## Red Riding Hood - 12/28

One aspect of this performance that really struck me was the subtle but omni-present embrace of the sexual undertones which underlie so many of the archetypal fairy tales. In this version of the play, feminine virtue is attacked on two points - the woodsman and the wolf. This surprised me a bit, because in the versions of the story I know, Red Riding Hood's mother is barely a character, and has no sexual interest in the woodsman.

By adding innuendo about the woodsman's large axe at the beginning, the author of the play reveals the dominant masculine threat towards the entirely-female society of Red's family. The entire woods fiasco is precipitated by the fact that the girls' usually-chaste mother accepts a date with this outside threat, making it so that she could not bring food to her own mother - nourishing the matriarchy.

is less overtly sexual, the conversation in the stomach did mention her getting thrown onto the bed.

Finally, the huntsman reveals himself to be less of a threat to the women of the story when he reveals his weapon of choice to be much smaller, and his profession much more benign. While he does cut the wolf open, this play is carefully constructed so that what is usually an act of violence is instead one of compassion for the life in all things. He does not kill the wolf in what would be an act of solitary dominance. Instead, a group of mixed genders works together to lull the wolf to sleep before the woodsman operates. This corrupts the ideals of masculinity even further, allowing the group to succeed instead of a single alpha male. Finally, the woodsman tames the wolf. The unruly male threat is controlled, while the other possible threat is revealed to be tame already. The story then ends as the matrilineage is reaffirmed when Violet swears to make more time for her daughters, and the sisters solve their differences. The family unit becomes united once more, regardless of whether or not the woodsman/veterinarian will join it. The women are strong in their own right, as the mother has shown herself able to hoist her axe in defense of her daughters, and the daughters have the fortitude and cunning to best the odds in their own ways. Though they can be helped by a man, they do not need him.

Antony and Cleopatra - 12/28

I really enjoyed this production of Antony and Cleopatra. To me, one of the most interesting aspects was the way in which Cleopatra was portrayed - as entirely apart from a noble queen. While this is definitely the general gist of the play as it is written, I believe that this particular director emphasized that aspect even more, in part through her opposition to Octavia.

Seeing this production was interesting for me, because I had seen it once before, also with a Cleopatra who fell outside of the regulations of conventional beauty. While this one

I thought that was incredible! Having ridden horses for about 6 years of my childhood, I was intensely impressed by the puppet-work in the horses. They looked and sounded so incredibly lifelike. Obviously, an intense amount of time went into studying horses' movement, behaviors, and sounds so that the actors could be trained accordingly. It was also amazing to me how they actually instilled Joey and Topthorn with distinct personalities. Even their appearances were different: with Joey being shorter and stockier, it was obvious that he had some draft horse blood as well as thoroughbred. Overall, the use of the animal puppets in the play fascinated me.

Other than horses, the only animals to be uses as puppets were birds. All three types of birds used had extremely different purposes and mechanisms. The play begins with a few circling song-birds, interestingly echoed in B 's opening background sounds. The next bird introduced into the play is the goose that lives on the family's farm. This goose is given almost as much personality as the horses have, as it pecks the drunken father and serves as comic relief each time the door gets slammed into its beak. Finally, crows or ravens are introduced in the second act. As the first act began with songbirds, the second begins with crows, picking at a dead body. Rather than flying free on long staves, the crows are closer to the puppeteers' bodies, and they spend most of their time on stage pecking at dead humans or horses. This effect intensifies the shift from the childish training and conflicts of the better part of the first act to the horrific war-imagery of the second.

Then, of course, there are the horses. I am most interested in their interactions with each other. Joey and Topthorn have two instances at which they touch each other. At the first, they are fighting. Joey bites Topthorn on his neck, and Topthorn kicks Joey. There is a face-off of

"In these cases, chance is very seldom pure." The farce *B* contains this line near the beginning, and this perspective seems to represent much of the rest of the play. The farce works because of the seemingly seldom chances which pile up towards the point of absurdity. As the director said at the discussion period after the play, this play needed a very long introductory segment in order to put into motion all of the chances which made the play so funny. This allowed the audience to anticipate the absurd twists, though not always to anticipate just what they would be. For example, it was obvious that something would go wrong with the invention of the name "Vauradiex case," but it was not immediately obvious that it was referring to a real criminal case, nor that the real criminals would become entangled with the hapless lawyers. The idea of pure chance not existing is supported by the way in which characters have multiple points of entrance and exit, and can use those points to narrowly avoid confrontation.

