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English 252:  
Theater in England -  
Journal

## Introduction

A note to the reader: Since I am a person of a technical theater / stage management background, I will be writing with a strong emphasis on these elements of the productions (some more so than others). My knowledge of technical theater and stage management comes from courses taken at the University of Rochester International Theater Program as some work experience over the past few years. Below find a list of certain terms and definitions/explanations that I will reference later in the journal. Also note that nearly all journal entries were written prior to class meetings intentionally – to ensure a fresh perspective on my part.

- *Color scroller* – An accessory that can be attached to the front of a light fixture that allows the color of the projected beam to be changed to a large variety of other colors or to no color at all. This is done by scrolling a role of gel.
- *Conventional light* – Standard stage lights that do not move, mounted in a single fixed position for a show.
- *Cyc* – A large drop hung against the back wall of a stage, with various light colors projected onto it for visual effects / support of what is going on onstage.
- *Effects Wheel* – An accessory that attaches to the front of a conventional stage light that rotates a large, thin disc, centered next to or above the light. The disc has a pattern sliced into it, and is spun with a motor. When the light shines through the moving pattern, different glimmering/flickering types of shadows are created.
- *Haze* – A type of fake smoke or fog pumped into the air to accent light beams or create effects.
- *Gel* – A piece of film placed in the front of a light fixture to create a specific color.

- *Gobo* – A template placed inside a light fixture to produce a specific shape or effect. Gobos can be metal (to create a simple shape), or glass (to create a more complex shape with texture and color).
- *Gobo rotator* – A device placed in a lighting instrument that rotates one or two gobos in opposite directions, creating effects such as that of fire or water.
- *Moving light* – A light that can alter the direction it is pointing, color of its beam, and size and shape of its beam. This can happen while it is on, to create certain effects, or while it is off in between scenes, to alter its purpose.
- *PAR* – Short for parabolic angular reflector – a type of lighting instrument that produces a soft beam, similar to that of a car headlight.
- *Scrim* – A fabric drop that appears opaque when hit with light, but is transparent when not hit with light and the scene behind it is lit.
- *Shutters* – Lighting instruments have flat pieces of metal inside of them that can be adjusted to alter the shape of the beam, often used to cut light off of the audience or pieces of scenery not meant to be lit at a given time.
- *Strip light* – A lighting fixture that usually holds six to nine lamps in a line, facing the same direction. They can all be the same color, or be controlled in sets with different colors.

*War Horse*

Dir.: Marianne Elliot & Tom Morris

Based on a novel by Michael Morpurgo

Adapted by Nick Stafford

As the first production of the class – this show definitely will be difficult to beat. I was left feeling speechless at the vast amount of emotion that was brought up inside me. To be completely honest, this is the first movie or show I have seen that has caused me to cry since *The Little Mermaid* when I was a very small child (so my mother tells me). It was absolutely spectacular.

Upon entering the theater, there were many significant elements, and even more not as obvious aspects of the production that hit me. The room was filled with a very thick haze. This may have appeared as a slight musk to most people, but as someone who has used it before – I can confidently say that they were using at least five large hazer machines to fill that room. This made even the house lights create an eerie feeling, with every beam of light visible. All that could be seen onstage was what looked like a three dimensional torn piece of paper or jagged cement, spanning the width of the stage somehow appearing to be hanging in mid air facing the audience. The way it popped out of the darkness made it obvious that video projectors were being used since there were no shutter cuts visible. A regular lighting instrument could not make shutter cuts for such a complex shape. A circle evident on the floor of the stage suggested to me the possible use of a turn table. There were also more than 20 moving lights and 30 scrollers, waiting to be used. These all made me extremely excited, foreshadowing some awesome effects

to come. Lights were also evidently aimed toward audience isles, suggesting the actors will be using this space.

Upon the first scene, it was immediately evident that this production was using 300-400 lighting instruments (compared to the UR productions using less than 200). Lighting designer Paule Constable successfully conveyed the warm sun of the “town meeting” where Joey was auctioned off with great use of PARs and strip lights with no color at all. These lights produce a warm beam, similar to natural light, when not colored. The warm look, used many times in the play, coupled with the thick haze, looked like dust rising above a dirt road or meadow/field.

The minimalist themes were extremely impressive as well. The scene boundaries were almost never made with stationary scenery. They were either made with pure darkness (the haze helps to hide the walls) or with actors holding objects such as pieces of wood. The structure of the puppets was also minimal, with wooden frames and wheels exposed. Even the music was very simple. During scene changes, it was often just a single musician playing the fiddle or accordion and singing. There was no exit music or bow music, making a simple yet eerie silence at the end of the show.

A theme conveyed completely by light was that of death. It became apparent in the first act when the fallen soldiers are walking into the blinding light that this was going to be a recurring theme. Death white lights were always the same type of fixtures – moving lights. This is because the very bright, blinding, cold white color is that of a moving light lamp, which is different from those in conventional fixtures. I have never seen a designer use these lamps without color and found it very creative. A strobe light was also used to convey death (usually when a bombshell was supposed to be going off)

– having the same color as the moving lights. Whenever a character died, this light was used. These lights were also used to show the concept of death lurking near, or being in the edge of death. This was done by having the moving lights chase around characters as gunshots were fired, bombshells exploded, and even at times when characters were trying to stay alive after battles had ended. The other subtle use of the death lighting was a hint of it shined on the window of the farm house – showing that death was lurking close by throughout the entire play.

The other major production element that I need to comment on is the puppets. The puppet work was spectacular in all ways. For a moment I felt that it was weird that you could see the puppeteers, but I forgot about them immediately. The way they all worked so well with each other and even made the sounds of the animals was very impressive. It was nice that the costume designer decided to have them wearing attire that fit in with the rest of the characters rather than trying to hide them – since we obviously can see them. They appeared almost as if they were simply there to tend to the horse rather than acting as puppeteers.

In addition, I must mention the use of video effects on the large piece of scenery hanging against the back drop, above the stage. My prediction during the pre-show observations about projectors came true. As the show progressed, different pictures slowly faded in and out on this “projection screen,” depicting images of war at times. In other moments, it was simply used to give a taste of the setting for particular scenes. This was a very creative use of the stage. Since such minimal scenery/prop elements were used, this was a way of showing the audience the message that the directors and

designers had in mind. The projections were also done in a style of children's drawings, showing the child-like nature of various plot elements.

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*The Habit of Art*

Dir.: Nicholas Hynter

Written by: Alan Bennett

*The Habit of Art* was the extreme opposite of *War Horse* in many ways that were very evident having seen both productions in one day. Bennett seemed to write this play to make a significant statement – almost in a way that is more important than simply making an entertaining performance. *War Horse*, on the other hand, seemed more strictly for entertainment value, though it too had a deeper message albeit less abstract.

Admittedly, as someone who is into technical theater and high tech entertainment, I enjoyed *War Horse* more, but I have a very deep appreciation for what *The Habit of Art* was saying. I have a hard time explaining what it was saying in any brief way. It seemed to be a commentary on a playwright's struggle to convey his message through actors while making sense in an amusing way as it perpetually crossed margins between putting on a play, being an actor, being an artist (writer or musician), and being an audience. Perhaps the fact that I found it less entertaining than *War Horse* is in essence part of the point of the play – in that productions are meant to say something to society and not just make people drool in awe at fancy lights and music or an emotive plot.

Before the play began, I observed the many lights around the room as I always do. Just like for *War Horse*, this excited me with what was to come. I then moved on to the scenery – which at first looked like a massive studio apartment that was cluttered with

stuff everywhere. I noticed that it appeared as if the theater walls were showing – with lighting cables strewn about, a massive gray door upstage (possibly for moving scenery into the space), and exposed lighting fixtures that were focused in seemingly random directions. There was also a person on stage with a clipboard appearing to check things around the set – similar to a stage manager. The last elements I noticed gave away the concept of the play: There were a row of tables stage left, one with spike take and gaff tape on it, with books and papers very organized, another with a sound board, and lastly an electric piano. This told me that this was some sort of rehearsal because these appear to be rehearsal tables. Having been a stage manager, I sincerely appreciated this!

Once the show started, I realized that this was either a rehearsal hall or a stage in progress. This was confirmed by the scenery appearing partially built (with exposed unpainted wood and missing props – the fridge and stove), the raked stage, and elements mentioned previously. The character on stage at the start of the show was confirmed to be an assistant stage manager (ASM), and he was joined by a production stage manager (PSM) – Kay, sound board operator, keyboardist, costumer, and playwright. The play did a fantastic job accurately representing the rehearsal process, with the actors being called “children” by Kay, the five minute breaks, arguments between the director and playwright regarding cut lines, etc. I found it particularly hilarious that the keyboardist was on stage actually playing while the actors would mime playing in a tacky self parody.

All of the lights that I noticed during the pre-show were either there to mislead the audience, or more likely just the theater’s standard setup, because none of them were used. Though I found this disappointing, I appreciated it as well because the stage was kept in rehearsal light, or work light. Rehearsal light is generally a flat white wash with

some lights perhaps left from old shows aiming in odd directions, with just enough to provide adequate light to please the director. This is exactly what was on stage.

With such a simple set of production elements (no sound effects, rehearsal light, no costume, basic props), I imagine that it was extremely difficult for the actors to portray their characters. It is also a large challenge to act a play in a play. To complicate things even more, the play in that play (telling the life of W H Auden) is very wordy, a rough draft that consists mostly of a few characters talking. This creates a significant challenge to draw the audience's attention – shown by the actors constantly bugging the playwright for more about why they are saying what they say, what their characters are supposed to be, and more. One character, the biographer, goes to great lengths to try and figure out who his character really is – coming on stage in drag and playing the tuba! At the end of the play, he mentions maybe he will try wearing a hat. To me, this is all part of him trying to get the playwright to tell him who his character is (or, perhaps, to tell the playwright who the character is).

