

STEPHENS COLLEGE
THA 227 STAGE MANAGEMENT I

Lecture #2: Script Analysis

Handouts: Sample *She Loves Me* script analysis and page 1 of script / Sample character, costume, and prop plots and lighting and sound cue lists.

I. What is "script analysis?"

"Script analysis" is an examination of the play and the breaking it down into its component parts:

- A. Characters
- B. Costumes
- C. Scenery
- D. Lighting
- E. Props
- F. Sound
- G. Orchestra
- H. Other special effects (pyrotechnics, rain, etc.)

II. Creating the script analysis:

- A. Read the play. This first reading should be for content only. You won't make specific notes at this time; your goal is to get a "feel" for the script.
- B. Read it again, making notes on specific items called for by the playwright.
 - 1. Be aware of stage directions furnished by the author as opposed to those based on the original production, which are the work of the original stage manager, director, and designers, not that of the playwright. Examples:

- a. *At that moment, in limbo, a spotlight hits SERGEANT WATERS. He is dressed in a well-creased uniform, wearing a helmet liner and standing at parade-rest, facing the audience. The light around him, however, is strange--it is blue-gray like the past. The light around DAVENPORT and WILKIE abates somewhat. Dialogue is continuous. – Charles Fuller, A Soldier’s Play*
- b. *The play takes place in a dining room or rather, many dining rooms. The same dining room furniture serves all: a lovely burnished, shining dining room table; two chairs, with arms, at either end; two more, armless, along each side; several additional matching chairs, placed so as to define the walls of the room. Upstage somewhere, a sideboard, with a mirror over it.*

Upstage, Left, a swinging door leads to the pantry and kitchen. Upstage, Right, an archway leads to the front hall and the rest of the house. But we should see no details from these other rooms. Both entrances should be masked in such a way as to suggest a limbo outside the dining room. – A. R. Gurney, The Dining Room

2. Each stage manager must find his or her own way of formatting the analysis; one method is to take a legal-sized sheet of paper – turned sideways – and make several columns. The leftmost column should be labeled “Act/Scene/Page #/Line”, followed by columns for each of the above-mentioned categories and ending with “Special Notes” (see ***She Loves Me*** handout).
2. Whatever format the stage manager chooses, the script analysis should be easily comprehended by anyone familiar with the production (This applies to *all* paperwork).
3. Be aware of items that are implied rather than overt. Examples might be:
 - a. a character has the line, “I’ve never seen so wet a summer.” This might imply:
 - i. An overcast day / lightning (lighting)

- ii. thunder and rain sound effects. (sound)
 - iii. realistic rain seen through the window (special effects)
 - iv. a raincoat and galoshes (wardrobe)
 - v. wet hair (wardrobe or hair)
 - vi. umbrella (props)
- b. In scene one of *She Loves Me*, Arpad sings, "We're stylish". What can be inferred from this?
- i. The shop interior is elegantly dressed and lighted.
 - ii. The shop employees are fashionably dressed.
 - iii. The shop's customers, ditto.
- c. A character asks, "May I pour you some tea? What props are implied?"
- i. teapot and cups
 - ii. napkins
 - iii. sugar and cream
 - iv. tray?
 - v. spoons
 - vi. "tea"
 - vii. materials which might be needed to clean up spilled "tea".
- C. Prepare detailed prop and costume plots, set descriptions, and lighting and sound cue lists. (**handouts**)
1. These plots and lists will enable you to anticipate conflicts and other problems:

- a. Quick changes. This will also help you decide where and when you will need quick change booths.
- b. Items which cross departmental lines. The classic example of this is a hat which is worn onstage, taken off, and thrown at another actor. Is it a costume or a prop? Which department and designer is responsible for it?
- c. Traffic jams. Are 4 women wearing hoop skirts expected to exit simultaneously through a 3' wide doorway?
- d. Props which will be subject to extraordinary abuse. Examples include:
 - i. The aforementioned hat
 - ii. doors which will be repeatedly slammed.
 - iii. props which will be knocked over or thrown.
- e. live animals
 - i. may require state or city permits
 - ii. sanitation concerns
 - iii. Equity and/or IA contracts may contain limitations.
 - iv. whether you're required to or not, work with the local SPCA or Humane Society chapter and follow their guidelines.
- f. Potential safety hazards:
 - i. one of the biggest differences between amateurs and professionals is their attitudes toward safety. The amateur looks at a situation and thinks, "we've never had a problem with that." The professional thinks, "we haven't had a problem with that yet."
 - ii. this is a professional training program; I expect all of you to take a professional attitude toward theatre safety.

iii. safety issues to address in script analysis:

(1) live flame.

Directors love live flame. Live flame is extremely dangerous. If you can't dissuade the director from using live flame, you must address the following issues:

- Do you need permits from the city fire marshall and/or the campus safety office (if on a college campus)?
- You will need to assign a stagehand or ASM to monitor the flame. This person should have no other duties while the flame is live and should have direct line of sight contact at all times. This person will need a fire extinguisher.
- Are there fire extinguishers on both sides of the stage? Have they been recently charged and inspected? Do the stagehands and ASM's know how to use them?
- How close will the flame be to curtains (both stage and decorative) and/or large frilly costumes?
- Where will the materials be stored?
- Is there an insurance issue? Consult with the producer or business manager.

(2) Pyrotechnics and lasers. All of the same considerations apply as with live flame with the addition (usually) of a state licensing requirement.

(3) Firearms.

- will the scenes be blocked in a manner consistent with standard firearms safety practice?
- what firearms will be used?

- Is there a qualified weapons master?
- Do the police need to be notified? (always a good idea in any case)
- Where will the firearms be stored?
- Is there a licensing requirement?
 - Is there an insurance issue? Consult with the producer or business manager.

(4) Will any actors be flown?

- who will rig this?
- Who will *operate* this? If not the rigging contractor, who will train the operators?
- Is there an insurance issue? Consult with the producer or business manager.