

THE THESPIAN

Volume XV Issue 1

The Horace Mann Theatre Company's Tri-Annual Publication

Fall 2011

La Vida Es Sueño

November 11th 12th 13th 2011

Once Upon a Dream...

Teo Armus-Laski | PG. 4

"Setting" the Stage...

Noah Margulis | PG. 6

Pulling the Strings...

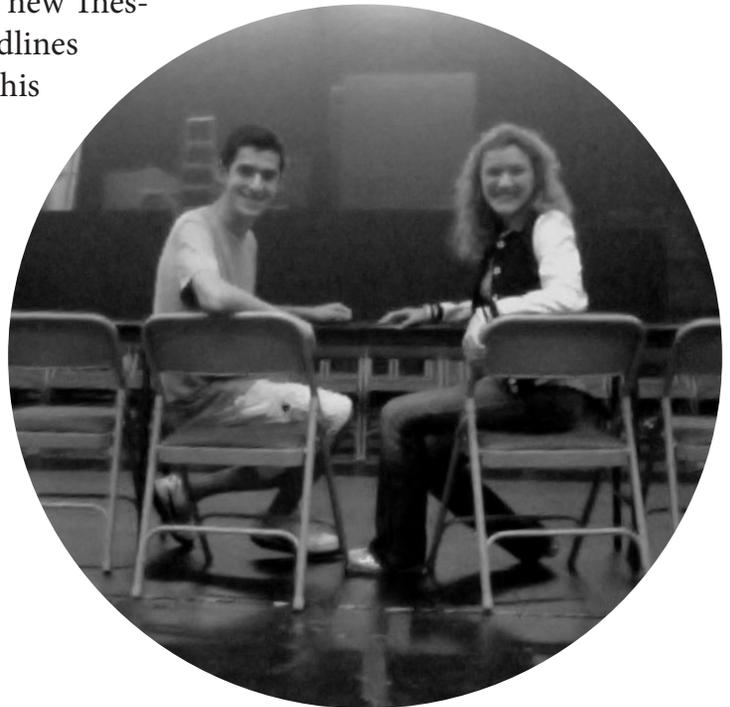
Luciana Siracusana | PG. 4

Cover by Jean Mariano

Officers Notes

FROM: Thespian Editors

The school year always starts with a bang – and that’s especially true in the HMTC! With a show opening in November and a brand new Thespian out in October, we always scramble to meet our deadlines and make everything just right. But as we fall back into this crazy routine, we’re looking forward to being inspired by Mr. Timkó’s *La Vida Es Sueño!* Incorporating Japanese puppetry and Spanish literature into a Polish setting (we know we’re intrigued), “La Vida” encourages us to tap into our creative sides. HM students can expect the unexpected in this highly anticipated production, and we’re already looking forward to what this incredible cast and crew will bring to the stage! So take a breather! Laugh a little (or a lot)! Try speaking a different language or exploring some new ideas. And most importantly, head to the theatre. A unique show like “La Vida” is the perfect way to get out of that beginning-of-the-school-year rut. We’ll see you there!



Happy Reading,
Katie Birenboim and Matthew Taub

FROM: HPMC Presidents

Welcome to the HPMC,

Last year’s season ended with the praise and appreciation of the entire HM community. With the leadership of the wonderful Jessica Chi, the HPMC family grew strong. This year we welcome Rachel Buissereth as the Junior Co-President as we prepare for an exciting year. Theater, Dance, and Stage Crew make up the core of our company. Rachel and I intend on bringing these sections together over the course of the year. Talent is our strength. Cooperation is our passion. Theater is what we do.

Antonio Irizarry & Rachel Buissereth

FROM: HTDC Presidents

Hello Horace Mann!

We’re the co-presidents of the HM Dance Club and we’d like to personally invite you to come try us out. We’d love to have everyone and anyone come dance with us- from the neophyte to the trained dancer. We welcome all styles and experience levels, and we love to try new things. We have a fun-filled season planned- including the January 26th, 27th, and 28th Student Choreographed Dance Concert. Save the date! If you have any questions, feel free to contact either one of us. Happy tapping!

