why now?” It’s all in how you set it up. These are the question a theatrical director must ask himself before he begins working on a new production. As I would later learn, these are also the question a director must ask himself each step of the way after he has picked a show and moves towards production. So with these in mind, I set out to find the right production for this moment and this audience.

My advisor, Cary Libkin – Professor of Theatre and head of the BFA Musical Theatre program at Penn State – suggested I err on the smaller side, involving a cast of no more than five or six actors. The limited pool of available actors in the Musical Theatre program as well as time and space restrictions imposed by the available facilities led me to read and listen to a handful of shows including Taxi Cabaret, Myths and Hymns, Floyd Collins, Tick-Tick BOOM!, Brownstone, and john & jen. Each had their charms and foibes, but one struck me in a deeply personal way when I listened through the cast recording.

- Discovering “john & jen” -

The musical john & jen, a lovely, funny, and poignant drama, left me in tears the first time I listened through the cast album. The original Off-Broadway production was directed by Gabriel Barre and premiered in 1996 after being “work-shopped” (theatrical lingo meaning “developed through performance”) the previous year at Goodspeed Opera House in East Haddam, Connecticut. john & jen follows the life of a woman, Jen Tracey, from childhood to young adulthood with her younger brother John in the first Act, and continues into her adult life in Act II
as she struggles to be a good mother to her son (whom she named for her brother). The play (I will use play and musical interchangeably) moves episodically, skipping over years and landing on certain important parts of their lives together. A basic understanding of the plot will be essential to describe certain later elements of this process, so included here is a brief summary.

After a brief “Prologue” introducing the characters, the story begins in 1952, in an unnamed town in the U.S.A., where Jen, a six-year-old girl, stands over the crib of her newly born baby brother promising to keep him happy and safe from their abusive father (Lippa & Greenwald “Welcome to the World”). They jump to Christmas Eve, 1968, where the two witness a fight between their parents. John blames their mother, but Jen withholds that it is really their father’s fault to keep from upsetting him further (“Christmas 1”). In 1960, when thirteen-year-old Jen discovers that their father has hit John, she makes her brother promise that they’ll stick by each other forever and get out of that place as soon as they can (“Think Big”). The next vignette takes place three years later at Jen’s final playoff basketball game, where the quarreling siblings ask God to “just do something” to the other “or I’ll have to do it myself” (“Dear God”). Another couple of years pass, and Jen sings John a hollow “Hold down the Fort”, giving him her last advice as she leaves him to go off to college. The following sequence covers the five years from 1964-1968. Jen goes off to college and explores the hippie and counter-culture movements in New York, while John searches for direction alone at home as he goes through high school (“Timeline”). In Jen’s absence, John realizes what his true passions are and writes to his sister to tell her he is joining the Navy and going to fight in Vietnam (“It Took Me a While”). In 1970 Jen returns home, and the two, now vastly different, tensely poke fun at each other. This erupts into a full-blown argument when Jen reveals that she and her boyfriend are fleeing the country to avoid the draft. The two exchange pointed attacks on their personal values until John storms out of the house without saying goodbye, leaving Jen alone (“Run & Hide”). A year later, she receives
word that John has been killed in action, and the act ends with the crushing guilt she feels for not protecting him.

Act II begins in 1972, in Canada, where the now pregnant Jen excitedly realizes that she can give all of her brother’s old things to her son (“Old Clothes”). Next, a seven-year-old John bursts onto the stage in “Christmas 2”, where he reveals that he is an incredibly savvy and creative young boy. Already tired by the Santa story his mother tries to tell him, he laments that he simply wants his father (who has left them) to come home. He then trudges reluctantly to a baseball game two years later, where he and an overzealous Jen clash over her hovering involvement in his life (“Baseball”). At thirty-eight, Jen reflects upon the similarities she sees between her Johns and vows not to let her son end up like her brother (“Just Like You”). The next several years of Jen and her son’s relationship flash by in a cartoonish whirlwind of “Talkshow” episodes. The tension between them rises, and the sequence ends in 1990 towards the end of John’s senior year of high school when he discovers an acceptance letter from Columbia University that his mother has hidden from him. He runs off to tell his girlfriend, and Jen, alone again, tries to say goodbye to her brother and leave his memory in the past (“Smile of Your Dreams”). She is unable to do so however, and crumbles beneath the guilt she feels for letting him die. John observes her breakdown and decides that he will not to go to Columbia so that he can stay home with her and keep her happy (“It Took Me a While Reprise”). He attempts to tell her the good news, but Jen tunes him out as she frantically prepares for his “Graduation”. He forces her to listen, and she dismisses the idea as childish, leading the two into the most dramatic confrontation of the show. When John accuses her of being too weak to tell the truth, she slaps him across the face, and he flees to his room. Jen finally confronts her brother’s memory and finds her peace with him (“The Road Ends Here”). Freed from this burden, she apologizes to her son and acknowledges all of the mistakes she’s made while raising him (“That Was My Way”). He accepts, and invites her to step out into the world with new perspective
(“Every Goodbye is Hello”). Act II ends with a final moment of understanding and love between the two as they head off into the world.

This is the story that most powerfully captured my attention, but before proceeding, I asked myself again: why this show? Why this audience? Why now? Practically speaking, the show made sense for this project because of its small size, limited technical demands, and the flexible age range for the actors. The audience we would be playing to was already decided: the Penn State school of Theatre and any friends and family interested enough to see the show. Why now? It had to be. I was graduating in the spring, and it was my last opportunity to direct with the advisory and support of the University. These were all rather utilitarian answers, so I asked once more: “Why this Show?” and crafted a more personal response. It was a story that moved me, and it was a story that I thought could move other people. The simplicity, humanity, and struggle of the characters is one that I felt viscerally connected to from the first read, and by sharing those characters with an audience I hoped I could perhaps connect to them as well. With the questions answered (at least for the first time), all seemed to be set-up and I made my decision. I would direct *john & jen* as my Senior Thesis project. I could now start synthesizing the theatrical knowledge I had acquired through performing with the new knowledge I was receiving through class and study to discover how the directing process would apply to me personally.
Chapter 2

Creating an Approach

The ‘approach’ a director takes to move from unfettered imagining to the physical realization of a production is a profoundly individual aspect of directing that demands patience, skill, and a great deal of time to develop. Alexander Dean and Lawrence Carra, both esteemed professors of directing (at Yale, and Carnegie-Mellon, respectively), and co-writers of the book *The Fundamentals of Play Directing*, assert that, “During the period prior to the first rehearsal, the study period, directors can afford to be open-minded, to listen and consider all sides of the question of interpretation. But from all the opinions and evidence presented, including those of the playwright, directors must make up their individual minds and take a stand…they must narrow their respective visions, if you will, to but one interpretation and then remain faithful to it… They must know exactly what to do and how to control it. (Dean & Carra 20). This art of honing, decision by decision, a singular interpretation out of the many options and disciplining all aspects of the production to embody that singular interpretation is the essence of the approach.

To create and discover my personal approach I would have to both follow my instincts and apply the craft that generations of artists before me had worked out through practice. The starting point, however, is the same for nearly every director.

- *Exploring the Script* -

The directing process necessarily begins with the written story, or script, as it is the base on which a production is built. From the script, there is a great deal of interpretive and creative work required of the director to bring the story to physical life on stage. The building blocks of the script are the words that the playwright has carefully chosen and ordered to tell the story.
These words are sacred. They may not be changed, altered, or cut by the director without the permission of the authors. However, these words may be interpreted in a vast number of ways, and the story that is told as a result can vary dramatically based on the interpretation.

The first thing to do, according to the acclaimed Harold Clurman in his book On Directing, is to “let the play work on you before you work on it” (Clurman 24). A director must not be too hasty in making decisions at the beginning of his process. Doing so can limit and severely handicap the flexibility of the production as other factors solidify (some of which the director has little or no control over). Clurman purposefully leaves this suggestion up to interpretation, and to more clearly understand how I might ‘let the play work on me’, I turned to William Ball, another prolific director and founder of the American Conservatory Theatre in San Francisco. In his book A Sense of Direction, he writes that, “From the time he agrees to direct a play until the first day of rehearsal, the director should read the script through many times and in many different moods. Sometimes he will read it rapidly and gather quick impressions; sometimes slowly and carefully, asking questions of the text, searching out details, and making notes” (93). With this in mind, I read the script several times through over two or three weeks and allowed my mind to play, ask questions, and explore the widest possibilities of my imagination.