One other interesting aspect of the play was one way in which the two acts were tied together. Act I ends with the maid shrieking "vengeance," while the second ends with the

a dog can be killed so easily, one must wonder if other characters of the play have such easy violent impulses. With the dog's death, there is the threat of other death as characters nearly discover the depths of their mutual deceptions.

Another theme running through the play was that of the narcoleptic uncle. I think that he was a very interesting representation of how people can delude themselves. Any time the other characters did not want him to catch on to something, they simply had to force him into a seated position. This allowed for the deceptions and confusions to continue beyond even the already unreasonable limits proposed by the world of the play. In a way, it reminds me of Chaucer's , and the way in which January is made blind by his willingness to be deceived.

To a point, the other characters "fall asleep" as well, as they do not immediately notice each others inconsistencies. One of the characters least likely to do this is in fact the mother-in-law, for the very reasons that her son-in-law so hates her. She is a suspicious woman, which makes her realize that the second lawyer is leading her on with his supposed tongue paralysis. In fact, it is her daughter, absent from the better part of the play, who first notices the inconsistency. The characters who can force themselves awake are then able to begin unraveling the confusing twists of fate, while the uncle remains in the dark.

Though I did not really have an all-encompassing theme for the discussion of this play, I did find many aspects of it extremely interesting. I found the use of chance and fate effective, and that use was augmented by the unusual staging. I really enjoyed the play between comedy and tragedy in the play, and the way in which the tragic threat overshadowed the humor. I also found the uncle's narcolepsy, while comical, a good illustration of the way in which all of the characters became deluded in the course of the farce.

I enjoyed this production of a lot, though it differed from my original understanding of the play in several ways. One of the biggest differences I noticed was the way in which the various flaws were played up through the characters' speech patterns and physical mannerisms, almost to the point of absurdity. Overall, I very much enjoyed the way in which this director played up the flawed aspects of all of the main characters, though at times it was at odds with what I felt that the play was trying to convey.

The first thing I noticed about this production was the fact that Tom had a lot of bizarre tics, such as jerky head and hand movements as he spoke. To my memory, this was not in the original text of the play, nor was it indicated in my edition's description of various conventional staging methods. I felt as though this technique was both effective and not. In one way, I really liked it because it emphasized Tom's difference from the rest of society. My impression from the text itself was that he was so alienated simply because of his poetic, dreaming nature, and because of his wish for something more than attempting to work his way up the corporate ladder. His slight physical off-ness, however, emphasized the way in which he was a "special" child like his sister, as I believe his mother called them. However, in a way this also detracted from the narrative for me. Part of the point of the play was that everyone has problems and some people just magnify their own more. However, I still felt when reading it as though Tom was the most normal and relatable character, made rebellious only by his unfortunate situation. His more obviously alienating defects make this portrayal as an everyman much more difficult.

Laura was also much more exaggerated than I had originally imagined her. In my copy of the text, the production notes said that often, Laura's physi

liberties taken added to the characterization, while others detracted from the everyman feeling which most American Dream material strives for in its heroes.

and Plautus' various twinning plays, there is no evidence at the beginning that there are lost twins to be found. Any revelation at the end would have felt incredibly contrived, especially due to the internal disparity between the two characters. If there had been an allusion to a lost twin at the beginning, the already-complicated plot would have risked becoming too complex and unbelievable for enjoyment.

Though they are not identical in body, Mme's Chandebise and Homenides also have a twinned role in the plot. This twin-hood begins when Raymonde begs her friend to write the false love letter to her own husband. This seed sown at the beginning of the play ensures that M. Homenides assumes it is his own wife who is being unfaithful, not his friend's. Because of this, the two women are often confused for each other in terms of their place within the plot.

Camille Chandebise can be considered a double of himself because of his speech defect

mentions that he can easily win people over – he does this by creating a character for himself, the man he wishes he could be. This man is the fallen hero, a man constructed from the ashes of one of his most successful roles. Rather than being a man with moderate success who always met with some failures, he transforms himself into a successful man brought down by an attempt to save his wife. Only at the end of the play do we find out that this is not at all the real Frank, and many of the weaknesses of which he accuses Georgie in fact belong to himself. Finally, the true Frank is unmasked as his assumed role is forcibly stripped from him.