Kiki Heintz & ShaKea Alston

Our 2011-2012 Season

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Life is A Dream / La Vida Es Sueño

November 11th 12th 13th 2011

MD Musical: Once Upon A Mattress

December 8th 10th 11th 2011

Student Choreographed Dance Show

January 26th 27th 28th 2011

Student Written One Acts

February 9th 10th 11th 2012

Musical: Guys & Dolls

April 26th 27th 28th 2012

H M T C
the horace mann theatre company

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Woody Howard
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Emma Laurence
Jonathan Nye
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Joseph Timkó

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Matthew Taub

Thespian Production Director

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Roll Call: La Vida Es Sueño

The Students Behind This Season's Productions

THE CAST

Hannah Ades (10)
Teo Armus-Laski (10)
Asher Baumrin (11)
Allison Chang (09)
Lauren Futter (09)
Phoebe Gennardo (10)
Roger Golub (11)
Shinil Kim (10)
Noah Margulis (11)
Colin Mark (11)
Thomas Meerschwan (11)
Kira Newmark (09)
Justine Potemkin (10)
Karina Rodriguez (09)
Rachel Simerka-Smith (11)
Luciana Siracusano (10)
David Zask (11)
Lindsey Zelson (09)

THE CREW

Donna Arreaga (10)
Jessica Azerad (11)
Sebastian Brunner-Stolovitsky (9)
Bryan Chen (10)
Sinai Cruz (10)
Danielle Dunn (12)
Adam Egelman (12)
Lee Ehudin (11)
Arianna Fullard (10)
Alexander Huang (10)
Hannah Jun (12)
Joshua Kwak (12)
Shyenne Parris (9)
Teddy Reiss (10)
Zoe Ross (10)
Rebecca Segall (12)
John Wang (10)
Tiffany Wang (12)
Winta Zaid (12)
Kenneth Zhang (12)

Once Upon a Dream...

Background On La Vida Es Sueño

Hippogriff. This mythical beast serves as the first line of seventeenth-century playwright Pedro Calderón de la Barca's *La Vida Es Sueño* (Life is a Dream), widely considered one of the premier works of the Spanish "Golden Age" in theatre.

In addition to his career as a writer, playwright, and poet, de la Barca was a Roman Catholic priest as well as a soldier – experiences that shaped his life and the way he approached the theatre. *Life is a Dream*, first performed in 1635, captures the complex story of Segismundo, the Prince of Poland, who was imprisoned by his father in order to avoid a catastrophic prophesy. Segismundo's "odyssey" is cleverly intertwined with a lady's efforts to avenge the man who left her. Written in a vivid, complex style, the play frequently references classical mythology (which brings us back to the work's peculiar first word!). Major themes include the idea of life "as a dream," as suggested by the title, and the clash between free will and destiny.

In 2009, "Sueno" was adapted into a modern-day play called "Fever/Dream." More recently in July of 2010, the play even became an opera written and composed by Lewis Spratlan and James Maraniss. Finally, as the HMTC adapts the work for our very own black box, the play has become a Japanese-style puppet show.