These questions ranged from the most basic to the profound and nearly unanswerable. They included: where does the story take place? How can these locations be dramatized? What is the most impactful moment of the play? What is the central conflict? There are three characters in the play, Jen, her brother and her son, but the director calls for only two actors (one male to play both Johns) – Why? Who are their parents? Is Jen aware of the damage she’s doing to her son as Act II progresses? What is the play about? Answering many of these questions would require a more thorough analysis, but by allowing myself to explore free of technical restrictions I had
already unlocked a wide range of ideas and possibilities that I could use as a basis for the next step.

- Script Analysis -

“The present demands and reveals a specific past. One particular, identifiable event lies immediately before any other. But who can say what comes next? It can be anything… You don’t know for sure until you can look back on it” (D. Ball 16).

David Ball, professor of playwriting, acting, theatre history, and literature at Carnegie-Mellon University, concludes in his book Backwards and Forwards that script analysis is about understanding the actions of a play, and that only by looking at the action both ‘backwards and forwards’ can one be certain of his analysis. Action, he writes, “occurs when something happens that makes or permits something else to happen. Action is two ‘something happenings’ one leading to the other” (9). The method of analysis he describes links every action in the play to the next like a set of dominoes. Each falling piece leads to the fall of the next until the last has fallen and all is still again, but different than it was before it started. If the director does not understand and express with exquisite clarity the connection between every action of the play, the arc of a story is damaged and even lost on the observer. Connecting the dots backwards from the final event in the play to the event before that necessarily caused it, forces the director to understand the nature of every action from start to finish.

Following Ball’s suggestion, I traced this event list backwards from the closing words to the opening breath and discovered that I myself would have to come back to reexamine this chain over some length of time. The episodic nature of john & jen held its own particular challenges, as there were great gaps of time between each scene. Finding the connecting actions that linked one scene to the next demanded both minute and broad examination. When I had completed and
revised an event list (available in Appendix A). I found the answers to a few of the questions I had posed during my initial readings.

- Identifying the Central Conflict -

The first question that was illuminated was: what is the central conflict? Central conflict as a term is defined by Ball as, “between what someone wants and what hinders them: the obstacle” (28). That “someone” is the protagonist—the main character whose story the audience follows through the play. In our case that is Jen, and the main obstacles between what she wants (freedom) and her achieving it are the two Johns. Her brother prevents her from finding her freedom by demanding her involvement in his life: “And you’ll make sure I’m happy/As safe as I can be?” (Lippa and Greenwald—“Christmas 1”). Even when she goes off to college she is tethered to him by the promise to protect him that she made at the beginning of the show. Her son does so by continuously reminding her (simply by his presence) of the guilt she bears for the death of her brother. As he grows up and tries to find his own freedom, she tries to redeem her failure to protect her brother by preventing her son from ever coming to harm. This task requires every shred of Jen’s energy, and she is unable to fly until she sets herself free from both her brother’s memory and the responsibility for her adult son. This information revealed the answer to another question: what is the most impactful moment of the play?

- Pinpointing the Climax of the Action -

In theatrical terms this pivotal moment is called the climax, and it is generally defined as the moment in the play after which the central conflict is resolved or left irreparable. My initial read had drawn my attention naturally towards the moment when Jen slaps John during the song “Graduation” at the end of Act II. However, on closer examination the climax seems to be when Jen overcomes her fear and guilt to apologize and ask John’s forgiveness at the end of “That Was My Way”. This is also perhaps the most emotionally heightened moment of the story. Although it is not as overtly intense as the slap, it carries the weight of the question we’ve had the entire
show: will Jen ever be free from the weight of the mistakes she has made? With these basic building blocks of analysis in place it became possible to probe deeper and explore a more broad level of interpretation of the play.

- Securing a Central Metaphor -

Among William Ball’s illuminating “Observations on the Art of Directing” is the idea of “central metaphor”. A central metaphor, according to Ball, is a device that gives a frame and focus to an entire theatrical piece. He suggests that the director find, “some object, picture, statement, photograph, sketch, or fabric that shall not only be like the production, but in the director’s mind, shall be the production itself” (W. Ball 34). I interpret this to mean how conforming to a single idea with great discipline is actually a frame that frees, not a limitation that stifles. This is a kind of research that demands of a director’s intuition, creativity, and imagination.

I searched for images of soldiers and protestors, paintings of lines and curves, music, poems, or anything that might capture the dynamic of the relationship between the two central characters. None of these rang true. The soldiers and protestors were too specific, and I didn’t want the story to be dominated by these singular identities. Lines and curves on the other hand were too general. I was endeavoring to use different styles of movement to create dissonance between the characters. This would prove useful in the staging of the piece, but wasn’t deep enough to hold the piece together. Musically, a single song failed to capture the range of times and places within the piece. As john & jen is a musical, I found there was little room to impose another musical idea upon the already closed system. However, on a subsequent read through of the script a familiar old idea took on a new shape.

I had from the start embraced the idea that Jen’s private space was in the attic of her home, where she kept the boxes and mementos of her brother’s past. This had occurred to me as a staging idea for a particular scene in the script – but what if instead, the attic, a literal space
visited briefly during “Old Clothes”, evolved into an inner space? I explored the idea of how this attic could both embody and transform into all the places and times the show needed to span by Jen’s discovery of mementos and other items that launched her into the various memories. The beautiful flexibility of theatre lies in the audience’s ability to imagine. If they are taught ‘how to watch’ the show at the beginning, they will be willing to accept almost any idea as long as it is not violated at another point during the play. I felt that by embracing the attic as the central metaphor we would unlock a vast web of creative solutions to the problems of changing time and place. So I proceeded with that as a guiding principle, trusting that the audience would be willing to imagine the story with us. Suddenly, fantastic possibilities for the entire realization of the production began to emerge.

With all this in place, I endeavored to answer perhaps the most important question of the play. What is the play about? This is also referred to as ‘the spine’, or the single all encompassing idea that embodies the director’s interpretation of the production. Gabriel Barre, the original director of \textit{john \& jen} Off-Broadway, included a director’s note in the script stating: “This is a play about a sister and a brother, a mother and a son, about Jen’s journey. It is not about abuse, the Vietnam War, talk shows or single parenting. In telling the story, simpler is better” (Lippa and Greenwald iv). I agreed with Mr. Barre in a broad sense, but I had a sense this was a generalization to keep directors focused more on the story than the social implications of the show. These are not without value, but to understand the socio-political issues in and out of the context of the show, I would need to conduct more research. To me, at first pass it seemed to be a play about family. About mistakes, forgiveness, and the beautiful madness we all endure as part of the greater human family. Ultimately, I would have to revisit the question after acquiring a more thorough sense of the play’s historical and cultural context, and thus the next step of my approach came into focus.
Chapter 3

Research and Re-Discovery

“There are two basic ways in which research can be valuable. It can illuminate the action, and it can guide the director in formulating the world of the play and, ultimately, the production approach. Once rehearsals begin, the work with the actors, not the research, becomes the primary ingredient in directing” (Bloom 25).

The challenge with theatrical research is finding its relevancy and direct application to the production. How can a director know when he knows enough, and how can he meaningfully apply it to the play? Michael Bloom, an American director with over twenty years of experience and author of Thinking Like a Director, warns that: “it’s easy… for a director to become too dependent on research, allowing it to dictate not only the production approach, but also the micro-acting choices in each scene” (25). Contrastingly, without any research many relevant layers of context, detail, and nuance can be lost, and without these the production’s sense lost, too. With the balance between all of these ideas in mind, I began searching for relevant information that might illuminate – but not dominate – the production.

- Requirement of Research -

A musical is a work of fiction, and as one it must reference reality. To access this reality a director may employ research to gain an understanding of the externals, or given circumstances of the play. Research creates context. This includes the date, time, location, socio-economic and cultural information about the characters. An awareness of these circumstances is vitally important to understanding the subtext, or what isn’t being said aloud during the play. Subtext
plays a crucial role in the story telling and must be closely followed during a director’s analysis of the play. I therefore began research to find an objective and emotional connection to each character. I turned first to the script so that I could pinpoint exactly what contextual and subtextual information I would have to explore outside of the story.

- Social, Political, and Cultural Research -

A major vein of the conflict of John & Jen emerges from the cultural rift surrounding the Vietnam War and counter-culture ideology. These cultural and historical events are referenced widely throughout the production and play a key role in personal conflict between Jen and her brother. Their first direct confrontation occurs in the third scene of the show after the children (eleven and five years-old) observe their parents fighting on Christmas Eve, 1957. Below is an excerpt of the scene:

JEN
I CAN’T BELIEVE THAT EVEN ON CHRISTMAS,
DAD HAS TO WIN,
DAD MUST BE RIGHT.

(Recovering)
Everything’s OK. Daddy’s just angry. They’ll make up.
(An awkward silence. HE has no reaction.)
Hey, you want to wrap some presents?
(HE takes his time answering.)

JOHN
It’s Mommy’s fault. Why does she always have to get him so mad?