One of my favorite parts was certainly at the very end before Kay walked off stage. She moved a book back and forth on the stage management table, about an inch each way. This is an example of how most stage managers (including myself) have a little obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD). This obsessive tendency also shows that the actors and playwright are in good company with their OCD.

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*Twelfth Night*

Dir.: Gregory Doran

Written by William Shakespeare

In all of my time studying theater, I have always struggled significantly with the language of Shakespeare. With this in mind, I still enjoy it performed live very much, because I can research the plot ahead of time and follow the production, appreciating the emotion behind the script and how the words sound, even if I cannot translate it sentence by sentence. I considered waiting to write this journal entry until after our class lecture on it, but I decided to write it before so it is not influenced at all by what we will discuss. Even though the discussion will most likely clear up elements of the production I found confusing, I am going to focus here on the other aspects presented that I was able to take in and enjoy (or in some cases, not enjoy).

The pre-show included sounds of a jungle or the outdoors, with crickets being the most prominent. Upon a closer investigation of the set, I determined that the set and the sounds of the outdoors were to recreate what theater was in Shakespearean times, viewed outside. The set looked like a sort of recreation of an old outdoors theater, with cement pillars, brick walls, and a ceiling that appeared to be open to a sky. Lighting technology complemented this with the effect of natural sunlight (similar to *War Horse*) coming in from above and from two windows on the set. Scrollers were also used to light the sky, making sense since these allow for it to change color with rain different storms or times of day. The set also had the floor peeling up and wrapping, almost as if it was a breaking

ocean wave, in the upstage left corner. This was confirmed later in the production to be the ocean for the shipwreck beach scenes on the Illyrian coast.

As the play progressed, I was fascinated at how the designers successfully combined the “outdoors theater” with a more modern technological production. The ocean (peeling up stage floor) was accented with a standard lighting effect that creates the look of rippling water. This is a classic effect and is often considered tacky – done using gobo rotators with glass gobos and standard gels. For many scenes, the look of natural sunlight was removed, such as Malvolio’s prison scene (which also utilizes a trap door). A particular moment when the old theater and new theaters clash was when Sir Andrew was on stage for a scene change and a tree was flown in, landing behind him. He turned around, saw it, and jumped. It was as if he was part of the old theater and was confused at how the tree got there since it is a new theater element (with rigging flying scenery). In addition, the fact that the sky was able to be altered from scene to scene to represent night or a storm is another example of how old and new clash – with old being that there is a sky, and new being that it is altered/created with lighting technology.

This production also had a few things that I had a problem with. The most bothersome was that light came through both windows and cast shadows of the window frame in different directions – going against the natural light concept. Whenever natural light is used (such as in *King Lear* – Todd Theater, Season 17), a single location must be determined for the sun, so when there are shadows cast for effects, they are all consistent. I cannot think of a reason for the designers to do this, [unless to represent confusion within characters like Viola, who is not who she is, is out of tune and out of time, like “Patience on a monument,” waiting until the sun (the marker of time) finally gets it

straight and releases her from her Caesario birthing through her brother's likeness, whereby she will no longer be a misplaced shadow of herself, but, rather, Viola in persona – RP]. Other problems were technical difficulties – the first of which most people probably did not notice. A color scroller got stuck briefly in one of the scenes between the Illyrian coast, when a single scroller set on a blue color did not change back to natural light with all the rest of the scrollers for a moment. The other difficulty was Sir Andrew's sword breaking when he went to slice a shrub. The blade literally fell off the handle and the cast on stage was left to improvise. Though this was clearly not planned, the cast did a spectacular job of improvising. The sword was picked up immediately and held with its handle. The silly antic seemed to fit fine with the Sir Andrew's character – almost appearing as if it *may* have been intentional. It was almost calming for me to see these things happen because as a technical theater person, I face difficulties of this sort all the time, but feel as if they never happen in professional theater. More will be discussed on this point in my entry for *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, next.

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### *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*

Dir.: Debbie Allan

Written by Tennessee Williams

Just like yesterday, the two plays seen today were again complete juxtapositions. Shakespeare and Tennessee Williams are very different playwrights. The Duke of York's Theatre was a small, older style theater, while the Novello Theatre was large and luxurious looking. The house (i.e. where the audience was seated – not the set) was complete with a fancy rug, red velvet type chairs, a massive crystal chandelier, and a

seemingly infinite supply of candelabra sconces on the walls. The luxurious house went well with the set – the also luxurious plantation house. A full size proscenium drop was hanging over the front of the stage pre-show. It depicted an image looking up at a canopy of tree tops. The light was trying to break through from above the canopy, but was seemingly unsuccessful. This served as a bit of foreshadowing, shown to me as Brick's potential to be better than he is (to stop drinking, have children, and inherit the plantation). He is hindered though because of his internal conflict regarding his old friend Skipper and how he feels responsible for his death. This hindrance can be interpreted as the tree canopy, stopping the light.

The show opened with a fantastic package of technology. The drop was lifted to reveal a scrim behind it. This is known as a “bleed through” effect, as lighting is used to hint at the scene behind the scrim after a drop is lifted, without revealing the entire scene. We are shown the hint of a silhouette of Brick showering, and then the bath tub is hoisted up to the grid at a very high speed. This was probably done using an electronic fly system rather than a human fly rail operator (fly-man). The set revealed after the bathtub flew out and the scrim was lifted was absolutely remarkable! The high walls of the plantation house were built in a way that made the house look even larger than it was. This was done with the walls being raked to get smaller upstage, and by using slats of wood rather than solid walls, making the room look more open (and allowing us to see through walls).

For the most part, the remainder of the tech was fairly simple. As noted in the script, the play is meant to take place over the span of an afternoon into night. This was depicted with scrollers, once again. The mood becoming cooler and darker accented the

plot line as well – as the story became darker. The idea of life being filled with mendacity was the overlying theme. The mendacity was in a way lifted as the plot progressed, revealing the death to Big Daddy and the conflict between Skipper and Brick. It is as if night falling is symbolic of the darkness that the world would be in if all was honest and true – without lies to sugarcoat or secret ways to hide from our problems.

One particular lighting element I would like to discuss is that of sculpting. Sculpting is a fundamental in lighting and is done by lighting a scene from two different angles with a different color at each angle. The different colors hit the characters and in essence cause them to “pop out” in a way, similar to how 3D glasses work with one different color for each eye. In this production, there was one moving light on each side in the back of the house, aimed at the stage. They would move to wherever a flashback was occurring and help the speaker to pop out from the rest of those on stage, with a warm light (orange) from one side and a cold light (blue) from another side.

There were a number of technical difficulties with this production. When Maggie went to light her cigarette, the lighter was set in a way that caused a large flame to almost burn her nose, visibly shaking her and Brick on stage and almost causing them to break character. Brick seemed to attempt to turn the lighter down when he went to light a cigarette later. Later in the production, prior to intermission, the baton (a pipe) used to weight the drop that was flying in landed on a piece of furniture. This is considered a mistake on the actors’ part because they were the ones to push the furniture off stage. A crew member rushed to push the baton in front of the furniture while another person pulled the furniture on stage. (No one was seen, but I can promise you this is what was happening!)

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*Footsbarn's Christmas Cracker*

By Footsbarn Theatre

The *Christmas Cracker* was certainly an amazing experience! What a treat to be at the historical Globe Theatre as a groundling. I thoroughly enjoyed it. Upon entering, I immediately felt as if I had stepped back in time, noticing the old wooden structure of the audience seating and the wide open ceiling over the floor in front of the stage, for standing audience members. There were also small pieces of paper fluttering to the ground, simulating autumn leaves. Prior to arriving, I wondered how on earth we were going to watch an outdoor play when the light of the day is extremely flat and dreary. Outdoor plays were designed to be lit by the movement of a day's sunlight. Also, the sun in the winter is positioned differently from what the theater had been designed for. The Globe tech team did a fantastic job combating this challenge while preserving the old feel.

The entire area was lit with a massive array of standard outdoor floodlights, creating a nice even wash. There were also four PAR fixtures (two on stage, two behind the standing audience). Most impressively, to best utilize these fixtures, they were rigged with rope and on swivel stands, so a lighting tech could refocus them during the show (to follow tight rope walkers, etc.). This allowed the old style production to avoid being so tech heavy that it became "too new," while still making it work with the challenge of winter's natural light. Other simple tech elements included a simple smoke machine. It projected small bursts of smoke that were each visible on their own, simulating how smoke could have been created in old times using a real fire or charring embers. The

most impressive concept of this production was that it was enjoyable to me without using a lot of technology – which is rare. The entertainment was simply great without it. A tight rope walker over a crowd with no safety device, while playing the violin, is as entertaining as it gets.

In addition to the simplified technological standpoint, the show had a very unique style of staging, including entrances and exits that were center stage (instead of from the side wings in modern theaters), processions that would wind around the standing audience area, and a smaller stage in the middle of the standing area (making part of the audience in between two stages at times). This allowed entrances and exits to be embraced as effects, instead of them trying to be hidden. The marching of a parade around the audience was a perfect example of this type of entrance/exit. For some scenes, a trap door was utilized as well. This was also a spectacular use of a simple effect for entrances/exits. The show did all this without the use of fancy lifts, fly systems, and arrays of curtains that other shows use.

It is also remarkable that following the ‘commedia dell'arte’ style, a lot of the production was improvised. The fact that I found it all enjoyable and funny while not being able to tell which parts were improvised shows that they were 110% successful.