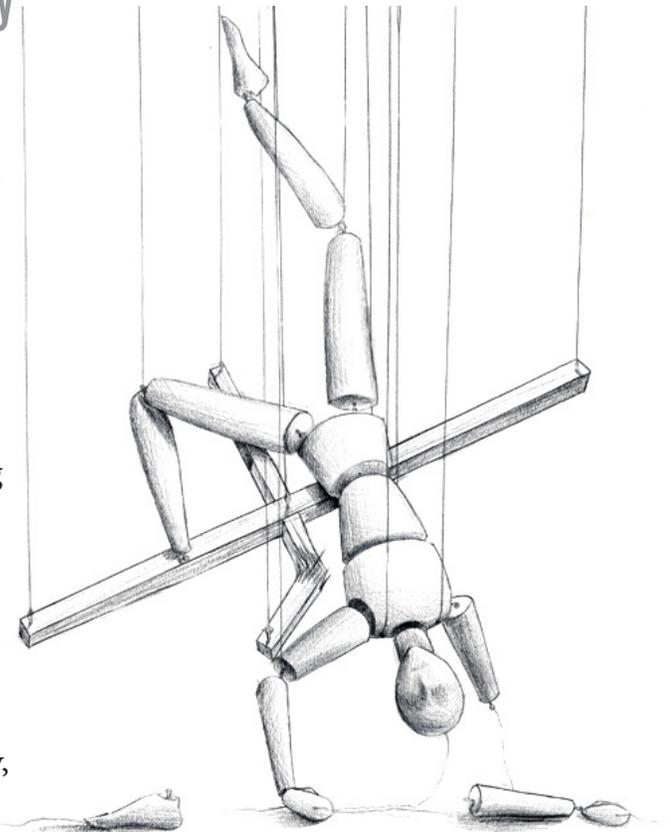
– Teo Armus-Laski

Pulling the Strings

Luciana Siracusana ('14) Explores the History of Puppetry

When most people think of puppetry, they remember playing with puppets as children. But puppetry goes far beyond our childhood memories. Originating around 21,000 B.C, puppetry has been recreated in many diverse forms all over the world, from shadow puppets in Asia to the classic marionettes in Europe. Perhaps our fascination with puppetry is rooted in our shared fondness of bright colors and slapstick humor, or our darker desires to control something else and make objects "come alive." In this fall's HM production of *La Vida es Sueño* (Life is a Dream), puppetry will be incorporated on a grand scale. The director, Mr. Timkó, is still developing and exploring the specific type that he'd like to employ, but is sure that HM's puppets will verge on the abstract side. What's more, the play will be in the style of Japanese Puppet Theater, with narrators voicing the puppets, and puppeteers controlling the life-sized figures. Puppetry's influence beyond the HM community is incredibly visible, with puppets being used in Broadway productions like Avenue Q, War Horse, and The Lion King. Ultimately, puppetry helps to create the perfect theatrical illusion.

– Luciana Siracusana



Mr. Timkó: In His Own Words

Q: In your own words, can you describe the meaning of *Life is a Dream*?

A: In terms of classical Spanish theatre, like “Hamlet,” the meaning is up for grabs. Even the title is ambiguous. Probably every production of “Life is a Dream” emphasizes different subjects of the play. There are a couple of speeches that give the meaning, but they are so vague that they are up for interpretation. One lesson could be how all the wildness in the play settles down into a peaceful acceptance. Right now, our production’s meaning is still open.

Q: What first drew you to “Life is a Dream”? Is it a play that you have been wanting to do for a while?

A: No, it’s not a play that I’ve been dying to do for a long time, but it has definitely been on my list. I saw a production years ago, but we’re certainly doing it differently.

Q: I heard that you were putting special twists into the play. Could you explain what those twists are and why you decided to incorporate them?

A: Originally, we were going to perform this show on the main stage, but the Middle Division show is being put up there, so then we decided to perform it in the Black Box. The thing about the Black Box is that you have a very intense audience because they are so close to the stage. One evening it just popped into my head that combining this fifteenth-century play with Japanese puppets would work so well because it would allow us to have smaller scenery on the stage. On the small stage of the black box this would work really well.

Q: Is this your first time working with puppets? How do you plan on approaching it?

A: I probably worked with puppets as a child. I don’t remember doing anything at HM where we worked with puppets. We occasionally joked about it though. However, sometimes we like to try different things, and puppets work. I don’t know yet how we are going to approach this though. We might try found-object puppetry, where the puppet is not necessarily life like. It could be a screwdriver. We might also try with shadow puppets, where there is a translucent panel with the puppet behind it. We’re really experimenting.

Q: Puppetry had somewhat of a resurgence on Broadway with Avenue Q...will the HM production be in this style?

A: No, it’s definitely not going to be like “Avenue Q.” There is some comic relief in “Life is a Dream,” but that character dies.

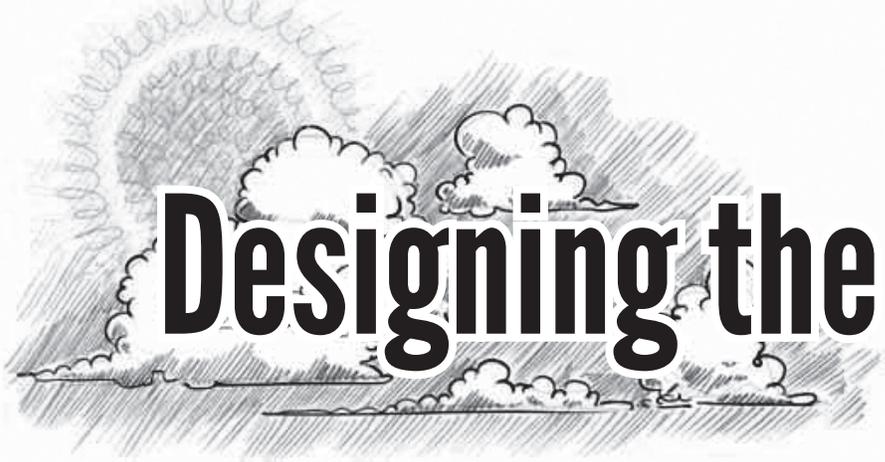
Q: What are you most excited for about the play and what are you most nervous for?