JEN
It’s not Mommy’s fault, John.

JOHN
Well, whose fault is it then?

JEN
The gap only widens as they grow up during the volatile time of 1960s America. Jen later grows up to participate in the hippy and anti-war movements while John joins the Navy to fight in the War. The Vietnam War is widely documented, and I discovered that there exists a vast trove of material relating to all aspects of the conflict. I obtained a variety of documentaries, films, and image collections that would help me create a base for personal understanding and visualization of this given circumstance.

- The Cultural Divide -

The first film I analyzed was the documentary “Berkeley in the Sixties”, written, produced, and directed by Mark Kitchell along with Susan Griffin and Stephen Most. It explored the charged political and social climate of the University of California Berkeley campus and the surrounding Bay Area from 1963 to 1969. The most strikingly relevant part of this film pertains to the 1966 “Stop the Draft week” protests in Oakland. Frank Bardacke, a student at UC Berkeley, explains how the Anti-War Movement was making little appreciable impact on the number of young men being drafted for Vietnam. Bardacke and other members of this movement attempted to “shut down the recruitment center” in Oakland by blocking recruits from entering and “actively resisted” the police and military forces that were sent to clear them from the area. Their initial efforts failed. Protestor Susan Griffin describes the disappointment of seeing—“busload after busload after busload of young men that day…going off to die. And I remember being sort of physically sickened, realizing that I couldn’t affect even that part of the war. Here I was face to face with these young men, and yet not one of them turned back. I don’t think we stopped one inductee from making that critical choice of stepping across the line and going to Vietnam” (Berkeley in the Sixties). A passing recruit was then stopped by a news reporter who
asked, “does the demonstration bother you?” To which the young man replied, “No, I thought it was kind of funny, all those folks running around doing nothing” (Berkeley).

This illuminated the profound divide between Jen and her brother John—each sibling thinking they are doing the right thing for the other, but unwilling and unable to understand the fundamental differences that drive them apart. These differences grow to affect their very perception of the world around them and make it nearly impossible for them to connect the older they get. This comes into direct application in the production during the “Timeline” sequence near the end of Act I. “Timeline” follows the rapid deterioration of the relationship between the brother and sister as she lives through her college years inundated with the counter culture and he is stuck at home beneath the traditional influence of their father.

- The Soldier’s Mentality -

To understand how so many young men like John proudly marched off to war, I watched the film Born on the Fourth of July, directed by Oliver Stone and written by Ron Kovic (adapted from Kovic’s autobiography). The film explores Kovic’s experience as a Marine in Vietnam and subsequently as a disabled veteran. One of the most illuminating moments of the film is early on when Ronnie (played by Tom Cruise) reveals to his family that he is joining the Marines. His mother responds with forced positivity, “You’re doing the right thing. Communism has got to be stopped. It’s God’s will you go.” His father, a veteran himself, demonstrates some hesitation. Ronnie’s haunting reply is simply, “I love my country, Dad” (Born on the Fourth of July). Late in the first act John sings “It Took me A While” and “Run and Hide”, songs that closely parallel the feelings expressed by Ronnie Kovic. One of the most revealing lyrics from John’s confrontation with Jen during the latter song is: “Dad fought against the Germans/And it’s a good thing he did./ Or we wouldn’t be here today./ I believe in my Dad,/ And I believe in my duty,/ and I believe in the U.S.A.!” (Lippa and Greenwald 31-32). This research connected me to the logic of John’s mind as he marched off to war and helped me sympathize with his struggle.
Finally, I discovered a very poignant expression of the betrayal that many Americans experienced as the truth about the Vietnam War was brought to light. This was in the documentary “Hearts and Minds” directed and produced by Peter Davis in 1974. Daniel Elsberg, an Aide in the Defense Department during and after the war, explained how the American public was lied to again and again beginning in the 1950s by President Truman, then Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon. He closed by saying, “I suppose it’s a tribute to the American people that the government felt they had to lie to them. But not one that they were so easy to dupe” (Hearts and Minds). This documentary helped me imagine how Jen, who was caught up in the midst of this turmoil, would fare. Not only did she fail to stop the war, she failed to stop her brother from going to his death. This burden is key to the central conflict all throughout the second Act as she tries to save her son from a similar fate.

- The Tricky Sections -

In addition to this broad socio-political and cultural research, I found it necessary to delve into greater specifics for certain sections of the play. One section that would need detailed exploring was the “Talkshow” number. The satiric style, rapidly shifting structure, and new characters introduced in this scene make it a difficult part of the play to unify with the whole. I thought I might find a key to unlocking the scene by watching the 1980s and 90s television talk shows on which the scene is based. I surfed the web and found video footage of Geraldo Rivera, Ricki Lake, and Stanley Siegal. Each of these hosts set up situations and interviews with wide varieties of “interesting” people that would appeal to a wide audience. I found an episode in which Ricki Lake busts cheating boyfriends by bringing both the girls to confront the cheater point blank. She is sweetly ruthless with the guy as she whips the audience up into frenzy against him (“Ricki Lake...” [Works referenced]). This tone felt appropriate for Jen’s interview of John: accusatory, a bit pointed, but sweetly in the right. In another video, Stanley Siegel picks on a
group of “punk” kids, and glibly makes fun of them as he asks them questions (“The Stanley Siegel Show”). His all-knowing air and charmingly arrogant laugh seemed to fit well for John’s interview of Jen. A third video includes Geraldo Rivera taking a punch to the nose when an interview with some members of the Skin Heads and Aryan Supremacy groups goes sour (“Geraldo Rivera Skinhead…”). Utter chaos breaks out, but the camera keeps rolling as audience and crewmembers mob together to see and stop the fight. This escalation gave me a point of reference for how the scene might take off and become more and more cartoonish as John and Jen frantically defend their point of view. One thing was true of each show: the hosts always had the audience on their side and actively engaged them to make their point. With all the information gathered, I felt much more confident in my ability to connect this difficult section with the rest of the show.

- Character Related Research -

The trickiest section worked out, I sought our research that would reveal particular details about the characters in the play. There was an important element to keep in mind during this process. Prof. Libkin advised that a director must love and understand every character, not matter how stupidly, nastily, or selfishly they act. There is no room for judgment, for if the director judges a character he does the audience’s job for them and therefore imposes restrictive parameters on the production. The audience must be allowed to contribute themselves, or else they may feel that they are being ‘preached at’ or force-fed the conclusions that should be there joy to discover. Eager to begin, I turned towards an element I thought would reveal the inner lives of the characters.

- The Character’s Music -

Although the music of the time was not an appropriate fit for the central metaphor of the show, listening to the musical artists that are mentioned by the characters provided great insight into the inner lives of the characters. Jen, at thirteen in 1959, idolizes Paul Anka, (evident by her
making his name the password to her and her brother’s play fort). Anka’s soaring tunes about love, loneliness, and youth must have captured her heart (not to mention his boyish good looks), and they illuminate her free spirit and desire to be loved. She later quotes a lyric from the Beatles: “I wanna hold your hand” further reinforcing her desires to love and be free. Quite contrastingly, her son is an avid Michael Jackson fan. John mentions during “Bye Room” in 1984 that he has a poster of the Rock King; and his mother reveals that he, “blasts music all day” during “Timeline”. Jackson’s wild and eccentric style is likely mimicked by John as he tries to express himself in his adolescence. Jen’s brother, however, makes no mention of music. A detail that is perhaps even more revealing that a particular artist may have been. The absence of music in John’s life could indicate certain stiffness, and further distances him from Jen as the two grow older.

- Psychological and Internal Research -

To refine the details further, I sifted through some sources that might reveal the psychological state of the characters. In Dr. J. Louise Despert’s book *Children of Divorce*, published in 1953, I discovered a passage that clarified the relationship between John and his mother in Act II on multiple levels. She writes, “Suppose the father has left suddenly. Men often threaten to pack a bag and get out, a threat on which they rarely act. But when it does happen? Generally the wife does not feel at first that her husband’s departure is permanent. She says, and believes, ‘Daddy will be back’ (Despert 40). The perspective lent by Despert makes the moment of “Christmas 2” when John asks if Dad is “coming home for Christmas?” even more heartbreaking. Jen replies, “Uh, no, honey, he’s not” (Lippa and Greenwald 37). Not only is he hoping his father will return, she has not likely accepted the reality of his departure either. So when she must admits in front of her son that Daddy is not going to be back for Christmas, she is forced to accept that he may not be coming back at all.
The stresses and emotional scars that John might develop throughout the divorce of his parents are discussed by Despert as well. In a section explaining the child’s experience of divorce Despert explains, “For the first year after the divorce Donnie still groped for a reunion of his parents. He built a fantasy around the vacation he would spend with his father at his grandparents’ home. He dreamed that his mother would come too, that they would all be together again” (96). John’s next response after hearing that his father is not coming for Christmas is to ask if they can have Christmas with Grandpa. Not only is John searching for a father figure as I had first thought, but he could also be hoping for the reunion of their entire family. When Jen quells these hopes, he is deeply hurt and, perhaps for fear of losing her too, he races to give Jen the Christmas present he made in school. These revelations gave clarity to the subtext in many of the Act II scenes, and would ultimately help me block and envision how the scenes would appear on stage.