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*Billy Elliot: The Musical*

Dir.: Steven Daldry

Book and Lyrics by Lee Hall

Music by Elton John

A single word summary of this production: “Wow!” In my entire life of seeing professional theater – I have never seen a show so tech heavy (not including Cirque du Soleil, of course). **DISCLAIMER:** I wrote too much in this journal because I felt the need to address so many technical elements used. The show had every single technical trick that I have ever heard of, and more! I was not familiar with the book or the production, so this was my first experience with the story. To be completely honest, the plot of the production was not that extraordinary, though its political commentary was fairly intense. Having said that – it was, because of the technicalities, one of the most spectacular shows I have ever seen. I should be adding words to the technical definitions prefacing the start of this document, but I simply do not even know how to properly identify what I saw- which has not happened to me since I started working in this field. The Victoria Palace is certainly one of the top theaters of the world, technologically speaking.

The house of the theater had an old, majestic feel, created by lots of medieval style chandeliers and sconces. On stage was a black scrim, without a baton in the bottom of it – suggesting that it could be dropped instead of raised after being used. This also suggests that there are other flying effects to be used that the scrim would be in the way of if hoisted up – an intriguing thought for what was to come. Behind the scrim, hints of a dark, natural, rocky looking set could be seen – probably a coal mine. The house was also outfitted top to bottom in all sort of lights – movers, scrollers, conventional fixtures, follow spots, projectors, and more that I did not know what to call. This was sure to be an impressive show.

The colors of lights were used to emphasize many unique moments/themes. Whenever Billy saw his mother in his mind, she was shown in stage outline with a bright blue follow spot, as the rest of the stage was toned down – making a special look for the mother. The light blue aura around her made her appear as a spirit. Those used during *Razzle Dazzle*, a mix of bright neon colors, gave the illusion of a disco club of some sort. Various colored shin busters (lights used to accent the legs of dancers, aimed at the lower body only) were also successfully used. In the angry dance scene (end of act I), the stage was covered in only red, depicting Billy's emotionally charged feelings.

This angry dance scene also utilized smoke – a tool used throughout the show in ways I have never seen before. Early in the show, an actor even walks across the stage with a hand held fog machine, spreading fog around the stage evenly. The most creative use of fog is during the song sung by the grandmother. The smoke creeps out from the stage left wing, slowly revealing a company of dancers, all smoking cigarettes. It is implied that the thick cloud of smoke was from them smoking, though clearly they were assisted by smoke machines. The cloud of smoke moved in perfect time with the dancers as they slowly overtook the stage, transforming it into a dark smoky room. The moment second to this in creativity using smoke was shown to me before I actually saw it on stage. I heard the faint hiss coming from back stage and knew immediately what was to come – low lying fog. The sound is from water being poured over tubs of dry ice, creating an instant surplus of fog that is heavier than air, so it remains low to the ground. This made a mystical dream-like look for Billy's fantasy when he is with the older male dancer in Act II.

The fantasy dance scene also had an awesome element – flying Billy! This shows that a full rigging system was in place. Typically when a person is flown, there is a technician known as a rigger above them in the grid, controlling their every move with cables. I can only assume this is how this was done, but it is possible it was done using a standard fly system or computer system, controlled from the ground. Other impressive fly moments were the use of an electric's pipe (pipe filled with lights, usually kept in the grid, above the stage during shows – but can be lowered for crew work or specific purposes during a scene). During the scene when Billy and his father talk to the Royal Academy of Dance staff after his audition, the electric's pipe is in its low trim position upstage. My first thought was how creative this was to make it look as if they are actually on a working stage that is in the midst of having electric's work done. I wondered if the lights on the pipe were actually plugged in or just there for the effect and decided that they were not plugged in since there were already so many lights. How could they have even more circuits to use? I was wrong, of course, as at the end of this scene Billy is dancing and the lights not only come on, but move while on as the pipe is lifted into high trim! What an outstanding effect! The fly system was also constantly used to raise and lower vertical trusses rigged with moving lights on each side of the stage when the set was moved on and off. The smoothness and frequency of flying scenery movements implies that there was most likely a computerized fly system, perhaps controlled from the booth in the back of the stalls with the rest of the tech team.

This leads me to the most impressive part of the show – the set. I did not know it was possible to have such an interactive set. It broke into pieces and was on wagons that could be moved off stage – implying that there were full sized spaces the width of the

stage left and right of the main stage. On the main wagon, there were additional wagons that could be pulled out like drawers by the actors (i.e. the bathroom, the costume closet). All wagons moved extremely smoothly – making it evident that they were on motorized wagons – a common piece of technology used in professional theater. The most baffling part of the set was the lifts and moving parts of the deck. It was complete with a full row of lights that flipped open like the headlights of a sports car, to start off. The tower that was lifted with Billy's bed was complete with an additional lift that could lift his bed above the rest of the set piece. The doors that opened to let this set piece go up and down were complete with doors inside of them as well, to allow for the different sized pieces to be lifted through. I cannot even begin to imagine how this was made possible from a mechanical standpoint, or how it was controlled. I am not sure if it had a console in the booth that a crew member controlled, or was controlled from below the deck by a different crew member – this is all new to me. There was an additional lift stage right with similar properties, and a larger lift upstage used at the end to simulate an elevator taking the miners down into the coal pit.

The only tech element left to talk about is sound – and of course, it too was unbelievable. The orchestra was amplified so well that you could barely tell they were actually playing right under the stage, but you knew they were because it was visible. The number of microphones used in the case was hard to imagine, with certain scenes such as the final where it was obvious that every company member on stage had their own. For Billy's angry scene at the end of act I, his shoes are even wired with microphones, accenting his kicking at the bars around his bed and stomping on the

ground. The sound design also utilized reverb very appropriately as the miners are brought down the elevator into the coal pit.

Other technical elements worth mentioning (that would be very impressive in any other show, but were simply not huge relative to those mentioned above) are snow falling, small pyrotechnics (the burning breakfast in act I), the massive riot barcade (end of act I), big red coal miners' banner used throughout the show, and the "safety curtain" from the Royal Academy.

I know all I have talked about for this show is tech, tech, tech – but I would like to mention one plot element that really stuck out to me. In the very end, Billy is on his dad's shoulders and is shown playing around, flailing his arms and mimicking an airplane, before he leaves for the academy. After all he has done, starting to find his sexuality, becoming an amazing dancer, learning values of finance, and auditioning with lots of people older than himself, facing the audition board after getting into a fight – he is still a kid. No matter what – he is still a kid having fun sometimes.

On a side note – as someone who wants to go into a career in technical theater / stage management – this production is essentially my life career goals. It really lit a fire inside of me that I was beginning to lose track of. If I manage to work on a show of this caliber – whether as a stage manager or a low level stage hand – I will consider a major career goal met. I contacted a connection I have with a professional theater producer, Erica Fee (who took this course, years ago!), in London – and she is trying to help me get a tour of the set/theater or meet someone on the crew. If that does not work out, I will be trying to contact someone on my own if I can find a name on the website.

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*The Pitmen Painters*

Dir.: Max Roberts

Written by Lee Hall

Once I realized that the Lyttleton Theatre is designed for shows in rep – I understood all the extra lights I saw at *The Habit of Art*. This was the production that spoke to me the most so far with its plotline, themes, and motifs. The tech was also impressive, though small potatoes compared to *Billy Elliot: The Musical*. Much like *365 Days, 365 Plays*, a Susan Lori Parks play performed at Todd Theater in fall of 2007, this production utilized video projection. Projection was used to help the audience realize when time passed, which date events occurred on, which places were being depicted, and most importantly, to see the art being created by the pitmen. The video design was very well done. In the beginning when slides were being shown through a projector and the screen showed them being changed very accurately, successful cueing by the stage manager (controlling the timing of these changes happening with the movements on stage) was evident. It was also clear that the designer had researched how this actually appears with a working projector.

This show spoke to me the most because of its dramatic commentary on the definition of art. I was left pondering numerous points raised, such as: Does art need to be political to be a success? If not, what makes art successful? Can anyone be an artist? Does having a full time career in art have anything to do with this? I also felt that throughout the play different characters represented different concepts. At first – the pitmen all represent ignorance of the common man, assuming that art has an obvious single meaning that they just need to know in order to see well. Oliver represents

questions that challenge his ignorance. Robert Lyon depicts a kind of enlightenment.

The woman who offers Oliver the job can be seen as representative of upper class people – those who are insidiously, but stereotypically, art connoisseurs.

This play utilized light as a set boundary very well. In act I when Oliver is presenting a painting to the other pitmen, a single bright light is on him while the rest of the stage is very dim, accenting his nervousness and pulling the scene to only him as he speaks. As he finishes the lights restore to the prior studio lighting. A similar effect is used when the pitmen are all speaking at their first convention. At the very end of act I, the men all stand close with light focused only on them, as they finish each others' sentences – all becoming one. The effect is like that of "Solidarity," in *Billy Elliot*, also by Lee Hall.

The final element I would like to address that is most easily overlooked here is the use of transitions/scene changes to emphasize plotline location. The scene changes start as very industrial and mechanical – with lights shining across the floor and the sounds of machinery operating rhythmically with the lights. As the pitmen become more aware of art and open-mindedness, the scene changes shift. They start to have what appear to be flickers of warm, full light – interspersed between the industrial effects. Once they begin to be well known and appreciative of art – the scene changes become very smooth, with either no sound or regular music of the times playing briefly. Toward the end of the play, as the pitmen argue over Oliver's job and the future of socialism and the mining industry, the transitions again become mixed with industrial elements and become less smooth.