A: I’m not nervous for any aspect of the play. Even though we are taking a risk, this is a school so it’s not on a commercial level—we don’t have to make it perfect. I also found an excellent translation that speaks to the audience. I’m most excited to solve all the problems. Usually in a production, there is a pattern. The cast starts out excited, and then goes into a lull because they don’t know their lines. Because in “Life is a Dream,” the narrators are able to read right from the text, there is no line-learning. It should be fun to see how that turns out.

Q: If you could play any character in the play, who would it be and why?

A: I don’t actually like to act much. I mean, I’ve acted, but I prefer to direct. I collaborate with individual actors to get the best result. I try not to be an authoritative figure; I am also not a copycat. I try to pair people with the parts that are best fit for them to act, but I just don’t enjoy acting for myself.

– Phoebe Gennardo



Designing the Dream



A Collaborative Experience

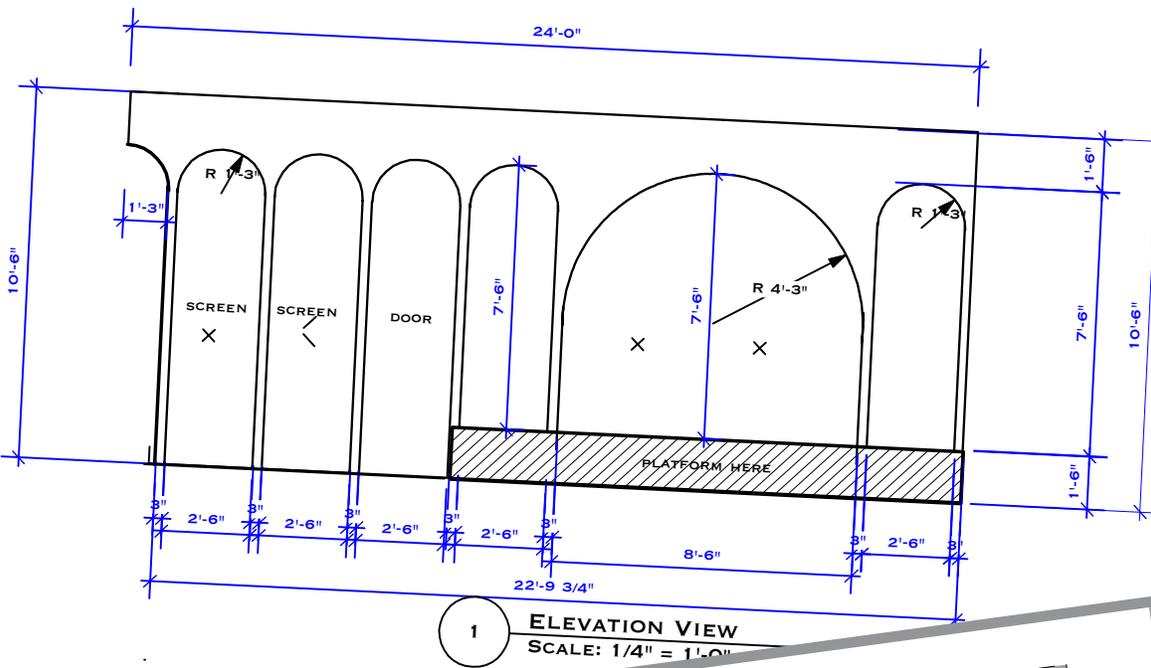
Designing a set is always a challenge – and that’s especially true for a play set in 16th century Poland that features Japanese puppetry! Fortunately, the challenge of combining the different traditions and styles represented in *Life is a Dream* was also highly interesting. First, my Design and Production class listened to a read-through of the play last spring. Second, in order to learn more about the specific type of puppetry that would be featured, we watched a documentary about the ancient art form and adapted some key points to fit the play’s design. We learned that the typical scenery for the Japanese puppet show featured a shelf at the front of the stage, on which the puppets could act, as well as a turntable that revolved between each scene in order to reveal new narrators and musicians. With “Life is a Dream” we tried to find a way to bring together all of these ideas while still being consistent with the play’s original motifs. Our final set involves, of course, the traditional puppet shelf and turntable, but we have also designed walls with high arches to allude to the fairytale castles of 16th century Poland. I’m confident that we have met the challenges and produced a set that stayed true to both distinct styles represented in “Life is a Dream.”