With all of this information swimming around in my head, I recalled the words of Michael Bloom: “Research will often inform my early readings of the play and the design of the production. But no matter how much background I’ve accumulated; I try to check most of it at the door to the rehearsal hall” (25). There were many steps yet in the process before we would begin the actual rehearsals, but having conducted a wide range of research— from the broader socio-political context to the psychologically intimate sub-textual elements— it was possible to move forward with the next major step of the approach: casting.
Chapter 4
The Casting Process

Professor Susan H. Schulman, the head of the Penn State University MFA Directing program and current president of the executive board of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society, has said that seventy-five percent of the work a director does is casting. Others – including Ball, Clurman, and Bloom – have pushed that number to around eighty percent. Regardless of the actual number it is clear that choosing the right actors for the show is of critical importance to the production’s success. Before holding the actual audition, however, a great deal of preparation must take place. Bloom writes, “Like an actor, [the director] must prepare for auditions by making some suppositions about each character. These suppositions are bound to change, but without them, it will be all but impossible to make informed casting choices” (104). Research and script analysis play an important part in forming these suppositions, but to prepare to choose the best possible cast, a detailed character analysis is necessary.

- Character Analysis -

Prof. Libkin has created a multi-part system of character analysis drawn from the writings of Francis Hodge, Aristotle, and his own taste and experience. The completion of this analysis helps the director to organize and draw conclusions from all the available information that exists within the script about a character. In this analysis the director poses and answers a variety of questions that include: What is primary desire of this character? What does a character say about himself, and what do other characters say about him? Does this character lead from the brain, heart, gut, or groin? In Appendix B I have included my preliminary character analysis for Jen, which answers these and other questions. I continued the process by creating a profile for both
Act I John and Act II John, as they were technically two different characters even though both would be played by a single actor. That factor and the rest of the analysis became crucial in the next step of the approach. That step was the creation of a concise, two to three sentence description of each character that the interested actors would use to prepare for the audition. The list of descriptions is called the casting breakdown. However, before creating a casting breakdown, it was important to understand how the audition process would function from the director’s perspective.

- A Director’s Audition Day -

I had ample experience with auditions as an actor, but after consulting the writing of Ball, Bloom, Clurman, and Dean & Carra, I began to see that the process would contain some striking differences. A standard audition proceeds as follows (this section is paraphrased and synthesized from the books of the above mentioned authors).

The director books the time necessary (this can span from several hours to several days, even weeks or months in some cases) in a centrally located studio that is accessible to the actors who might audition. Audition notices are posted online and distributed through casting directors, friends, teachers, and social media so they may reach as wide a selection of actors as possible. Particularly helpful in distributing the audition information to the right actors are Casting Directors. These people are theatrical professionals who help a director find the general type of actor he is looking to cast in certain roles. They do so by submitting lists of actors to directors from databases they’ve accrued from watching other auditions. Certain important information about the nature of the audition and the roles being cast is compiled by the director and posted with these notices. These are called casting breakdowns (these will be explored in greater detail shortly). Once all the information is made available to the actors, those who think they are ‘right’ for the audition will prepare a short selection of material (a monologue for plays, and song-cut for musicals).
The scheduled day arrives and the audition process begins. The director and other members of the creative staff sit behind a table at one end of a small studio space and one by one the actors enter, hand over a headshot and resume, perform their audition, and exit. They are notified (generally by email) if they have received a call back. After all of the actors for the day have been seen the director has a discussion with the creative team, creates a callback list, and starts the process over again with a refined group of actors. He will likely distribute small excerpts from the show called “callback sides” to be prepared and read by the actors in the next audition. After completing these callbacks he refines the list further. He may repeat the callback process several more times until he has created the best possible cast list from the available actors.

Once the list is decided calls are made and the actors are offered parts. There is generally a one to two week period in which an actor may decide if he will take the contract. If he agrees, a contract detailing all of the important information about the expectations for the work, pay, and other legal details will be mailed to him. At this point the casting process is complete.

- The Casting Breakdown -

This comprehensive understanding of what was to come allowed me to better focus on what to include in the casting breakdowns. The two to three sentence breakdown has to articulate as much relevant information as possible to the actor. The challenge comes in how to deliver that information. A director must be both specific and broad in his description; richly communicative but not pedantic. The essentials, including age, gender, time, and location of the play are standard. Beyond that however, a director must consolidate the multiple pages of character analysis he has created into a package that can quickly, effectively, and powerfully help an actor prepare for the audition. For john & jen, I selected a few key descriptive adjectives and clearly
defined the relationships between characters. When the completed casting breakdown (Appendix C) was distributed to the students of the school of theatre, the actual audition process could begin.

- The “john & jen” Audition Experience -

The initial audition for john & jen was peculiar, for it was combined with the auditions for the other shows that would be produced in the spring semester. The main-stage production, Into the Woods, held precedence over the other three or four shows. This meant that the actors would be singing songs appropriate for Into the Woods and I would be selecting a callback list based on auditions that were not specifically tailored to the characters I was looking for. This was not ultimately a problem because I had seen many of these auditioning actors perform before, and I was still able to see whether an actor was generally right for my show from these auditions. I had also already created a loose list of actors I was thinking about calling back. However, Prof. Libkin advised me that this could be limiting and that it was best to remain open to surprises if possible. I endeavored to be as objective while watching the Into the Woods auditions and by the end of the day I had compiled a list of four men and seven women that I would ask to callbacks.

- Callbacks -

In order to see the actors’ best expression of the characters they are auditioning for, a director distributes selected callback sides and asks them to prepare and memorize them for the callback. A director must (in a very brief period of time) attempt to discover as much as he needs to know about an actor to see if he or she will be best for the role. To do this a director selects short excerpts from the script and in the case of a musical, the score, (these are commonly referred to as ‘sides’) that will allow him to learn more about an actor in the proper context of the show. The actor’s ability, physicality, personality, and appropriateness (e.g. gender and age) for the role are all important factors to consider. Equally as vital is the actors’ “chemistry” – an elusive terms that is used to describe the dynamic connection between people. John & jen was actually quite simple in this respect. Given the limited casting pool, it was far easier to find two
actors with “chemistry” than it might have been for a larger cast. Matching the actors together however, and exploring their chemistry as both ‘brother and sister’ and ‘mother and son’ over various times and ages would be a challenge.

- Selection of Callback Materials -

The song and side selection therefore had to encompass the characters at different ages, in different relationships, and with different energy between the two. I finished with six sides. A solo number for each of the characters as a preliminary check and an additional four sides for those from whom I wanted to see more (list available in Appendix D). At this point, with the posting prepared and the sides selected, both the auditioning actors and I were prepared to begin the callback.

- The Callback Itself -

Nerves are often a huge factor for both actor and director during an audition. William Ball offers his perspective: “It is important to understand that when an actor walks into an audition, he is at his worst. He is nervous, he hopes he will land a job, he is in a strange place, and you are seen as the judge, the forbidding authority” (38). With Ball’s musings in mind, I started the callback process by sharing some thoughts with the handful of actors I had selected from the initial audition. I wanted to create a comfortable, communicative, and professional atmosphere (as several of the students were my classmates) while also specifically sharing some thoughts on the characters. I split up the Johns and the Jens and gave each group a quick synopsis of the story, their location in the story, and the single most important thing I wished to see for that moment. From there I began to see each actor one at a time for the initial song cut. I discovered very quickly that it was far more effective for me to get up close and give notes to the actors within touching distance than it was for me to bark out adjustments from behind my observation table.
A most incredible feeling and phenomenon began to emerge as I went through this process with the actors. I felt a deeply powerful connection spark between the actors and me, and I saw dramatic changes after our brief conversations. Throughout the rest of the nearly four-hour callback, I felt that the actors and I were riding an emotional high from the exchange of such intimate and truthful expression. Each of the actors revealed to me colors and facets that I had never seen from them before, but it was becoming more and more clear who the front-runners were. When the callback process was over I had narrowed down the list of candidates to two or three for each role.