I found the ending of the show to be very well done – with the historical resolution explained on the projector. As this happens, the full cast comes together to

sing. All of them joining can be symbolic that all of their contrasting views of art throughout the show can be seen as equally correct. To me, art is something that can be different for everyone. Fame from art is something defined by society – but is irrelevant to right or wrong. Art influenced by the war became famous because it was what people were focused on at the time.

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*Annie Get Your Gun*

Dir.: Richard Jones

Book by Victor Herbert and Dorothy Fields

Music by Irving Berlin

The general feeling I was left with after seeing this production was good and bad. Obviously – this show is in a different league than most of the other productions we have seen thus far. I was a little annoyed at some of my classmates for being so hard on it, attempting to compare it to shows like *Billy Elliot: The Musical*. This show was written in a completely different era of musicals with different deep motivations and intentions for the audience. Less technology was available at the original time of this play as well. Even if the Victoria Palace was available for *Annie Get Your Gun*, I am convinced that it

would simply make no sense – despite best efforts of the production and design team.

With all this in mind – I watched the show with a somewhat fresh perspective.

I will start with the good. I sincerely and deeply appreciated the technical elements used for this show at the Young Vic Theatre. It had an intimate feel without complex bells and whistles – something that *Annie Get Your Gun* required. I could not imagine the show anywhere else. The show ran very smoothly, despite the lack of a fly system, wagon system, or lift system. For the few scenery pieces that flew, including the chandeliers over the audience, crew members were visible in the tech gallery (a level above the audience where the board operators, follow spots, and other tech members work during the show) hoisting them by hand. There was no enclosed booth such as that of most other theaters, located in the back of the stalls. The deputy stage manager called the show from the tech gallery. I supposed I related to this in a large way because it is how I am used to running shows, without a booth in Todd Theater. They also did not have any significant lighting fixtures or sound effects. A full show with no microphones on stage helped compliment this intimate feel as well.

Now with all this being said – there was a great deal in this show that I found extremely tacky, unnecessarily low tech, and amateur. The show seemed similar to something you would see at an older high school (the new ones with performing art centers could probably do better). I understand that this was a children's show and was written a very long time ago, but that does not excuse certain elements. These all come mainly from the director and designers. I stand by saying that the tech crew still did a beautiful job. Since there was a repeating need for gun shot effects, I would have expected something a bit more real. It would have been easily possible for them to use

blanks at the time this was written. If they did not want to fire blanks in this show, they could have still done a bit of a better job with the sound design rather than just playing a clip of a gun shot through the house speakers. Perhaps a smaller speaker could have been located somewhere on stage with a more realistic sound clip – or a cap gun used with a microphone placed inside it. Another odd tech element was the lighting design. The space above the stage (a sort of oversized proscenium) was at times lit with seemingly random colors. I understand that songs during musicals tend to have looks that distinguish them from the rest of the play – to show that we are leaving reality briefly – but often times the colors and intensity of the light in this space seemed extremely irrelevant to what was going on. It could have been used as a cyc, to accent the mood on stage or show time of day, but at times it was bright green or hot pink, making little sense for this production. The final problem that bothered me was the transitions. They happened in black out a few times, with maybe a sound clip playing. This is very rarely done because a blackout not only slows the pace of any production, but also usually signals the end of an act. I would have liked to see some more creative versions of transitions.

There were a few high points of the production, however. I enjoyed the train and boat scenes – using a conveyor to show passing scenery. This was a cute way to take care of a challenging requirement to portray travel around the world within a theater like this. I would have liked to see something a little different for running the conveyor instead of a person sitting at the end grabbing what went by and passing it off stage. With someone doing this, seated center stage during a lit scene – they were impossible to

ignore, making it look a little silly. I also felt that Annie Oakley's accent was extremely well done, even more so than some of the characters in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*.

I spoke with the house manager of the show during interval to see if I could meet the crew, since I felt that I could relate to them so well. I wanted to know how they ran the show and how they obtained the jobs they had. She set it up so I could meet the follow spot operators after the show and get a little tour of the tech gallery. I found this extremely interesting and plan to do similar things for more shows in the future on this trip!

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### *The Priory*

Dir.: Jeremy Herrin

Written by Michael Wynne

I can fairly easily say that this was my favorite production so far. It had a superb cast, a plot line that I was extremely entertaining, coupled with the perfect balance of technology to support it – using a combination of simple effects done very well, interspersed with bits of more complicated effects, also done very well. Entering the theater, I was immediately overcome with the sense that I was in an old, creepy, mansion sort of house – with tall cathedral ceiling resembling a church or abbey. I also noticed that there were windows to the outside on the upstage wall – which seemed odd since light was coming in from outside, spilling on stage slightly. I realized then that this was all part of the set, and the windows were revealing a faux outside. It was extremely convincing, with trees visible and street light spilling in. The mood conveyed upon entering seemed to be exactly what the designers/director were going for, because this is

exactly what the setting is supposed to be. The last element I noticed upon entering that needs to be addressed is the fact that there was a full ceiling over the set. Where on earth could the stage lights be? A show can not be done without high side light and top light! Then upon closer investigation, I noticed that the lights were tucked skillfully behind these cement looking trusses that spanned the ceiling. It was a very impressive, yet elegantly simple set.

The production went on to depict a story of love, comedy, and a bit of horror – all things that I always find interesting and fun to watch. It poked fun at horror in film/theater, as well as use of drugs and alcohol for partying.

It is worth discussing the capabilities of the windows, door, and scene behind the set in detail here. For a scene in act I, there is a partial blackout on stage, leaving only a faint back light through the windows visible – very accurately depicting moonlight or street lights in the distance. A dark figure then crosses in between this light and the window, showing the audience a scary, black, silhouette. I was expecting this effect, yet it still was enough to startle me. The front door was so realistic that when it was opened, I swear I felt a draft. Later in the play, it is raining outside. Rain can be seen falling outside when the door is open, as well as trickling down the windows and dripping from the tree leaves. This is an impressive effect, considering the challenges of running water on stage. As one can imagine, when water mixes with electrical cables, lights, and sound cables – bad things happen. A very realistic effect was executed with these challenges overcome. The costume crew also did a fantastic job making the actors' costumes look drenched when off stage in the rain, even though it was clear that the rain was not actually torrential backstage.

Another effect that was quite impressive was the fireplace. It was clearly a gas fire, but was lit subtly by what appeared to be someone throwing a match on it from just off stage, and burned with flickering yellow flames as if it were a real, wood burning fire. It also created a visible amount of smoke seen dissipating above it, and died down by the end of the act as a fire would.

The final effect I wish to address is the blood. I felt like I was slightly insane because when the blood was shown on stage, I exclaimed “awesome!” or something similar. I can explain this! I have worked in great depths with blood on stage, including in *The Illusion* which I stage managed. I am very aware of how fake blood works on stage, the challenges of using it, cleaning it up, as well as making it. Because of this sincere appreciation I have for times I see it used, I was very satisfied to see it on stage. The moment Laura went for the knife, I knew it was coming. This is for various reasons: First of all, she was wearing a white shirt – often used for blood scenes because it can be bleached and used again, rather than ruining a colored costume. It was also wet from the rain (i.e. pre-treated), making the washing process easier. One can also notice that the blood was not on her in the bows. This is because the costumers took the shirt immediately to start cleaning. The second giveaway that blood was coming was that she headed for the dark, blood red shag carpet – something that she could “bleed” on and not ruin, and that could easily be cleaned up by stage management in the next transition. Two blood packets were burst. One was burst by Laura when she first slit her wrist – the other by Kate when she wrapped her wrist with a rag. Blood packs are often stashed on stage somewhere so that actors can grab them when ready. I suspect this was done here. One of my favorite parts though had to be when the blood was cleaned up after the scene!

A stage management team sprang into action in a complete blackout. One stage manager took the carpet away, while another held a black light close to the floor to make any blood spatter show up, with yet another person wiping as she went. Left over blood spatter can get tracked around the set, ruining scenery and costumes that are not ready for it. When I worked with blood in *The Illusion*, we had not thought of the black light concept and were left on our hands and knees looking for spatters on a black glossy floor – a challenge every performance. We also did not have a red shag rug to take away, or the luxury of a white costume, but we overcame!

\*\*\*Amendment: I found out from some classmates that managed to talk to the actors after the show that my policy on blood packets was incorrect! Evidently Laura had a bottle of blood fitted inside the back of her dress, with a small tube connecting it to her wrist, where it was released using a motorized pump/valve that was controlled by the stage manager. What a great piece of technology! Something is sold for this purpose for over £2000. To save money, the technical team actually built this one from scratch, complete even with the surge of a heartbeat.

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### *Nation*

Dir.: Melly Still

Based on a novel by Terry Pratchett

Adapted by Mark Ravenhill

Of all the plays I have seen so far on this trip (including the Shakespeare!) – this one is the most difficult to find motivation for writing about it. The reason for this is that it lacked a solid storyline that made me want to follow it intently. The tech was pretty amazing, so it was not hard to watch, but the story seemed to move slowly, even

tediously at times. I suppose it would have been easier having read the play first because a lot of the confusion came from odd transitions between worlds and perspectives.