– Noah Margulis

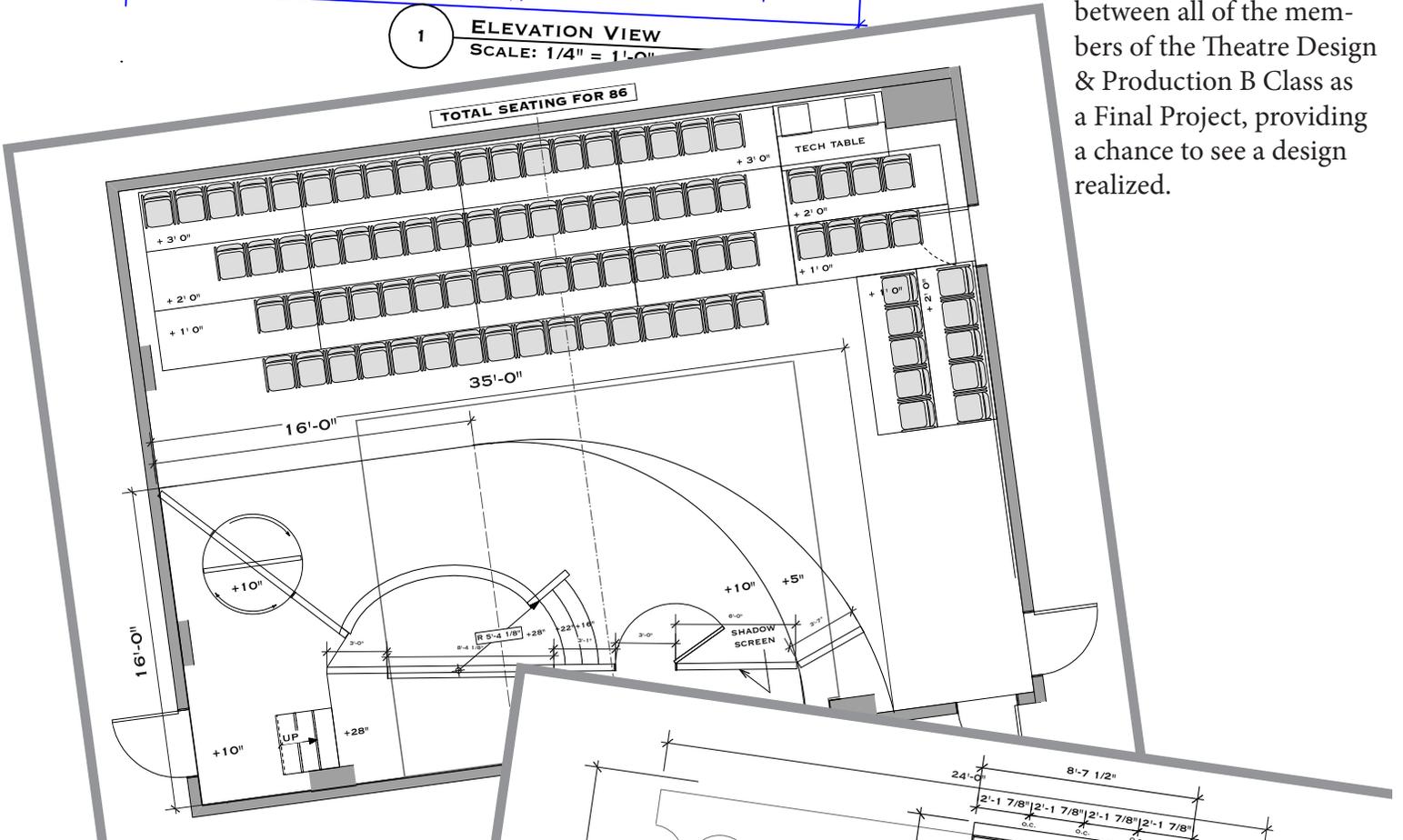
TOP RIGHT

An elevation of the back-stage wall. The arches were designed to evoke Spanish villas while also providing a space for entrances and exits.