- Finalization of Casting -

The final step in the process was collaborating with the other directors over the casting decisions. Before the official meeting, we met individually to assure that any conflicts over actors could be worked out civilly in private. The directors of the various productions had some brief discussions, made some compromises, and ultimately settled on their cast lists. I wound up with exactly who I thought I would as John, and I was wonderfully surprised by the choice we settled on for Jen. The first instinct is not always the best pick, but once the cast is cast all doubts and questions must be forgotten so that the director and actors may have a professional, healthy, and mutually beneficial relationship throughout the rehearsal process. With an official cast, a library of research, and a complete analysis of the script, the final steps of the pre-production process were within reach.
Chapter 5

Coordination and Realization

Throughout the long preparation process, I discovered that for every artistic consideration there are just as many, if not more, logistical concerns to address. It is not often mentioned in the texts on directing, but Prof. Libkin aided in guiding me through the complex process of coordinating all the obvious and not-so-obvious practical pieces of putting a show together. What space will you use? Where will the audience sit? Will you stage it in a thrust or proscenium style? Have you secured the rights? Will you rehearse the play in order? How long will your rehearsal period be, and how many hours per night will you work? How about the musicians? Where will they sit? Have you selected a design team? Scheduled production meetings? Do you really want to do this play? These are all vitally important questions that must be just as meticulously minded as the more artistic ones. Without clear organization and communication the best ideas in the world may never see the light of the stage.

- Organizational Essentials -

The first organizational aspects I explored were quite simple, yet deceivingly time-consuming. These included the creation of a rehearsal schedule, a scene breakdown, and a ground plan (a to-scale map of the performance space and the scenic structures that the director envisions for the play). Focusing on the practical forced me to look at the piece in a different light, and presented challenges that I had never before experienced. The first of these was the rehearsal schedule.

- Creating a Rehearsal Schedule -
How does a director create a rehearsal schedule? How can he know how much time to allot for each song and scene? To learn how to address these specific challenges I turned to Timothy K. Hanson, the first graduate of Penn State’s Master’s Degree in Music Direction for Musical Theatre, prolific regional Music Director, and former Associate Artistic Director of The Willows Theatre in California. As per his suggestion, I read through the songs for measure numbers, tempo, and complexity of action in order to estimate the time I would need to block each scene. With this information, we began to play with how to order the rehearsal period. We discussed when to include time for review and when to charge forward, what pieces would need the most work, and what order the show should be rehearsed in. After several iterations and a similar consultation with Prof. Libkin, I decided that *john & jen* would be best rehearsed from beginning to end, as a play would be, so that the actors and I could understand the arc of their characters and keep the order of the episodic piece clear in our minds (Appendix E).

- *Synthesizing the Scenic Breakdown* -

To further help us clarify the arc of the show, Prof. Libkin suggested I create a scenic breakdown to organize into an easily accessible chart all the relevant basic information from each scene and song. This, I would learn, necessarily varies from show to show depending upon the demands and specifics of the piece. I would end up including the scene name, score and page number, date, age of each character, location, and relevant costume information (Appendix F). I found that this was a key element in beginning to envision how the piece would move on stage. It allowed me to take another step forward with the practical realization of the production and became a useful tool in the creation of a ground plan for the space.

- *Mapping Out A Ground Plan* -

Revered Professors of directing Alexander Dean and Lawrence Carra offer a great deal of wisdom on the teachable craft of directing in their book *Fundamentals of Directing*. Before taking the crucial step forward of creating a ground plan, one that would literally define the shape
of the rest of the process, I consulted their writing. They write that, “A ground plan is evolved out of the director’s visualization of the life within the play. It is evolved out of the dramatic needs… it is evolved out of the dynamic design in the flow of… all relationships of character to character, character to theme, character to mood, and character to atmosphere” (Dean and Carra 277). A director must consider all these elements, as well as the practical limitations of the room, lighting instruments, and sets. With all this in mind, I created a final draft (Appendix G). The next step would be to recruit the rest of the creative team.

- Building the Creative Team -

No matter how much research, planning, and envisioning I had done on my own, I still lacked perhaps the most important element of all. Theatre is an inherently collaborative art. Without a full staff of dedicated artists, a play would never be more than a bunch of naked actors yelling in the dark without accompaniment to an audience of one—the director. I would imagine most directors aspire to more than this. Michael Bloom writes that, “A director is a medium—between actors and text, between the text and the physical elements, and of course between the producer and the production… Other than an orchestra conductor, no other artist is as dependent upon the contributions of others” (5). Who a director selects (or in some cases who is selected for them) is of paramount importance to the production.

To put up the show on time, fully realized, and without major problems requires the expertise and dedication of a stage manager, a set designer, a lighting designer, a props manager, a costume designer, and other assistants, advisors, and supporters. A great number of emails, meetings, discussions, and conversations took place over a several month period to secure the help of all these necessary people. Very early in the process I had secured a music director with a great deal of professional experience. Bringing her into the process was a quick and simple matter of asking. A more complex team building experience, however, was finding a costume designer.
I had the fortune to meet with three potential candidates, suggested to me by costuming Professor Richard Henry St. Clair. I asked each of them to read the play and listen to the music before our meeting, and to come in with some thoughts about the project. As I interviewed each candidate I discovered that the elements of greatest importance were first, my clear communication of how I envisioned the show; and second, keeping my mouth shut and allowing them to share their thoughts, feelings and personalities with me. It was quite clear to me which of these candidates I wanted to work with. Someone who would not only listen to and understand my ideas, but who would take them further, challenge me, and ask the necessary questions that would take the entire production to new heights. With a team secured, I continued to meet, discuss, challenge, and learn with each person, knowing that my ultimate duty was to create a unified, coherent, and radiantly clear production that seamlessly synthesized every available element. William Ball wrote, “What we are describing… the mystery, or magic of theatre… these moments of unity… are the very purpose and the reward of drama” (12).

- Realization -

The next step was both the simplest and the most demanding one yet: Preparing to move from concept to realization. This process demands collaborating with each design artist, making the decisions that would limit and free every subsequent question, and drafting the final blueprint for every foreseeable moment of the show before we set to work in rehearsals. At this step a director must recall all of his previous work (the research, analysis and discussions with collaborators) and then allow that work to fade into his subconscious, trusting that his instincts will guide him to the story he has been working to tell from the beginning. I have been told many times by many teachers and friends that there is no ‘right’ way to direct any given show. There is, however, a true way. A way that only the director can uncover that will allow all those invested in the project – designers, actors, and audience – to connect to the material. This is the singular interpretation that Dean and Carra wrote about in their beginning chapters. This is the
point of the approach when the director must trust the work he has done and make strong, clear decisions. This is the point when the director blocks the show.

- The Basics of Blocking -

What is blocking? Dean and Carra describe it broadly as, “the use of emphasis, stability, sequence, and balance to achieve an instinctively satisfying clarity and beauty” (68). Blocking is the one design element that is under the complete control of the director. Authors offer a script and score and the designers each provide their unique specialties. The director’s domain is the arrangement of the elements on the stage. This includes telling the actors where to stand, deciding where to place and move set pieces and props, and creating the transitions that connect one scene to another. Perhaps the most important responsibility of the director in this step is the control and placement of emphasis.

Emphasis, according the Dean and Carra, “ Is essential to all arts. The kernel, core, the heart and soul of every concept is expressed through the proper control of emphasis… Through emphasis the artist is able to make the important parts of a creation stand out vividly… so that the spectator may recognize their importance more easily and clearly” (4). Emphasis through staging may be achieved in a variety of ways. For example, one can give emphasis to an important character by placing him alone in one space, while placing a crowd of less important characters in a separate part of the stage. Employing the use of different levels is another way to draw the audience’s eye to specific points. A third technique is giving a character a particular facing (an actor’s orientation to the audience) to allow for greater or lesser connection between him and the audience at a certain moment. There are many more specific blocking techniques a director may employ to control emphasis; but he is not limited to these exclusively. In addition to staging, emphasis may be achieved through the use of costumes, props, lights and sound design.
These are some of the tools a director has at his disposal to create “the mental movie” as Ball calls it, of the production in his imagination that he will ultimately direct into existence (93). I recorded this movie in my script, and after twenty-five hours of focused imagining, I had a final blocking draft. This draft was a script full of thoughts that would help guide, but not dictate, the direction of the piece when it was time to bring it to life in rehearsals. Included in Appendix H is a sample page of the script containing my thoughts on acting, staging, and design for that particular section of the story. This is the last of the pre-production steps, and with the approach complete, only the rehearsal process remains. That process is one that has not yet begun, however, so I will finish my exploration and discovery with the last step of the pre-production approach.
Chapter 6

The Next Step

This journey, from first read to the eve of rehearsal, has been infinitely illuminating. The opportunity to direct a theatrical production has taught me things I could never have gleaned from any book. Creating theatre is not a ‘safe’ process. There will be great and terrifying risks, difficult decisions to make with minimal information, and plenty of unexpected twists and turns that no amount of planning can prevent. With all I have received from this experience I will head into rehearsal with confidence, excitement and a healthy dose of nerves. The production will go up, it will be more or less successful, and I will continue on to direct, create, and realize the rest of my dreams into whatever reality I can make of them. I know now even more the depth of my ignorance, but I have a mission that will carry me through the rest of my life. A director need not have all the answers to every question, but he must explore every question before it is asked. The most important of those being this: How can I, the director, fulfill my duty to assure that everyone—actors, designers, producers, crewmembers and staff—is working on the same play? That may seem simple enough, but the intricate preparation, nuanced communication, and vast knowledge that is demanded to fulfill such a job is something that can only be understood through experience, and it will be different for every new project. I do not claim now to know ‘how to direct’. But I have discovered that I am a director.
Appendix A

Preliminary Event List for john & jen

10/20/13

ACT I:

**Prologue:** Establishes Brother sister relationship, establishes that there is some wrong Jen feels she has committed. Introduces the promise they made, introduces a longing for the past.
- The time is somewhere in Jen’s adulthood

**Scene 1:** The first time they are together as brother and sister. Jen makes Promise to a sleeping John.
3- Jen Meets John for first time, introduces him to the world.
3-4 Jen Promises 1. To make John Happy, 2. To keep him safe, and 3. To help him grow.