Upon entering the theater, there was a very mystical mood. The room was very hazy, with a few lights projecting onto the stage – casting large, defined rays of light through the haze. This gave it almost a divine appearance, as if it was a higher being shining down on the stage for a miracle occurring. On stage was a section of a globe, forming a mound center stage, surrounded by what looked like leaves, and again surrounded by ocean blue – three concentric circles. There were also a number of palm tree trunks and what looked like a tree stump – showing that there would be themes of nature and the four elements. The impressive technical pieces of the set were three hanging, framed scrim that were partially reflective, partially translucent. They also had lights inside of them, in the plane of the scrim. This allowed the scrim to be given a glowing blue tint – appearing as water looks when you are looking through the glass at an aquarium. The start of the show revealed two very high power follow spotlights as well, which followed the main foci on stage at most times. Usually, one spot was warm and one was cold, helping to sculpt those on stage (as discussed in previous journal entries). The very high intensity of the spots and that they came from directly above the front of the audience (one on each side of front of house) also worked to help with the mythical god-like themes, with large beams shining down in the haze.

The most impressive technical element of the show had to be the three dimensional projections onto the three hanging, reflective scrim. With projections of water images on the screens, other effects could be intensified to be more realistic. Whenever a character would jump off a boat, or be drowned in a flood, they were shown

leaving the front of the stage, then immediately were seen floating down behind the screen, as if underwater. The dolphins also seemed very real. They were controlled by puppeteers holding them up on sticks behind the screen. Another moment that projections helped with was the starry night. Stars and a night sky were portrayed on the screens and were supplemented behind/above the screens with fiber optic lights. A fiber optic light source allows light to be transferred through plastic wires (called fiber optics) from a source (called a light pump) through any twist of directions to a final destination. For stars, lots of small fiber optic cables were wired from the light pump to locations behind the set, with the ends poking through. The projectors also portrayed clouds going by for the sunny island scenes.

The set also utilized other creative elements that seemed unique to me. To simulate a flock of birds scattering, lots of birds (disguised as leaves) were hidden on the stage floor pre show, attached to thin wires to the computerized fly system – then all hoisted up quickly at one time. This was a very unique use of the fly system. Another concept that I would never have thought of was how they portrayed boats on water. A boat was placed in the center of a large piece of blue fabric, held by actors along the edges and beneath it. The actors caused the fabric to move in ways that mimicked real water. Coupled with lighting effects (such as strobes for lightning), 3D projections of waves, and the sounds of thunder and rain – storms were successfully created.

An additional technical concept that really caught my attention was the explosion inside the Cave of the Grandfathers that simulated the tsunami wave which wiped out a civilization. Lots of pieces from the hidden upstage room suddenly were projected forward, under the power of a technical force I could not determine. It was either done

with the fly system pulling forward then going loose or there could have even been crew members back there pushing it manually. This show used a bright white light for death (Locaha), complimented with white makeup – similar to in *War Horse*. I enjoyed the turn table being used frequently – however I had trouble establishing its purpose in many cases. I believe this was part of the trouble with the clarity of transitions. Since it was rather uniform all the way around, it was difficult to see the designer’s intentions with it. The starry night used the turntable well. It rotated very slowly, giving the illusion that the sky was slowly shifting while the set remained still.

Lastly – it is worth noting that this was the one show so far where the cast acknowledge the technical team at the end of their bows. They all pointed toward the booth at the back of the stalls. It always touches my heart as a tech person when this happens!

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### *Rope*

Dir.: Roger Michell

Written by Patrick Hamilton

I felt that *Rope* was overall very well done. It utilized technical elements with a good balance for the size of the show, had a moving plot, and evoked a great deal of emotion/thought in me as I watched. Seeing a show performed in the round is always a treat as it makes all technical elements particularly challenging – performing for an audience that can see every angle. They definitely met the challenge.

The room was very cozy – the perfect size. In the heart of the room was an octagonal stage. To discuss theater in the round blocking, since there is no stage left or

stage right, it is common practice to use the hours of a clock for directions. For the purpose of this discussion, we will let the fire place be located at 12:00 and the door at 6:00. The room was very dimly lit, creating an elegant, but almost creepy mood.

As the show began, a laugh track and applause track was played as the protagonists - Wyndham Brandon and Charles Granillo – came on stage, knocked over a chair, and placed the body of Ronald Kentley into the chest in the center of the stage. This seemed to simulate the start of a magic trick. The show ended with the body popping up out of the center, through the top of the chest, with green streamers – sort of simulating the end of a magic trick. I am not sure what to make of this, but it seems that as a magic trick would happen, the audience would be stunned, fooled, and in the end shocked at the outcome. Or perhaps it enhanced the calloused attitude of Brandon and Granillo toward the cleverness of their murder skills, like that of a magician but no more significant. I suppose one can make the jump that this is what the designers were trying to do to the audience of this play.

Aside from the “magic trick,” the show started with the room extremely dark, with only the fire place lit and a bit of moonlight. The moonlight was softened nicely, shined down through the glass, translucent ceiling. The firelight was made slightly larger to evenly light the stage with the assistance of a large number of other lights all on with an intensity that seemed to be 5% or less. This is a common technique to mimic a low light scene while still lighting an entire stage. A challenge of lighting the round is that almost all light needs to be top light or high side light – since any side light that is even with the height of the actors will blind the audience. Since this production did not have audience seating directly at 6:00 or 12:00, there were bits of sidelight used there. This

dimly lit start accurately portrays the fear and darkness that comes over the boys after they have committed their crime. It suits their subsequent freaking out very well. Once the lights are turned on, a large chandelier is lit and the stage is filled with light – though still looks creepy with only an even wash of medium intensity semi-warm light.

Rupert appears first as a particularly slimy and creepy role. He seems to distance himself from the rest of the party – suspecting the boys of murder after finding the ticket that Ronald had been carrying. After the party is over, he returns claiming he forgot his cigarettes (which he did not), then stands the entire time off the main octagon portion of the stage, around 12:00 at the fireplace, while both boys are on the other side of the chest at 6:00. Their opposite staging helps to accent their positions – the boys fearing Rupert’s finding them out.

This play used sound very effectively to convey moods as well. Again – sound design in the round is very challenging. It must be taken into account that sound can reverberate off the back walls and cause strange sounding time delays for the actors or audience across the room. This was successfully avoided. As the show progressed, rain started – making the mood even creepier and on edge. Thunder was also used very effectively, fluctuating around the room with rumbles, just as a real storm would. Also, whenever there was a bit of tension about the murder or about what was in the chest, the fire crackling seemed to get louder. The loudness of the crackle seems to go along with the boys being so on edge – since when you are in this state of mind, small sounds easily startle you.

Dir.: Harold Prince

Music by Andrew Lloyd Webber

Lyrics by Charles Hart

I found this to be one of the most remarkable performances I have ever seen for a combination of reasons. For one thing, it is the one musical theater performance that has evoked the most emotion in me. I found myself so wrapped up in the story, being almost overcome with the emotion coming off the stage. Even more remarkable than this was the fact that this show was created in 1986 at Her Majesty's Theatre, and the technical elements have not been changed since then. With a design that is almost a quarter of a century old already and the quick pace that theater technology is advancing – it is astounding that this production still works so well. The tech at the time it was made must have been the most advanced, since it is still one of the more technically impressive plays I have seen.

I would need to write for about ten pages to do justice to all the technical elements that dramatically influenced the plot and how the audience viewed the production – so I will select those that were the most important. Since the design has not been changed in nearly 25 years, there are no moving lights, yet somehow the lighting design is one of the best I have ever seen. The play uses an astounding combination of gobo rotators, effects wheels, follow spot lights, and different types of fogs to create dramatic effects. These are used to create a magical/mystical look at appropriate places. In the scenes where The Phantom takes Christine into the catacombs beneath the opera house, the stage is covered in low lying fog. They ride in a set wagon that seems to be placed in a track and either motorized (remotely controlled) or pulled with cables along the stage floor extremely

smoothly. The low lying fog gives the illusion that it is actually in the water. The illusion of water is complimented by the moment when Raul jumps down into the water, falling into a trap door in the stage. (You could hear the thud of him hitting a pad if you listened carefully.) Another amazing set element in this scene is the candles. They rise out of the stage floor in a way that makes them seem to come from the mist. Lots of small doors in the stage floor allow them to pass through. The use of lifts for bringing up set pieces like this was quite advanced for the time this was made – and is still advanced today.

The low tech use of follow spot lights is also impressive. The play used six follow spots (which could have been less if moving lights were used). Two of the follow spots used even required dowsers – opaque plates that the operator holds in front before turning the lamp on or off to make the on or off look instant while the lamp ramps up or slowly glows out. A follow spot on stage (aimed from upstage right down at The Phantom as side light near the end of act II) is also used very well. Follow spots coming from on stage are rather rare.

One of the more impressive parts of the set was the highly complex fly system. I have come to the conclusion that it must have been partly computerized. I am unsure of whether this was an available option in 1986 or if it was added – but the speed, smoothness, and complexity showed that it was not just manual. I suppose it is possible that it was manual, but it would require a team of fly men. There were many scene changes, such as the one when the old theater auction becomes the modern day theater, where the entire stage is transformed by mainly flying scenery. I did see some crew members walking along the catwalk above the front edge of the stage for certain

moments, such as when the massive curtain that is up at top of show is split and falls down. The part of the flying that I am fairly sure was machine run was the chandelier and the “pod” that The Phantom is lowered in. These move very quickly, smoothly, and with a lot of force – something that a human operator probably would not handle. Especially when the chandelier falls at the end of act I, it would be crazy for a person to try to control it manually. The chandelier was raised and lowered in a very creative way – first hoisted upward, then upward and outward (toward the audience), ending above the front of the audience. When it fell, it simply went in reverse, swaying away from the audience toward the stage. All of the chandelier movement coupled with the fact that it lit up in different colors, made it a remarkable piece in itself. The Phantom’s “pod” that he rides down in after the rooftop scene blends right in with the proscenium, then all of a sudden begins moving – surprising the audience in a great way.