In a way, Georgie is playing a part as we

This was one of my favorite productions of the trip, and my favorite of the Shakespeare plays which we have seen so far. I thought that overall, the acting was excellent and many of the choices for scenery were fascinating. Perhaps the most interesting effect was the use of books throughout the play as scenery. I believe that the books were in fact a representation of nature and the natural order of the world.

Throughout most of the first half, the scene is dominated by two monstrous bookshelves. It is not actually clear from the audience whether or not all of the books are real — several people including myself thought that perhaps the upper shelves were a screen. This proved false, however, as we found out when the props malfunctioned and one of the bookcases began to fall. After many books fell, the case was finally righted before the end of the segment. We then found out why such a malfunction was possible at the end of the half when both bookcases fall askew, allowing hundreds of books to fall to the floor in heaps, scattering pages across the stage. Leontes' world collapses after he has defied nature and the Oracle. The scene on the shores of Bohemia is a craggy beach, in which books become the harsh scenery. I was extremely impressed with their portrayal of the bear. Especially after loving the sea-elemental bear created at Stratford, I was skeptical of any other portrayal. This bear, however, was a masterful puppet whose fur was composed of pages. Nature tries to take vengeance on the unnatural Sicilians. Interestingly, Antigonus does not exit "pursued by a bear," but instead is dragged by the bear after he sacrifices himself to it to save Perdita.

The use of the books and pages to represent nature is continued after the intermission.

The piles of books and tipped cases are left on stage, and the stage is ringed with pages. After Time's speech, Autolychus enters through the hole in the center of the stage, through a

## Romeo and Juliet - 1/1

I had mixed feelings about this production of Romeo and Juliet. While I enjoyed much of it, particularly the aesthetics in scenes such as the ball, I didn't really like the way in which the producers played with the costuming. I felt as though whatever they were trying to get across with the varied time periods of clothing was too ambiguous to be effective. What I am most interested in, however, is the portrayal of the youth and youth-like qualities of many of the

around her house, sulking down to breakfast while wrapped in it. When her mother brings up the question of marrying Paris, Juliet throws a temper tantrum. In this scene, however, her father is no better than she! When he learns that she wishes to defy his will, his reaction is absolutely infantile. First, he mutilates the orange he would eat, and then he advances on Juliet. Most of his lines are yelled at this point, and he throws a book around and even shakes Juliet. His reaction is rather like that of a toddler told that he cannot have candy.

At this point in the play, Juliet begins to change, however. After she is fitted for her wedding dress, she is no longer a misfit or adolescent through her costume. Then commences her marriage to Death. Her first adult act is the actual decision to take the poison — a step proving that she is willing to potentially sacrifice herself for what could otherwise be seen as an infatuation. She takes the poison, and then marries death. This is emphasized by her wearing the wedding dress during her fake death, and the contortions she makes as the poison takes hold. At various times, she seems to be writhing either in sexual ecstasy or in the agony of labor pains. Either way, she has reached a level of sexual and social maturity which she lacked earlier in the play. While Romeo's transformation is less overt, he does go from being costumed as a teenager to the more sober dress of a friar, in which garb he dies. In this way, the play can almost be seen as a coming-of-age story, though those who come of age do not live to flourish in their maturity. The cuts in the ending emphasize Romeo and Juliet's growth — by not having the families outwardly reconciled, the director implies that they have not reached the same level of maturity as their children.

Though is a play about death, it is also a play about the trials of youth and growing up. One must wonder whether the lovers are truly in love, or just taking infatuation to an extreme. This production seems to play with that ambiguity through its emphasis on youth.

## Hamlet

stay his hand. If anything, Claudius would be destined for Hell by praying to false images and a corrupt institution, rather than being forgiven all of his sins for being murdered while at prayer for God.

Another change which I found interesting, but not too effective, was that Ophelia was executed by the government rather than committing suicide. The entire scene surrounding her capture I thought could have been carried out better. First, the rioters who assisted Laertes are escorted off-stage by armed guards. They have their hands behind their heads, and it is implied that they will be killed as insurgents. Then, Ophelia is seized by a couple more agents and escorted off as well. I disliked this interpretation for several reasons. First of all, I think that it would've been more effective to show Claudius' cruelty if one or more of the rioters had been gunned down on stage, or even if gunshots were heard after their exit. I also think that Ophelia's execution did not have the impact that the director intended. First of all, I just don't believe that it is in character for the Claudius that the director was trying to portray. It is feasible that a cruel dictator would execute people who know too much, but no one would believe a woman who is commonly known to be mad. There was no reason to get rid of her. On a more artistic level, I think that it robs Ophelia of her dignity, taking away from her the one act of her own volition in the play. Most of her actions are guided by her father or Hamlet's pursuit, and her suicide seems an expression of freedom.