**Scene 2:** Christmas 1: Jen breaks promise for the first time- can’t keep Him Happy. John needs his reality to be validated (Santa, and Mickey Mantle bat) but Jen, who wants the same, is unable to preserve that for him against the force of her Father.
3- John waits up for Santa
5 Jen wrangles her kid brother for a bit and tries to get John to go to bed.
7 John discovers there is no Santa Claus when he sees his parents fighting
8 Jen protects John by lying about Santa.
8 John questions her commitment “and you’ll make sure I’m happy…”
8 Jen promises no-one will ever hurt you.

**Scene 3:** Playtime: Jen tries to help John to grow independent, but John has his own ideas about it. They are in direct conflict, as she needs freedom from home, and he finds stability there. Jen discovers his bruise, he tries to hide it, and she insists they amend the promise- they must stick by each other forever, but ESCAPE from their father as soon as they can.
10 Jen and John play together- Jen takes control, teaches John to “think big”
11 John follows along, but asserts his independence by idolizing Dad.
12 Jen challenges him with her desire to be free (from home, Dad)
12 Jen discovers John’s bruise
13 Jen realizes she has broken her promise to protect John, and insists they amend it to promise to ESCAPE their home as soon as they can.
14 John agrees and leads the next charge “WE gotta think big”
14 Jen however, pins her hopes upon John “It’s up to you”

**Scene 4:** Basketball: Establishes their growing up and growing apart- John has been forced to see her game and breaks all of Jen’s rules. Brother sister antagonism/love is revealed. They are both forced into an undesirable situation, and blame the other for their plight. (When it is really neither of their faults, but Mom’s) Jen needs to achieve a goal of hers to win and be free of John and his distraction. John just needs his presence to be acknowledged.
14 John is forced against his will to watch the game.
15 Jen makes the rules for him: don’t talk, don’t tell anyone last name, stay away from billy clay.
16 Jen wins the game
17 John joins the crowd, and breaks her final two rules, insisting that he be heard “I’m john tracey, her brother…”
**Scene 5:** Hold down the Fort: Jen breaks her new promise “to protect each other and to stick by each other against everybody. Forever” she is leaving him alone at home with Dad. She is ESCAPING physically, but not really free. She gives him rules *again* to try and keep him safe, to get his weight off her chest. John needs her to stay with him, and puts the responsibility back on her, because he has never needed to carry it before.

19 John needs Jen to stay with him.
19 Jen throws responsibility for staying safe on John, and happy on John, and gives him rules/advice for how to do so. (even in her absence is trying to control)
20 John Calls her on breaking Promise, and leaving him alone.
20 Jen explodes at John, tells him she needs Him to grow up and take care of himself.

**Scene 6: I’m Free:** Jen needs to escape from home. She leaves John behind, He begs for help and guidance, but she ignores and evades him. John insists that her absence is the cause for misunderstanding, while she needs to justify her distancing herself from him and home. They end in different worlds; John finally sided with Dad, Jen with Jason.

21 Jen justifies her actions- “I know you must think I’m a weirdo now, but **if you were** here you’d understand”
22- John asks her to come home and help him sort out the difference between her way and Dad’s way.
22- Jen needs him to stop pressuring her with stuff about home and Dad, excuses herself from having to see him, and ignores his pleas.
23- John repeatedly begs her to come home to help.
23- they stop listening to each other, John in her absence chooses to follow DAD
24- they settle on opposite ends, unwilling to compromise or connect.

**IT TOOK ME A WHILE**
25-26 John tells Jen he doesn’t need her anymore, and that he’s going to join the Navy.

**TRANSITION**- Jen and John prepare themselves to see each other for the first time in over 2 years, but do so in completely opposite ways.

27- Jen pumps herself up with their old song
27- John tries to prepare to embrace the change he knows is coming.

**REUNION:** Jen continues to run from home and hide in the past, while John moves down Dad’s path and needs her to join him in the present. Jen blames Dad for everything, John blames her. **John is motoring for the first time.**

28 They see each other.
28 *John* attacks Jen’s appearance and beliefs
28 Jen counters by attacking his appearance and beliefs
29- Jen tries to ease tension by reliving childhood memories
30 *John forces* Jen to see they’re not kids anymore- things have changed
30- Jen hopes John will accept that she’s moving to Canada with Jason, and defends herself before John has the chance to attack.
31- John forces her to face the consequences of her running away from Dad
31- Jen blames Dad for these consequences, and John for joining him “go ahead, hit your kids too”
31 John rejects Jen: “you’re not my family anymore”, “no way.”
32- Jen begs for peace.
EPILOGUE: Jen discovers John has been killed, and finally apologizes, but it’s already too late for him to hear.
33- Jen blames herself “I never should have let you out of my sight”
33- Her memory of John charges her with responsibility for “holding down the fort”

ACT II

PROLOGUE ACT II: Sometime in the future, likely a development of the the Act I prologue. She needs to connect to Brother John, who is not there. Jen needs him to know she has a son, and he’s (really she’s) got another chance to live.

OLD CLOTHES: Jen has preserved Brother John in the attic, and is, piece by piece, reassembling his likeness upon baby John’s frame. In the first song of ACT I, welcome to the world, she introduces Brother John to the world. Now she is Re-introducing Brother John to the world by imposing her memory of him upon Baby John.

35- repeating herself over and over, she has SAVED it all, and nobody gets it (understands, AND receives) but HIM. Never calls Baby John by his name.
35- Needs this to be her second chance to fix her mistakes, realizes that Brother John will never leave her.
35- finally speaks to Baby John for the first time, he is sleeping, and she insists that he will fit and love Brother John’s clothes just right—just right.

SCENE 2: CHRISTMAS 2- Following the pattern of Act I, she needs to recreate Christmas for Brother John (enforces his presence gives glove, sings song). Baby John, smart, and understanding Jen better than she does, needs to keep her with him in HIS reality. (ACTI/II: both Johns need their reality validated and their needs met, BroJ his fantasy of Santa, (which Jen preserves); Baby J, the reality that Jen avoids- (to preserve Brother J’s Santa reality).

36 we meet Baby John for the first Time, he is savvier than Brother John. John wants Dad, who has left, or at least a father figure of some sort
37- Jen tries to protect him with the classic song from xmas 1, and breaks down at the mention of husband and her father
37-38 John gives her gift, but doesn’t trust her to open it herself. Asks her not to go away. (Reveals his mistrust- and she doesn’t actually say she won’t leave him)
38- Jen gives Brother John’s Baseball Glove, enforces her reality
38- Baby John rejects it
39- Jen refuses to acknowledge her son’s thoughts “That’s impossible” and Commands John not to talk that way.
39 John reveals he knows she’s Santa, his FIRST BIG STEP AWAY FROM HER, he is not going to give up so easily.

SCENE 3: BASEBALL 2: Like Act I, The antagonism between them grows. She Clings, he rebels. But NOW Jen is the one blocking John from getting what he needs (freedom). In both cases, however, John doesn’t want to be there. She needs recognition for being there; he to be left alone.

40- John is forced to go to the game, and makes rules for Jen
40- Jen promises to keep them, and that she’ll always be there
41- Jen breaks all three rules in one fell swoop.
42- Baby John needs space and independence
42 Jen needs someone to recognize the lengths she goes to to support him.
SCENE 4: JUST LIKE YOU – This is new for her. No parallel: “Tomorrow he’s going to camp, and I can’t deal with it. I barely even let him out of my sight”. She needs support, she’s saying, it’s really hard to do this. To do what I promised, give you another life, but to also protect him. She’s looking for a way out. If I keep him here, then he can’t be like you. She needs to know how to keep going like this. How she can keep him here without pushing him away.