The pyrotechnics of the production were also quite amazing. They made the Phantom look more magical and mysterious each time they were used. One moment features approximately 8 foot tall flames shooting out of the stage floor. In the final scene, The Phantom shoots fire balls from his scepter at Raul. This too is an effect that would be just as remarkable if the play opened yesterday. In The Masquerade scene, the Phantom seems to vanish in a burst of flame then appear way upstage, opposite where he was. This is done with costume trickery and flash paper. While the audience is blinded by a burst of flash paper and a cloud of smoke, the Phantom quickly made his costume hidden, showing only its black backside which blended in with the darkness well. He appeared to be gone. Then a second costume appeared, most likely worn by a general ensemble member.

The sound design was also very well executed. When The Phantom was meant to be all around the room, his voice was focused coming from every back corner of the room as well. It was so convincing that I turned to see if he was behind me at least two times. The constant use of reverb also successfully portrayed the feeling of a big, old opera house.

An additional moment worth mentioning is after Christine performs one of her first shows, and the audience is given a perspective of sitting backstage. The curtain opens, and the audience sees Christine bowing as she faces upstage and a conductor faces her. This is essentially a mirror image of what would typically be seen from where the audience sits. It was very clever to reverse the perspectives like this to portray Christine's point of view.

The final elements I wish to discuss are those that show the age of this production. The most noticeable was that of the set wagons. Whenever a big scene change was happening, it was very loud on stage from the wagon wheels rolling along the stage floor that is covered in trap doors and other bumps and ridges. In newer plays, silent casters would be used or all wagons would be placed in tracks and operated all by machinery, crawling smoothly along. Big, loud, clunky casters are a thing of the past. Also, in The Masquerade scene, the construction of the stairs was easily seen, taking away from the wow factor of the scene. I was still extremely impressed by it regardless. If you looked carefully at the stairs, you could see wooden support pieces behind the steps – something that looks extremely out of place on what are supposed to be grandiose stone steps most likely.

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*Pains of Youth*

Dir.: Katie Mitchell

Written by Ferdinand Bruckner

Adapted by Martin Crimp

This has been the first journal that I have waited an extra 24 hours to write because I wanted to let it sink in a bit more and was curious as to what the class had to offer. I found it to be one of the more riveting productions of the trip so far, and definitely one of my favorites. I adore the style in which it was done, using the black box feel that I am so used to calling home at Todd Theater. I left the show feeling the way I often feel leaving a Todd show – thinking to myself, “Wow, that was great!... I am so confused!”

I must start off as I always do, commenting on my immediate feelings upon entering the theater. There was a small stage with a single open room. Without any light fixtures other than practicals on stage, I knew that there was most likely going to be a lot of dark, eerie moods. There was also a row of windows near the stage right ceiling – probably a source of light to be seen later. Three practical fixtures hung in the center of the stage, along with a sconce and a few table lamps. The room was dressed very sparsely, with an institutional feel. Most strangely – all the furniture was covered in plastic sheets. It was as if the room was uninhabited for some time and covered up to be kept clean/dust-free. The sterile environment worked toward the institutional feel. The theme that we had discussed in class prior to seeing the show – about youth being isolated from society, lacking a place to fit in – can be supported by this institutional look. Being kept in an institution suggests being isolated from society – unable to fit in

for a reason. Going slightly against this theme though was the fact that the room was slightly dingy and dirty – perhaps implying that youth are somehow tainted and that is why they are isolated.

The first thing we saw after the lights dimmed was a bunch of people in black suits entering and peeling the plastic off everything. They were dressed for modern times, even though it is supposedly taking place in 1923. With them in the room, we also heard a sort of zapping sound, like electricity. The lights were all back light, which always creates a creepy, evil mood – making everyone appear in silhouette. The light was also a bright white color. It came from the windows, inside the book shelf, and behind the doors that were on the stage left and right walls. When they black suits exited, normal light restored and characters had entered the room, wearing period appropriate costumes. I will not get into the countless themes in great depth, but I will speculate on what some of these technical elements meant for the themes.

The frequent use of this blinding white light with the eerie electricity zaps, coupled with the entering of the black suits modifying the scene, to me implies that there is some sort of experiment taking place. I admit this idea is not my original. I heard a classmate speculate on it, and I have not been able to settle on anything else. The question is – who is the experiment on, and what is it testing? It seems that the experiment is being run by the black suits, since they are the ones manipulating the scene and seem to be able to stop and start it at their will. They also are constantly taking things out of plastic bags and bagging whatever they remove from the set – as one would with evidence from a crime scene, or more appropriate here – scientific data from a laboratory experiment. There are a couple moments when the actors peer out into the

audience briefly, almost so brief that they are hardly noticeable. This is the element that makes me wonder if the experiment is on the audience or on the actors in the actual scenes. It seems more logical that the later is correct.

The question of what the experiment is seeking to determine relates more to the general themes of the production. The way I saw it was that most of the interruptions by the black suits were enablers for the other characters losing control. The process can possibly be viewed as the black suits somehow symbolizing the rest of the world – enabling the youth to be how they are but doing nothing to help them.

The lighting and sound of the production went extremely well with the eerie themes of youth isolation, sins, euthanasia, etc. These elements are all every creepy and possibly even taboo. The sound send shivers down my spine, and I noticed it doing the same to those around me. There was a single musician (if you want to even call it music) using a violin bow on metal strings and springs, making squeaky, creaky sounds. He also played odd sounding piano pieces and violin music at times. The lighting for the show became increasingly dark and dreary as the characters became more hopeless and helpless, either turning to the release of death to avoid their isolation, or somehow finding a way to be assimilated into the rest of society (into the Bourgeois culture).

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*Oliver!*

Dir.: Rupert Goold

Written by Lionel Bart

I watched *Oliver!* with a perspective that I have not yet experienced in my life of theater. This was because it is a show that I have worked on (as a percussionist in the pit

orchestra in high school) and had the opportunity to see with a different director and design team. Having been extremely familiar with the show since I saw it a great deal throughout this process, I was able to focus more on what was different and how tech was improved in this professional production, rather than getting caught up and confused in a story I was unfamiliar with (like I usually am!). Most people I spoke to were dissatisfied at the acting, specifically Oliver's. As someone who is not familiar with acting (unless it is miserably bad), I did not notice this, so it was a great show to me.

The show had fantastic lighting, as expected since the designer was that of *War Horse*. It was obvious that it was the same designer because of her frequent use (I would say, a slight overuse) of haze and fog. This and her use of warm, high above the stage back light were characteristic of effects seen in *War Horse*. I am not quite sure at the look she was going for with the use of thick haze. Light beams popped out in a significant way that seemed nonsensical. There were two high side lights used to light the conductor in the pit, and these lights stuck out so much when they should have been completely hidden since they had nothing to do with the actual production. One other lighting effect that confused me was the beams shining through the upstage windows in the first scene. They were in all sorts of different directions. If they were supposed to be sun rays, they would need to be in one direction. It looked really cool, but did not make sense. Late in the church, we see the rays used again, but this time in the same directions- so I am not quite sure what Constable was going for. I am being picky because I can be, but overall the design was simply outstanding, and I certainly could not do any better!

I am becoming quite jaded to these amazing sets, which is probably a good thing because now when I enter the professional world of theater, I will not look like a fool, in awe over all of the high tech production effects in use today. Nonetheless, I am going to comment on the effects with a fresh eye. The set was truly spectacular for lots of reasons. The set designer did an amazing job portraying the cluttered streets of 19<sup>th</sup> century London – with recognizable locations such as St. Paul’s Cathedral and London Bridge. More impressively, they used a lift that spanned the length of center stage, left to right. The lift served as a single purpose and did not really change at all. Usually lifts represent intense scene changes (such as in *Billy Elliot* when we went from a bedroom to a kitchen to a dance hall by means of lifts). Here, the lift was always a street road surface, with a manhole in it that led down into the lair of the thieves. When the lift went up, the lair was exposed (brought on with wagons from both sides smoothly), but the street above still functioned as a street for actors to use. It was simply as if the camera that was focused on the street level tilted down to let us see beneath it at the same time. In the end, the street surface is also that of London Bridge, with an additional set piece flown in and placed in front of it to make the arches and walls of the bridge. In the bridge scene, there is also great use of low lying fog (just like in *Phantom of the Opera*) to give the illusion of the Thames flowing under it. The one problem I had with it was that the fog went right into the audience. I worked for a company a few summers ago that manufactures fog products, and I know they are usually quite hazardous to breathe, with a level of carcinogens in them. I suppose there are safe products out there for a price that such a great theater can pay, but I was still paranoid.

The song *Who Will Buy* is and has always been my all time favorite musical theater piece. It is filled with absolutely breathtaking harmonies and rounds. The scene was even more spectacular here because it is meant to take place in Bloomsbury – and seemed to obviously be a set construction of Cartwright Gardens, the street our hotel is on!

The last concept which deserves mentioning is the spectacular back drop of the set – the sky. It was simply a gauze, or more opaque type of scrim, with a deeply texture sky painting with clouds on it. Constable did an amazing job lighting it from all sides with the perfect balance of colors and gobo rotators (probably built into moving lights) so give it the illusion of the changing sky with moving clouds. The sky changed from an eerie green (top of act II), to a happy bright blue (*Who Will Buy*), and even a night sky for the end. The effect of passing clouds was also amplified with fog, moving laterally from stage right to stage left. This was most likely done with fans on the stage right side and a formula of fog fluid that produces fog equal to the weight of air so it does not drop or rise at all. This show must go through gallons and gallons of fog/haze/snow fluid for every show – something very expensive! The newest fog machines can fill a stage of that size with a single unit operating at full speed in under a minute.