While I thought that many of the changes to the usual staging of were interesting, I could not fully enjoy them because they warped the meaning of the play. I love the myriad of interpretations possible for any play, there also comes a time when the director strays so far from any possible intent that it is a different work entirely. I think that this is where the director failed – he was so concerned with his new interpretation that he lost Hamlet on the way.

I absolutely adored this version of Cinderella! I do not know the original ballet, nor have I seen professional ballet in several years, but I was absolutely captivated by the beautiful music and the modernized, yet wonderfully classical dancing. What fascinated me most is the way in which the ballet made the story a dual Cinderella story involving both male and female leads, not just Cinderella herself.

The first sign that the main characters are both a type of Cinderella is when the soldier stumbles into Cinderella's house. She takes him in, but he is later forced out by her overbearing family. When he leaves, he leaves behind his hat. She uses the hat then to perform a dance, dressing up a mannequin as though it were her new-found beloved. The dance with this mannequin was actually one of my favorites, as the mannequin is quickly substituted with the actor, who pretends as though he is not truly alive, forcing her to reposition him every once in a while. Then, Cinderella must seek out her airman – the one that the hat will fit. Finally, they find each other, immediately before London is bombed.

When next the lovers meet, they are in the café and both have undergone an extreme transformation. The airman enters first. He is no longer bandaged for a head wound, and the torn garb he sports throughout the rest of the ballet is exchanged for dress blues. For one of the only times during the performance, he is truly dapper and clean. Cinderella herself has undergone a shocking change as well. She has laid aside her dowdy clothing for a shimmering fairyland of a dress. Her drab brown hair has turned into flaxen gold, marvelously coiffed. It is almost a surprise that they can recognize each other. In this case, it appears as though the fairy godfather has enacted change on all that is around him. He has rejuvenated the club after the first missile strike, and he cleans and clothes the two protagonists. After the two have some time

away from the club together, however, a second missile strike brings reality crashing down again. The fairy godfather undoes all that he had done, restoring club and protagonists to their fallen states.

Next, the airman is left with a piece of Cinderella's costume: her silver slipper. This scene mirrors the original scene in which Cinderella dances with the airman's hat. While Cinderella does not appear to take the place of the slipper, the airman dances with it and around it as though he is holding onto his lost love. He even goes so far as to try to kiss the space where her face would be. While Cinderella's original dance was largely elated with finding a new love, the airman's is more tragic, filled with sorrow and longing for the lover he lost.

The comparisons between the stories of the two lovers continue their parallels when both are sent to the hospital. Both experience healing (though what is healed is perhaps dubious in the case of the airman) at the hands of the doctor, played by the same dancer as the fairy godfather. When they finally meet again, the two still recognize and love each other, despite their transformations back into the torn and more drab people of the real world. Rather than seeing if the shoe fits Cinderella, their identification process is mutual, as they see that each one possesses a single shoe of the matched pair.

I really liked that both ended the ballet looking as they did in the beginning, though considerably more cleaned up. I feel as though that showed that while people can have projected fantasy lives, princesses and princes may be found among every-day people, even if they are not in a ball-gown or fancy suit. For this reason as well, I liked the fact that the last moment of the

Beauty and the Beast

Priscilla, Queen of the Desert – 1/3

was so much fun! I really enjoyed the way in which the stage production used the tropes of live musical theater to augment the themes of acceptance and self-expression. Live stage has possibilities on which film cannot capitalize. The over-the-top costumes and giant dance numbers really help to augment the themes of the show.

One of my favorite effects in was the use of the "divas" to sing the songs that the queens were lip-synching. In a drag show, everyone understands that the female impersonators are neither truly female nor truly singers. The musical capitalized on this accepted deception by showing the audience just who was singing instead.

Possibly the most obvious device of the show was the costuming. Obviously, the costumes will be magnificent in a show about drag queens. However, this was even more amazing than I could have anticipated. In a movie, there can always be pauses and cuts while actors change costume. In this show, despite quick scene changes, there were an immense number of costume changes into fantastical garb. One of the major themes of the play is that the drag queens refuse to hide their identities or tone down their clothing. This was emphasized by

being held. Similarly adding to the acceptance of necessary showmanship, I found the microphones on all of the drag queens to be very blatant. I think that maybe they were supposed to be somewhat visible in recognition of the various parts that the men were playing.