44- She says he sleeps just like you.
44- And he looks just like you.
45- Admits she failed: “and all I know is I won’t fail my son the same way I failed you. “
45- You should see this kid- why? I wish you could see this kid. I’m doing well? Or this is hard?
45- But I won’t let him be just like you. Not like you. He’s going to stay.

BYE ROOM – John needs to establish his independence. There is No direct parallel, this is Baby John’s tune. It’s lively, fun, free, he’s in a different world, and he just needs Mom to let him go.

46- Tell Jen I’m going away Mom
46- She’s admitting he’s a burden, yet she can barely watch him go. She sees only the NEGATIVE aspects that will be alleviated with his going, not the benefits for him.
47- Jen finally says Goodbye to John
48- John drowns out her clinging, and keeps on going. Refuses to be stopped

SCENE 5 TALK SHOW: Parallel with Letters, the distance between them grows; here we see that they are inevitably flying into a confrontation of epic proportions. He needs to be recognized and freed, she needs to keep him safe, contained and here. While in Act I, John begs for her to come home, he now begs that she let him go. Jen runs from home in the first, and now guilty, tries to hold it down in the second.

49- Jen sees that she’s losing him, but doesn’t take responsibility for it, blames him.
50- John points out the disparity between her life and her expectations for his- asks WHY he’s being dragged into her mistakes. Blames her.
50- Jen needs him to be the stable man in her life.
52- John needs to RUN AWAY to be a writer and live his own life.

52- John understands that Jen’s issues are with her guilt about her BROTHER

53- Jen continues to blame John, avoid responsibility,
53- John Challenges her, “ I don’t think it was wrong”
55- Time to leave you, Never leave you. The line is drawn in the sand.

56- John discovers she hid his acceptance letter to Columbia, lets it slide when she begins to break.

SCENE 6: SMILE OF YOUR DREAMS: Jen sees that she’s living a lie. She needs to say goodbye to Brother John, tell him she has been faking it this whole time.

57- She finally acknowledges that they were not just brother and sister, but a FAMILY. Mom, DAD and John.
57- She admits that She cannot fix it, or pretend that she is trying to forget Brother John.
57- Acknowledges that John sees it.- FIRST TIME SEEING FROM HIS PERSPECTIVE.
57- she rips up the picture of John, needs to try “hand at Goodbyes”
58- But John’s memory haunts her,
59- Trapped, she tries to reassemble the picture, and lost asks John (both) not to leave her.
59- Baby John sees her broken, that she needs him.
SCENE 7 IT TOOK ME A WHILE REPRISE
59- John has decided to stay to be there for his Mom
60- Needs Mom to acknowledge his choice to stay for her
62- Jen needs to avoid that reality, because she has just admitted with “Smile” that she can’t continue that way. She needs him to go so she can be free.
62- John brings up Dead Brother John, and how she’s trapped him here.
63- JEN SLAPS BABY JOHN

SCENE 8: THE ROAD ENDS HERE:
63 Jen finally acknowledges John and his feelings, confronts Brother John and her guilt towards him, and decides to move on.

THAT WAS MY WAY:
64- Jen explains herself, asks for forgiveness.

EVERY GOODBYE IS HELLO: John forgives; Jen meets herself, her son and her future for the first time.
Appendix B

Preliminary Character Analysis for John & Jen

Jen Tracey.

1. Desire: Jen NEEDS to protect herself and her Brother from her Father. More than this, she fights for control of her life, and of the lives of those dearest to her (her brother, and then her son) To do this, she forms a pact, a promise, to “help out each other” “I’ll make sure you’re Happy, as safe as you can be”. Her promise, constant striving for control and safety, and near inability to cope with that which confronts the reality she is constructing to support her need, only create a greater need for her to cling to that controlled reality. There are really two parts to her desire. Her first is to fulfill her and John’s happiness through control of her life and her brother’s life. When he dies, her guilt causes her to manifest an even greater need for control over her son’s life. PROTECTION- When she realizes that she can’t protect them from Dad, she then NEEDS for them to ESCAPE. When brother John dies, She feels responsible for leaving him, not PROTECT. Is Jen stupid? She names him John, she deliberately breaks all the rules in baseball, she makes all the most obvious mistakes. It’s a stretch for her to come to that realization. She’s missing such obvious cues. Seems so clueless,

2. Will Power. Jen NEEDS this control so deeply that she has deceived and deluded her perception of reality. She is terribly desperate, even from the start, having witnessed and endured personal violence. Her fear is massive.

3. Moral Stance. Jen will go to almost any means to maintain her delusion of control. She hides her son’s acceptance letter to college, She even is brought to strike her son. But let us look in the first place at her willingness to sacrifice her son to assuage her guilt of having failed her brother. She gives herself a second chance to change things, to make up for her failure to keep her brother alive, by recreating his likeness in her son.

4. Physical intensity.: perhaps Jen hyperventilates when she is stressed. She is in a constant state of high stress in the Second Act, always just a word away from the edge, she could snap at any moment.

Jen leads with the heart, though it is misguided by her mind, which plagues her with the guilt of her promise to her brother. She relies on her gut when those two fail her, when she is left without an answer; she is left to lash out with emotion, lacking any reason.

1. Young Jen wants to be an Eagle, and fly away. She says she’s not an eagle, but she’ll still fly. She thinks herself smart (in the playtime scene).

2. Brother John says plenty about her in “Out of My Sight” – she goes through many phases. Always smart, but everything from a young pretentious girl to a drugged out hippie.

3. Jen promises, loves, protects, saves, escapes, avoids, ignores, refuses, attacks, commands, demands, reasons, enlists, dominates, begs, jabs, pushes, clings, pulls, and clambers to fulfill her need.
4. “This play is about a sister and a brother, a mother and a son, about Jen’s journey”

   Relationship: obviously sister and mother. But teacher, slave master, caregiver, enemy, General, Chemistry: Must believe she can be both a child and a mother. Whew.

   Journey: Jen goes from being a naïve, scared, and loving sister, to a desperate, deluded, clinging mother, to finally become a free, reborn, independent person.

   Character Description:

   Jen is a big-hearted, loving, older sister (6 years his senior) to John in Act I and an overbearing, overwhelmingly loving helicopter Mom to her Son, her brother’s namesake, in ACT II. She desperately wants to protect, nurture, and make her John’s Happy. She is a control freak, always seeking stability, even if she must bend reality to find it. She always carries with her a great burden, her promise to her brother to protect him, make him happy and to help him grow.
Appendix C

Character Breakdown john & jen

*JOHN & JEN* – by Andrew Lippa and Tom Greenwald

**Director:** Rob Montgomery  
**Show Dates:** April 24th-27th, 2014  
**Rehearsal Dates:** March 31st-April 23rd, 2014  
**To be performed in room 119 Theatre Building**

**Character Breakdowns:**

Jen Tracy: A woman of unyielding determination. Electric, loving, and dangerously stubborn, the safety and happiness of her brother John are everything to her. She grows from the age of six to forty-four over the course of the story. Act I follows her and her brother John; Act II her and her son, also named John.

**ONE ACTOR WILL PLAY BOTH JOHNS**

John Tracy (Jen’s Brother): a brother who follows, listens to, and waits for his older sister. Patient, simple, all-American, full of energy, and charm even in his less noble moments. He wants more than anything to make his father proud.

John (Jen’s Son): Sharp as a tack, but has the sensitivity and care to tactfully navigate his way to being accepted for who he is by his overbearing but delicate mother. He is quick, engaging, driven, playful and mature beyond his years. A born leader, even at the age of five.
Appendix D

Call Back Music Cuts and Scenes for *john & jen*

**Jen: The Road Ends Here-**
From the Bridge to the End “Can you see from where you sleep- end”
Gives us her most powerful yet vulnerable moment, most demanding vocal song
M: 16-42

**John: “It Took Me A While”—**
second verse “took me…. That I could hold down the fort- the end”
Most demanding vocal, and his realization that he’s made it.
M: 41-86

**Brother/sister:**
**Christmas 1**
Brother sister tenderness and love and vulnerability. Probably their most intimate moment of the show as brother and sister
M: 115-147
-Scene leading into “Santa couldn’t be here tonight thru end” “Hey you want to wrap some presents”

**Run & Hide:** “Dad fought against the Germans- you’re not my family anymore”
M 53-87 We get to see them at the height of their conflict as bro/sis.