I also must comment on the backstage tour before the show. It was fascinating to see the history in the old theater. Every theater has bits of history to it that are not obvious at first glance. The story of royalty coming to see the shows in their separate boxes is an example of this here. At Todd Theater on campus, most people do not know that the theater itself used to be the dining hall, when Todd Union was the student union. The current Todd Lobby used to have a bar in it! Other truly amazing backstage views of

the theater included the old hydraulic lifts under the stage. This is a perfect example of old yet reliable technology still in use today. These lifts were used during the show and operated just as the new *Billy Elliot* lifts did.

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*The Inspector Calls*

Dir.: Stephen Daldry

Written by Joseph Priestly

*The Inspector Calls* was an overall enjoyable and impressive production. It used only conventional lights, from what I could see, as well as mostly simple scenery elements and sound effects. I believe I have said this in previous entries, but it is the shows that have the most simple technical elements yet still enthrall me that are by far the most impressive.

At first glance, the stage seemed rather normal – with a wooden deck and a red house curtain. Upon further inspection, the wooden decking down stage of the house curtain was falling apart – peeling up stage right and down stage left. There was also a telephone booth collapsed on the ground in front of house, stage right. The house curtain was also very dingy and was paged slightly stage left. This was quite odd because it toyed with the concept of what a proscenium theater always is. The show starts once the curtain is up typically – but here, the curtain itself seemed to be part of the show.

Once the curtain rose, there were immediately lots of additional elements that disrupted the regular proscenium theater “rules.” For one, the upstage drop (the sky) was intentionally too small for the set. The action was taking place in a small house on stage with the wall facing the audience even closed at the start. A closed fourth wall is extremely confusing! The difference between the house on stage and the area outside of the house was explained in the program. The time in the house was in the early 1900s while outside the house was in present times when the play was adapted, in the 1940s. All people outside the house were essentially from the future looking back on something that happened in the past, or of people who were living in the past.

The overall themes of the play include being aware of small things that can have great influences in the bigger picture of someone else’s life. The actions depicted tell the story of a family that has caused a series of events all together that lead to a young woman committing suicide. This is a very dark and unhappy subject. The play also takes place (outside the house) just after the war. The set very accurately depicts the dark implications of this story – with lots of smoke, a house located in a pile of rubble, and real rain/mist falling from the sky (above the stage). The lighting is also successful in portraying a dark, dreary, stormy scene. We are introduced to The Inspector early on, as he enters the world from present time. He seems to be speaking directly to the audience as well as to the children (also on the present time), as if trying to teach them from the mistakes that the family and its generation has made. His role as such a critical character is brought out very well by using a foot light, aimed up at his face from the stage right edge. It is at the proper angle to create minimal amounts of shadows on his face and cast his full height shadow on the front of the house, portraying his overbearing nature on the

family. The other characters are top lit – just like people would be in an interrogation room!

Other odd interactions are those of the community members on stage. They enter from beyond the back drop off stage right from a big rectangular opening, casting bright white light onto the stage. It is as if this is an entrance from another world – the real world. They can represent the people of present times, meant to learn from the story and judge the family. The Inspector also has some extremely peculiar interactions with the audience near the end of the show. He yells “stop!” and everyone on stage holds still, as work lights come on (essentially an even wash of no color front light). He then addresses the audience. Here, blankets are also given from The Inspector to the family. Rain also resumes. The actors wrapping themselves in blankets give them a sad, desperate appearance, stripped of their ridiculous high class living at this moment and depressed. Here, the house also is lifted up out of its roots (using a lift on the upstage end of it). I was clued into this happening by the popping sounds heard just before it occurred. These were most likely the sound of the safety mechanisms being disengaged. Typically, for an effect like this, pins will be positioned in a location to hold the set piece from activating mistakenly at the wrong time, with actors inside it. The pins will be removed via use of a solenoid – a coil of electrical wire. When current is passed through the wire, it creates a magnetic field that pulls in a direction perpendicular to the wrapping of the coil, in turn yanking a metal pin out of its safety position, making the set piece ready to move.

I felt that the “exploding” house could be seen as representative of the foundations, which the family was built on, being completely uprooted and destroyed. Just as symbolic though was the house going back to its initial position once the family

feels they are no longer in danger – reimagining the fragments of the story to be something of a hoax, made up to embarrass them. The rain stops, and all seems normal. This bothered me because even if the girl did not kill herself, or even exist as a single person, all the events that took place were still actual occurrences! The magistrates of the family were still wrong and should learn from these exposures. The family is simply lucky if there was not actually a victim as they thought, but should still feel distraught and motivated to make things right and change their ways. Honest guilt is only felt by Eric and Sheila in the end. The rest of the family goes back into the house, closes the fourth wall, and draws the window curtains – back to their fake, blind world, where everything is great and they are good people in their own eyes once again. Except for the very end, when the phone off stage rings, and the hospital calls to say that a suicide has just arrived, as if their inquiry had anticipated a truth that still needed to be explained. No one gets off scott free in crimes against the soul, not even the nouveau self-appointed aristocracy.

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*A Daughter's a Daughter*

Dir.: Roy Marsden

Written by Agatha Christie

This production was an example of a director and design team using minimal technical elements to still tell an enthralling story via good old fashion concepts of theater. It was immediately clear upon entering the theater that the lighting was set up for realistic lighting, what might be expected in the living room set. There were no scrollers or movers – only conventional fixtures. The stage was set up as a living room, with a

fireplace, furniture pieces, and classical art on the walls. A record player sat in the corner of the room as well.

It was clearly a deliberate design / directorial choice to keep the tech low key. This can be viewed as an element to support the daughter Sarah's dislike of change. A very dynamic technical production would be confusing and spoil the necessary effect of the opening scene. The theater was sort of black box proscenium with what appeared to be minimal high tech capabilities – making it a good fit for the sociological situation that the play was set to explore.

For this show, we were seated in the second row. The stage was on the same plane as the front row, so we were very close to the action taking place. I particularly enjoyed this seating because it was as if you yourself were placed within the production, getting a feel for the emotion being emitted from a very close perspective and being a part of the lighting that exposed the actors. When I am close to being on stage, it allows me to look up and see exactly how the lighting designers are working their magic.

The designers seemed to be going for a couple time elapse effects during the play. The main, most obvious leap in time was that which occurred during interval. During this time, I believe over a year is meant to have passed. The house has been redecorated with modern art and a bar set has been introduced. It is made evident that these changes are a result of the mother trying to get more out of life after the daughter has stopped her from marrying Richard.

The main lighting dynamic that was visible was the setting/rising sun. There was a window on the stage left wall. Here, I believe scrollers were utilized to show more subtly show the change in day. There were moments when it seemed like someone hit a

switch and turned off high noon sun and turned on sunset. I was also a bit confused by these effects because it seemed that more than a day was meant to have passed at times when the sunlight would stay the same. There was also a changing light behind the glass panes on the upstage wall. This seemed to replicate a street light or front light outside the house, because it was always a bright, fluorescent type color.

I felt that the stagnant nature of the lighting supported the ending. It was simply not a happy ending, with a number of unknowns left for us to ponder. We do not know if Sarah is going to leave Lawrence for Jerry or not. Her mother, Ann, is left alone, something she has feared at the outset of the play, and we do now know that she will probably never meet someone and will be left to end life by herself. The lights at the ending are just as they were at the beginning – a stagnant living room. Though so much has changed, we are shown that Ann is right back where she started, only this time with no one.

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*The Misanthrope*

Dir.: Thea Sharrock

Written by Moliere

Adapted by Martin Crimp

This theater gave a very high class feel. The ceiling/chandelier and proscenium were lit up with moving lights focused on them, set to a rich, gold color. This was clearly a design choice rather than simply part of the house lights. The theater was also adorned with chandeliers and gold painted wall trim. My seat was in the front row and against the side of the theater, so seeing the stage in full was difficult; however, it was possible for

me to look up at the lights over the stage. This is a compromise I am willing to make, once a while, so I was still satisfied with my partial view seat.

The high class look of the house was carried out to the set, once the curtain opened. We saw a hotel room with high ceilings, fancy molding along the walls, full height windows, paintings, mirrors, and chandeliers. These were design choices to support Jennifer's large living style, as a famous movie star.

A significant lighting effect that I was able to notice from such close seats was the subtle color shifting to support moods of the scene and the character speaking. Whenever there was a hint of tension, specifically someone quarrelling with Jennifer like Alceste or Marcia, hints of orange and/or pink top lights would fade up. If Jennifer was becoming upset, such as when Alceste makes her nearly bust into tears, more blue colors are used – probably meant to evoke pity from the audience for her. There was also a constant use of very low level blue top/back light. This type of lighting does not hit anyone's front at all, so the effect is only seen in filling in shadows created by the actors or lighting parts of the set that are in the background. It created a slightly chilly feel. I believe this portrayed the cold feeling of the world the actors are living in, opposite of what Alceste wants for Jennifer and himself. In the world shown, life is filled with hints of deceit and betrayal – something seen as severely flawed in the eyes of Alceste, but perhaps loved by Jennifer and her friends, who recognize how entertaining her lies and faux behavior can be.

In the final party scene, the designer very successfully utilizes candle light. The actors carry 32 candles onstage, which is plenty to actually light the stage. This created the exact feeling the director wanted. This was a candle-lit party, and that is exactly what was visible. There was a bit of low level lighting from the front sides of the stage, to fill

in some of the actors' faces, but without spoiling the shadowy parts of the set. This calculated effect was not evident unless you were looking for it – which is the main reason it was so successful. I would also like to comment on the challenge of having so much fire on stage. I am surprised this was allowed by whoever is responsible for the safety in this theater. With so many large, baggy costumes around, as well as wooden scenery – the fire was quite a hazard. I would expect that flame proofing was used to minimize risks here. In the US, theaters are required to use flame retardant paint, which causes scenery to simply char and crumble rather than bursting into flames like a dried out Christmas tree.