Another way in which theatrical conventions complemented the themes of the show was through the giant dance numbers. In these, the musical was very different from my memory of the movie. In musicals, it is expected that outside people can join a scene for the sake of a chorus number. Because of this, when the men were out in the desert, a whole troop of other men in outrageous drag joined them whenever they began to sing. Movies usually try to maintain more of a sense of reality, so this trick was not used in the cinematic version to my memory. There is also an expectation of absurd and pointless props in a play of this nature. This is played on as well, with a giant shoe often being wheeled around. The musical has no illusions about its hyperbolic absurdity, and decides to play up those aspects rather than trying to hide them.

, D , uses the intense theatricality and unreality of a musical to augment the themes of accepting oneself that are so prevalent in the story. The drag queens are unapologetic for their appearance and lifestyle choices, even when faced with bigotry. They might move on, but they do not tone down their outrageous sense of style. In the same way, the musical itself recognizes the absurd possibilities of staging a live musical, which are much different than those available to

Phantom of the Opera – 1/4

I really enjoyed this production of

when Adam wonders if the cities were built to keep the freaks in or to protect them from the outside world. The bars both seem to afford the Phantom protection and to cage him. They give his home a more sinister aspect. Of course, the musical decided to reject some of the truly Gothic descriptions from the book, remaking the Phantom's punt as a bed rather than having him use a coffin for his rest as Leroux suggests. The beautiful and the grotesque meet in the Phantom's lair, as they do in his soul.

Interestingly, Raoul also partakes of this split personality. One part of the musical which has always bothered me actually is the scene in which Raoul concocts his plan to trap the Phantom. At first, he speaks beautiful love to Christine, telling her "You don't have to, they can't make you" in respect to her singing Aminta's role in D. When he comes up with his plan, he takes on a more manic disposition, however, and tells Christine only moments after his reassurance that "Every hope and every prayer rest on you now!" Though he does not go to such violent extremes as the Phantom, Raoul's personality shifts almost as quickly as his sinister counterpart.

is a gothic book and musical, exploring the boundary between beauty and the grotesque. The Phantom, in particular, demonstrates through personality and setting the way in which that line can shift based on perspective. Other characters are caricatures, like La Carlotta, Piangi, and perhaps even Mme. Giry. These characters show just how fine the line is between lovely and horrid. The opera stars, in particular, are supposed to be the best in their professions, and yet are obviously vocally outclassed by the Phantom and his young tutee. In this play, what should be beautiful reveals itself to be ugly, and the ugly becomes oddly beautiful and compel

described their relative scenes so vividly that they created a mental picture somewhat akin to scenes in . A sense of reality and setting is often created through narrative description rather than dialogue or elaborate sets and projections.

The play also felt very cinematic at points. Near the beginning of the play, Helena predicts that she and Bob will never get together because everyone knows that in romantic comedies, the characters begin completely at odds. Probably the most vivid example of a cinematic moment is when Bob imagines his life as a movie trailer. The lights turn blue, and Bob is isolated on stage as he acts out a one-man preview. Later on, there is a cinematic voice-over about his life as a young man.

The play also integrated other forms of drama. It is not a musical, yet there is music in it, both in the background and sung by the characters. The music is a lot of fun – while it does not narrate parts of the plot as it does in many modern musicals, the music definitely augmented the story. The songs often had slightly disturbing lyrics (such as one which begins "Give me drink, give me darkness, give me pain, then take it all away"), adding to the tension between the fun, frivolous story, and the deeper philosophies behind it. Along with musicals, also ran into the genre of pantomime. The biggest audience participation moment was when members participated in the counsel of Bob by reading questions, and at one point Bob also flees through the seats. Perhaps the scene with Elmo could even be counted as a nod towards puppetry.

I think that the way in which blended different forms of presentation was complete genius. The result of the different aspects was a unified whole which was constantly changing, yet intelligible. The narrative style was innovative, and allowed for the characters to shine of a very limited stage. The way in which the characters kept weaving their narratives together illustrated just how similarly-

distraught as her world comes crumbling down and the saint she believed she married reveals himself to be merely another flawed mortal man.