**Mother/Son:**
**Christmas 2:** John starts with “Mom is going to cry when she sings”- through scene until We’ll have fun here, I know we will. See the difference in dynamic between the two, he is nurturing and independent, she now is losing grip.
M22-55

**Graduation:**
From “That’s not a good enough reason- you don’t run my life anymore”
Gives the peak of their conflict, Baby John’s sharpness and focus, Jen’s age and disintegration. M: 59-87
## Appendix E

### Rehearsal Schedule for *john & jen*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JOHN &amp; JEN</th>
<th>Tentative</th>
<th>Rehearsal Schedule</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>M</strong></td>
<td><strong>T</strong></td>
<td><strong>W</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>wk of 3/31</strong></td>
<td>1hr- Review Music, look at transitions. 2.5hrs read/sing thru. 30 mins- TBA</td>
<td>(no prologue) pp 3-11 (#s 3 &amp; 4) Welcome to the World-mid Think Big</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wk of 4/7</strong></td>
<td>pp 34- 39 (#s 13, 14, 15) Prologue ACT I Prologue ACT II, Old Clothes thru Xmas 2</td>
<td>pp 40-48 (#s 16, 17, 18) Baseball thru Bye Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wk of 4/14</strong></td>
<td>Parallels, Review, Work Thru however far we get</td>
<td>Continue Work thru- MOMENTUM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wk of 4/21</strong></td>
<td>Tech- Cue to Cue- (add sound, Jordan on Synth?) (Tech Preview)- (run for tech, stop if necessary)</td>
<td>Last minute Fixes-DRESS (orchestra)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Appendix F

## Scenic Breakdown for john & jen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actor</th>
<th>Chiar.</th>
<th>Score #s</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Libretto Pgs.</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Season</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>John Costume</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Jen</td>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>1-5 A&amp;B</td>
<td>1-6A</td>
<td>1-6B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18-23 (X)23</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>John</td>
<td>Jen</td>
<td>baby bump</td>
<td>newborn</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score #s</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6, 7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Prologue</td>
<td>Welcome to the World</td>
<td>Christmas 1</td>
<td>Think Big</td>
<td>4-8</td>
<td>4-14</td>
<td>14-17</td>
<td>18-20</td>
<td>20-25</td>
<td>25-27</td>
<td>27-28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libretto Pgs.</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>4-8</td>
<td>8-14</td>
<td>14-17</td>
<td>18-20</td>
<td>20-25</td>
<td>25-27</td>
<td>27-28</td>
<td>28-31</td>
<td>31-33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Season</td>
<td>Any</td>
<td>Any</td>
<td>Dec. 24th</td>
<td>Any</td>
<td>Any</td>
<td>August</td>
<td>Changing</td>
<td>April</td>
<td>June</td>
<td>June</td>
<td>June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>America (attic?)</td>
<td>B-john's Room</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Occidental Court</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>NYC, Home</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Costume</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actor</th>
<th>Chiar.</th>
<th>Score #s</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Libretto Pgs.</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Season</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>John Costume</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jen</td>
<td>John</td>
<td>13, 14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>John</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>(X)12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14-18</td>
<td>(X)18</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score #s</th>
<th>13, 14</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>16</th>
<th>17</th>
<th>18</th>
<th>19</th>
<th>20</th>
<th>21</th>
<th>22</th>
<th>23</th>
<th>24</th>
<th>25</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Prologue, Old Cotched</td>
<td>Christmas 2</td>
<td>Baseball</td>
<td>Just Like You</td>
<td>Bye Room</td>
<td>Talk Show</td>
<td>Bride of the Desert</td>
<td>It Took Me Re</td>
<td>Graduation</td>
<td>Road Ends Here</td>
<td>Never Too Far</td>
<td>Every Goodbye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libretto Pgs.</td>
<td>34-35</td>
<td>36-39</td>
<td>40-43</td>
<td>44-45</td>
<td>45-48</td>
<td>49-56</td>
<td>57-59</td>
<td>59-60</td>
<td>60-63</td>
<td>63-64</td>
<td>64-65</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Season</td>
<td>Any</td>
<td>December</td>
<td>24th</td>
<td>Summer</td>
<td>Summer</td>
<td>Ely Day</td>
<td>Summer</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>June</td>
<td>June</td>
<td>June</td>
<td>June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Canada Home</td>
<td>NEW USA Home</td>
<td>Baseball field</td>
<td>Cemetery by Old Home</td>
<td>new USA Home</td>
<td>Montage</td>
<td>USA Home</td>
<td>USA Home</td>
<td>USA Home</td>
<td>USA Home</td>
<td>USA Home</td>
<td>USA Home</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

*Note: The table continues with additional entries for different actors and scenarios.*
Appendix G

Ground Plan for john & jen
Appendix H
Sample page from the Blocking Script of John & Jen

PSU April 2014

John & Jen

Rob Montgomery, Director

WHILE YOUR SMILE
IS THE SMILE OF YOUR DREAMS.

(JOHN enters in the shadows wearing Brother John’s grey
baseball T)

JOHN

What’s the matter, Jenny?

JEN

YOU TEACH, YOU LEARN,

Can’t I come with you today?

JEN

YOU PUT AWAY ALL YOU EARN,

She said I had talent, Mom — real talent!

JEN

AND YOU SMILE THE SMILE OF YOUR DREAMS.

Can’t we stay in here — it’s safe.

JEN

YOU SHOUT, YOU SING,

Is grandpa going to be there?

JEN

LET OUT A LITTLE MORE STRING,

JOHN

Dad says he thinks I’d make a good soldier.

JEN

AND YOU SMILE...

YOU SMILE...

YOU SMILE...

JOHN

1. Looks at album, bitterly
   slams shut.

1. JOHN appears UR,
   unfurls flag, drapes over
   boxes like cofins(?) of
   plat

2. V.O. Cue

3. >> LIGHTS FADE on
   JOHN

1. SHE not aware of him,
   but hears his voice

1. » JOHN grabs suitcase
   and Xs L to edge of
   plat.

2. » Xs L leaves suitcase
   between plat and UL
   pile

3. » JOHN hears suitcase
   slam, Xs UL

1. » pulling the napkin guy
   out from the xmas stuff

2. » Xs LG to coat rack

3. » JOHN arrives UL, puts
   suitcase in pile. Then
   picks up napkin holder

1. Hiding behind the
   blanket on the coat-
   rack.

2. Drops on floor.

3. JOHN avives at blanket,
   starts folding up.

1. JOHN Then Xs to
   chest, pulls out glove
   (have the new one)
   Then toss on floor.

2. » JOHN sees the glove, Xs
   to it with the blanket &
   holder still in hand

1. JOHN continues
   rummaging, grabs takes
   out airplane instead
   sets on bed and Xs DR

2. » JOHN grabs the glow-
   the plane, the blanket
   and napkin holder. 
   takes it over DR and
   throws it all in an empty
   box.
Works Cited


*Hearts and Minds*. Dir. Peter Davis. BBS Productions, 1974. DVD

Works Referenced


ACADEMIC VITA

Robert Maxon Montgomery

Rob.montgomery16@gmail.com

233 Kenwood Ct.

Grosse Pointe Farms, MI

48236

Education:
- Academic Minor in Spanish Language.

Honors and Awards

- Musical Theatre Endowment Scholarship, Penn State University, 2010-2014
- Academic Excellence Scholarship, Penn State University, 2010-2014
- June H. Ford Memorial Award for Musical Theatre Dance Performance, May 2013
- Dean’s list from Fall 2010-Spring 2014
- Recipient of the President’s Freshman Award.

Association Memberships/Activities

- Phi Beta Kappa Honor Society, Penn State University Chapter
- Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society, Penn State University Chapter
- Co-Founder of ‘The Statesmen’ A Cappella Group, Penn State University
Directing Experience

- *JOHN & JEN* – by Andrew Lippa & Tom Greenwald. Penn State University Honors Thesis Project.
- *FULL GAY HOUSE* - by Russell Jordan Poole. Staged Reading for PSU’s Cultural Conversations Festival

Assistant Directing

- *RABBIT HOLE (Selections)* - by David Lindsay-Abaire. Penn State University Director’s Diagnostic. Dir. Richard Roland
- *THE LAST FIVE YEARS* - by Jason Robert Brown. Production Assistant to Dir. Robert W. Schneider

Professional Performing Experience (Selected)

- Male Swing, *FIDDLER ON THE ROOF*, Goodspeed Musicals
- Ensemble/Boy, *42ND STREET*, Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera
- Cornelius Hackl, *HELLO, DOLLY!*, Wagon Wheel Theatre
- Axel Hammond, *THE NERD*, Wagon Wheel Theatre
- Glen Guglia, *THE WEDDING SINGER*, Wagon Wheel Theatre
- Kyle B. O’Boyle, *LEGALLY BLONDE*, Wagon Wheel Theatre