One other moment I wish to discuss is Alceste's interruption of the final party scene, once everyone has started dancing. I was wondering if this dance scene would fade to a black out, as I looked up to see if the lights had begun to dim. Instead I saw the opposite. Most of the lights seemed to turn on to less than 5% intensity. This means one thing usually: The designer is pre-warming the lights. When a light turns on, it takes a bit less than one second to go from 0% to 100%. If a designer wants a look to happen instantaneously, lights are often pre-warmed to a low intensity in a previous lighting cue, so when the 100% moment happens, they are ready to turn on quicker. Sure enough, moments later, Alceste knocked over a cart as all the lights were bumped to full. The lighting here shocked the audience, along with the music stopping and all the actors on stage freezing in their steps. This made everyone listen intently to Alceste speaking to Jennifer about his plan to take her away to the country and start a new life. We are then left to react to Jennifer disliking his plan, and then being forgiven by all the other actors whom she had betrayed. The final look we are left with is a fade of all the lights into a

momentary single light on Jennifer, immediately fading to black. This final brief moment seems to say that Jennifer will remain the center of attention, whether among friends or enemies.

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*The Power of Yes*

Dir.: Angus Jackson

Written by David Hare

At this point in the London trip, I am admittedly becoming more and more jaded to amazing theater and finding it more difficult to appreciate shows to their full extent. With that said – *The Power of Yes* was not my favorite. I feel that it could have been more enjoyable if I was able to follow the storyline a bit more, but due to my lack of up-to-date knowledge of the recent financial crisis, the events that were constantly referenced were somewhat foreign to me. The intended audience was most likely supposed to be knowledgeable on this subject.

Other than the fact that the play depicted the story of the financial crisis being told to a writer by all sorts of people, including financial workers involved in the events – it seemed to me like it did not necessarily need to be on a stage. The production elements that are available to be used on stage in order to support a play were not really needed here – shown by the lack of a set. The first thing that happens in the production is the audience being addressed by an actor, being told that this is a story – not a play. This supports my theory that this perhaps did not need to be on stage; however, there some light cues and other advanced technical elements that are worth mentioning.

The most impressive technical element used was an LED (light emitting diode) screen which spanned the width of the stage and could be raised or lowered, with a full height that was about a third of the proscenium's height. With LED screens hanging without a background, all we see is a grid of tiny light bulbs hanging. This allows it to also act as a scrim, which we can see through when lit properly. One particularly memorable use of the LED screen was in the first scene when we see numbers and letters scrolling around. We are reminded of the tickers that can be seen around Wall Street in New York City. This was a very successful effect created by the video designer. Other uses of the LED screen included showing us pictures of a person or location referred to in the story as well as a date of an event being discussed. A conventional color projector was used against the back wall of the stage, with similar intents.

A set with no back or sides (only a black glossy floor) creates a special need for a lighting designer to create the "walls" for each scene. The wide open stage creates a bleak, cold, desolate mood – something that was a design choice meant to evoke these emotions in the audience regarding the unfortunate matters of the financial crisis. The dark colored business suits that all wore showed a similar intention in the costume design. With this stage, scenes were lit in a way that would often cause the individuals on stage to "pop out" while no walls were obviously lit. This can be done with finely focused lights that are at an angle which only hits the actor on stage, creating a massive shadow on the floor around them but nothing more. In some scenes, actors were hit from five different angles, creating a sort of star pattern of shadows around them, but still not lighting walls.

In the final scene, numerous design elements are introduced for the first time – telling the audience that this scene is particularly important. In this scene, the writer essentially wraps up what he has learned throughout the story with a financial worker. A set piece of the NYC skyline is flown in near the upstage wall, and is lit up with fiber optics and LEDs inside it. Against the black glossy floor, we see the reflection of it on the dark stage. A table also rises out of the floor downstage. One actor is seated at each end of this long table, with a blue light cross focused on him (meaning that the stage right actor is lit from stage left, etc.). This is the first use of colored light in the production.

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*Every Good Boy Deserves Favour*

Dir.: Felix Barrett and Tom Morris

Written by Tom Stoppard and Andre Previn

This production was definitely a great finish to the trip. It was by far my favorite (though I know I have said that several times already, but that's the way with good theater – it may be for all time, but it is also for the moment!). *Every Good Boy* had a perfect combination of technical elements and an enjoyable plot, with numerous deeper meanings that left the audience reflecting on the story. The play successfully utilizes a full orchestra on stage! This is truly an amazing element – one that makes the play stand out from all the others. It is true that lots of other shows integrate live music – but this show used a symphonic orchestra as a physical part of the production and the plot. A few members of the orchestra even double as actors.

The audience is first presented with the orchestra playing on stage as the mentally unstable Ivanov conducts along to himself while playing his triangle. As he dances, it is

almost humorous. Most people laughed at it. I felt that while this was amusing, there was an eerie feeling to the whole situation because it was fairly obvious that Ivanov is mentally challenged and is acting in a sort of deranged state – something serious and not necessarily to be funny. This is confirmed when the doctor enters and we realize that the orchestra is only in his head. The orchestra continues motions of their playing, but the sounds disappears – an amazing effect. It is very confusing to one's senses to watch the full orchestra playing but no sound coming from them, but no more confusing, perhaps, than its playing full sound in Ivanov's head when no one else seems capable of hearing it.

The orchestra is also utilized to underscore different happenings in the plot when the main character, Alexander, and his son, Sacha, are shown dealing with the traumatic life of Alexander being locked up for slander in Soviet Russia and refusing to apologize or say "admit" that he was wrong. Another use of the orchestra which throws a wrench in Ivanov's mental illness is the fact that the doctor at the hospital is a violinist in an orchestra. This is used as a humorous element for the audience, confusing Ivanov as he tries to realize that there is no orchestra while his doctor carries a violin and rushes off to rehearsal.

This show has some truly impressive technical elements, including the use of a rotating stage that the full orchestra sits on. This presents a multitude of challenges to the technical design of the production. For one thing, the orchestra members all had music stand lights that were controlled from the lighting console, programmed in the booth at the back of the stalls (with the rest of the stage lighting). This means that they were all wired through circuits that had to be connected to the turn table. I am sure this was some sort of technology at work which I am unaware of, but it seems like a huge challenge to

wire upwards of 30 lights, each requiring an individual circuit, on a platform that spins. Seems like a big tangle of wires under the stage to me! There were also lots of lights focused on the turntable, including focused on each specific orchestra member – used to accent them as they stood up to represent members of Alexander’s life story to Ivanov. There were additional lights focused on the white pathway that leads through the orchestra, across the stage. Often, as the turntable rotated, lights would stay focused in their proper location – meaning that the lights were moving at the exact speed and precision of the turntable. This is an extremely complex effect!

One additional moment I would like to mention is that when the orchestra exits at the end of the production. I was always taught that one of the first rules of lighting design is to hide the source from the audience (i.e., do not blind the audience). As the orchestra is leaving, there are fixtures along the floor on the upstage walls of the stage that are aimed directly at the audience, on a full intensity! As the stage is filled with fog and the musicians exit one by one, we are blinded and can hardly see what is happening. This is a very dramatic effect, and says so much more about the meaning of the play and what constitutes reality in our heads. I am sure there is a lot more to the meaning than I can see, but it seemed to me to make a statement about how society (the audience) can be blind to what is meant to be under control, such as the government (the production).

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*Reflections on Backstage Meetings / Tours*

During the London trip, I was able to schedule meetings with some back stage personnel at a couple theaters. I did this by simply going to the stage doors and asking the person manning the desk if I could speak with someone from the tech crew,

explaining to them who I was and what I was looking for. I did this at almost every theater we went to, and most sort of laughed at me or insisted that they had not a minute of free time (hard to believe, if you ask me!). The National Theatre and The Royal Court Theatre (home of *The Priory*) both agreed to let me meet someone for a private tour and to discuss careers in stage management and lighting – my two passions.

The National Theatre gave me the email addresses of *The Habit of Art's* stage manager and the head of stage management for the entire theater (essentially the equivalent of the King of England in the stage management world). I was able to schedule a meeting with the head of stage management, Mr. Eric Lumsden. He flat out told me that I could not get a job there right now (which I knew since I am just graduating and the National Theatre is the most renowned, high paying theater in the UK) – but he agreed to give me a tour and sit and discuss my career with me. The meeting was extremely fascinating, allowing me to see the stage of the show we did not see in the black box – *Our Class*, and the rehearsal hall for *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour*. He told me that if I wanted to work somewhere like the National Theatre, I would be better off choosing a focus in theater rather than being active in all departments as I am now. With such a large theater, they need specialists in each area, rather than jacks of all trades. I am not sure of what to do with this advice, but it is food for thought.

The Royal Court Theatre was much smaller and somewhere I would more easily fit in with my current education and experience. The Deputy Production Manager (DPM) who I met with, Tariq Rifate, gave me a tour of *The Priory* set and showed me how all the awesome effects were done (including the rain and the blood). He gave me tour of the rest of the building as well, including an additional, smaller black box theater

upstairs. He told me that someone like me could definitely apply and get an internship with them, and possibly even a job if they needed someone (pending me getting a working visa in the UK). I am still planning to try to attain work in New York City after college since it is more local to me; however, I will definitely keep The Royal Court Theatre in my mind as an option.