Mr. Chiltern is also gravely injured by his revelation to his wife. He knows the high standards to which Mrs. Chiltern holds him, and realizes how grave an error he has committed to lose her regard. He comments that she is merciless in her perfection – though he seems to have known about this ruthless capacity in her, forgiveness and mercy are usually prime values for people of strong moral character. Then, Mr. Chiltern believes that she has again defied his

One of the earliest statements in is when Sir Anthony Absolute tells Mrs. Malaprop that "Thought does not become a young lady." Throughout this highly entertaining play, the question of thought and its relationship to the written word is explored. Writing is a major concern of the play, from the illicit novels enjoyed by Lydia to Mrs. Malaprop's misinterpreted missives.

Sir Anthony Absolute and Mrs. Malaprop speak near the beginning of the play of the evils of the town's library. Sir Anthony tells Mrs. Malaprop that he believes that "A circulating library in a town is like an evergreen tree of evil knowledge." This statement speaks to the fear of the period that women were being mislead and corrupted by the increasing number of sentimental and non-educational novels available to them. Lydia herself recognizes the way that her elders will judge her guilty pleasure — she goes to great lengths in the attempt to hide all of the books her maid borrows on her behalf, and is sure to put more appropriate reading conspicuously around her room. Despite the fear of novels' corrupting influence, Lydia obviously benefits from them to some degree. Her aunt, obviously not such a reader as her young charge, consistently misuses the language which she can so accurately pronounce. Lydia, however, understands the meanings of words along with their pronunciation, perhaps from seeing so many words in context during her reading.

Another major instance of the written word in the play is Mrs. Malaprop's correspondence with O'Trigger. She writes to him in flowery, if not always accurate, language, sending her missives through Lydia's maidservant. The maid delivers them faithfully, though she makes sure to profit on both sides of the deal. What she does not reveal to O'Trigger, however, is the fact that the letters come from the heavy-set and aging Mrs. Malaprop, not her

young and beautiful niece. The verbal ambiguity of the letters combined with Mrs. Malaprop's assumption of a allow O'Trigger to believe what he wants, namely that it is in fact the lovely Lydia who fell madly in love with him. When he finally discovers the truth, O'Trigger is devastated by the initial revelation, as is Mrs. Malaprop with the knowledge that he has no feelings for her other than repulsion. In the end the two are reconciled as O'Trigger accepts his bachelor fate and Mrs. Malaprop realizes who her true admirer is, but as in the case of books, the written word holds the possibility for both good and evil.

The final instance of the written word in the play is the correspondence between Captain Jack Absolute and Lydia. Once again, there is verbal ambiguity and the possibility for disaster, though their correspondence ends more happily than that between Mrs. Malaprop and O'Trigger. Jack is nearly in trouble when Mrs. Malaprop intercepts his letters through the maid's efforts. Luckily, he also was writing under his pseudonym of Ensign Beverly, so Mrs. Malaprop does not immediately realize that it was he who called her "the old weather-beaten she-dragon," and mocked her abuses of the English tongue. When she finally discovers his deception, it is actually the latter insult that is more grievous in her mind. In a world of shifting linguistic meaning, Mrs. Malaprop cannot bear the thought that she is adding to the deception, however unintentionally.

is essentially a play about misunderstandings and linguistic ambiguity.

Though the written word is supposed to be more concrete than that which is spoken because of its lasting power, the playwright complicates that idea through his demonstration of the ways in which text can be interpreted or misinterpreted for both good and evil. Though the play ends happily, the threat posed by the ambiguity of language, both spoken and on paper, remains. I thought that this play was really fun, and one of the reasons I enjoyed it so much was the clever linguistic play and misunderstanding.

I really enjoyed , for many reasons. I really liked the ambiguity of the characters, and the way in which the play was used to demonstrate how a person's experiences can change them for better or worse. However, the characters were not all human. One of my favorite aspects of the play was the way in which the tenement building itself took on a persona, affecting the people living within it as much as they affected each other.

Near the end of the play, Jenny says that, "This house is rotten." Indeed, the house acts as an infection throughout the play, ensuring that its inhabitants cannot escape. The way that the

because of its unsanitary conditions and lack of hot water. It is actually amazing that none of the other family members catch the tuberculosis, since they are living in such close quarters.

The close quarters of the house is the other major way in which it affects the lives of its inhabitants. The play revolves in part around the ways in which people are moved around the apartment. Granny Morrison is distraught because she has to be sent away to her daughter-in-law Lizzie's house, but there is just not enough room in the Morrisons' apartment all of the time. When she is there and Isa and Alec arrive unexpectedly, there end up being three women sharing the same bed. The middle daughter shares the bed with Isa, and when Jenny gets home, she too goes into that bed. There is also the concern of John and Maggie, who have a pallet which they move onto the kitchen floor at night. At one point, Maggie mentions that eventually, they will move somewhere where they can have a real bed.

Furthermore, the apartment has a role as the woman's domain. The entire play deals with gender dynamics, complicated even more than usual by the depression which prevents the men from finding work. Though they can't work, they still feel as though they need to go out and try, rather than helping

Julius Caesar – 1/6

I really enjoyed this production of Shakespeare's C; I think it was my favorite Shakespeare out of the ones we saw. C is, in essence, a political play. This

of mass settings that the screens were used for are in fact supposed to be homogenous. Though obviously the same people are not repeated in a real mob, people with the same gestures and intentions are. As the burning Rome seemed to be a metaphor for the political conflagration, the sameness and repetition of the lower screens shows the way in which the Romans were a single entity that could easily be swayed in one direction or another.

The other major way in which the director created the illusion of a large community was through the living soldiers. In part, this illusion was also aided by the screens and the centurions who appeared on them during the battle scenes. However, the choreography of the battles was also extremely important for such an optical illusion. When the battle began and the first army entered the stage, all of the extra actors moved as one, performing jerky and uniform motions. This mimicked the precisely-commanded motions of a true Roman warrior. Once they reached the battlefield, the single army split into two indistinguishable ones, demonstrating the way in which brother fought brother because of Rome's internal strife. A battle scene cannot effectively be carried out with merely seven or eight people, however. After the men fought each other, they then turned around and fought an intricately choreographed battle with phantom enemies. Perhaps the single fighting force was symbolic of the way in which the fight had truly come out of nothing other than egoism and pipe dreams. The three ways in which the army moved was an effective technique for demonstrating Roman military cohesion and the folly of the battle itself.

is an intensely political play. It is in fact more about Rome than any one character, and definitely is a play larger than its titular character who dies within the first half of the play. This particular production managed to completely surpass the constraints of a live stage, however, using special effects, optical illusions and genius choreography to imply many more people than were in the cast.

he realized that God would never be satisfied with his work, no matter how many churches he built up however high. He gets his real start as a house builder after his own house is destroyed: 
"I have paid for [my career] with my soul." Halvard feels that his house burned down because of his intense wish for its destruction, initiated by his familiars and evil demons. He also feels that he is leaving an enslaved state to God, much as Lucifer fell in . And as in the case of Satan and Eve, freedom and knowledge are followed by damnation.

The most Faust-like aspect of this play was probably Hilde's relationship with Halvard.

Faust's deal with Mephistopheles was that after he achieved perfect happiness, his soul would be

Deathtrap – 1/8

I absolutely loved D , and I thought that it was the perfect ending for this trip. I feel as though so many of the conventions of both the plot and the staging of D echoed other things I have written about over the course of the trip. Even more so than the straight comedies I discussed, D played with the fine line between comedy and tragedy. This play also deals with the theme of a play within a play, and the line between reality and fiction. I thought that D was immensely clever, and it succeeded in bringing me to the extremes of both suspense and laughter.

I had earlier discussed the tragic possibilities of a comedy in terms of the farce, A

. This play explores that theme's converse

characters put on a show for their concerned neighbors, and then each other. Sydney tricks Clifford into allowing him a possible self-defense motive by asking him to test a stage-fight between two men of unequal strength. Sydney manages to get past Clifford, proving the verity of the scene, but he is scratched and his clothes are torn, allowing him a convincing act for the authorities he plans to call in. Perhaps the final nail in the coffin with regard to the humorous, hilarious line between reality and acting is the scene between Helga and Porter. They both realize the same thing that Clifford and Sydney did – the stage potential of the "true" set of events. They then proceed to enact the same tragedy, feeling the jealousy of unequal collaborators and finally taking up weapons before the lights cut off.

picked up many other themes from the trip, also including the trope of the aging artist, complicated sexual power struggles, and the use of prophesy in an otherwise believable (or at least not magical) world. I will end my discussion of this play however, not with ten more pages of explanation, but with the thought that I felt this play a wonderful culmination of our experience. I had an amazing time on the trip overall, and thought that D was one of the most fun and innovative plays we saw.