RIGHT A ground plan for the set, which was a collaboration between all of the members of the Theatre Design & Production B Class as a Final Project, providing a chance to see a design realized.

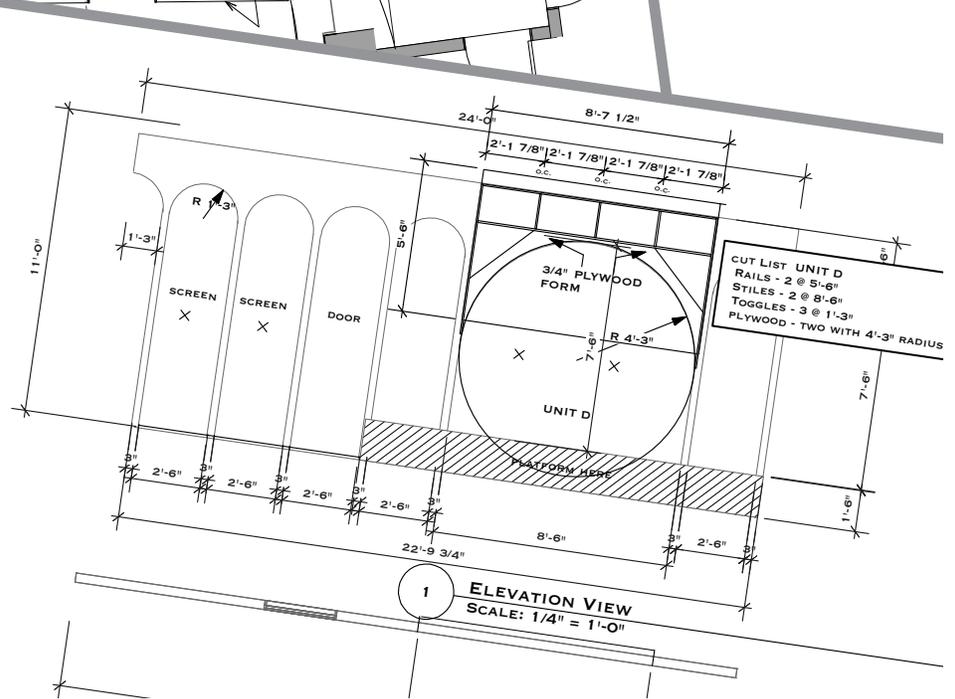


1 ELEVATION VIEW
SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"



GROUND PLAN
LIFE IS A DREAM
DIRECTED BY: JOSEPH TIMKO
SET BY: TPD A
LIGHTING BY:
SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"
1 OF 1

LEFT An elevation of the side-stage wall. One of the unique features of the project are the changing narrators similar to those in Bunraku Puppetry. To accommodate that we added a rotating platform in the wall.



1 ELEVATION VIEW
SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"

- CUT LIST UNIT D
- RAILS - 2 @ 5'-6"
 - STILES - 2 @ 8'-6"
 - TOGGLES - 3 @ 1'-3"
 - PLYWOOD - TWO WITH 4'-3" RADIUS



Spotlight on:

The Blackbox



I couldn't think of the Horace Mann Theatre Company without also thinking about the theatrical "hot spot" in the basement of Tillinghast – better known as the HM "Black Box." Built in 2003, the Black Box is able to cultivate free-form, creative staging within HMTTC productions. Without a formulaic space for the stage and audience, for example, the black box affords set designers more creative freedom. Particularly for small-scale plays without big sets and musical numbers, the black box allows a close, personal relationship to develop between the actors and the viewers.

The concept of a black box is attributed to the Swiss designer Adolphe Appia, who first explored the idea of flexible staging in 1921. Black Box Theater, however, did not gain popularity until the 1960s, when the theatrical scene became dominated by experimental theatre. Besides this rich history, black boxes have many other advantages – including cost efficiency (little room for big lighting, sets, costumes, and casts). In this way, black boxes have played a major role in fostering especially controversial or creative theatrical pieces.

If you haven't seen the Horace Mann Black Box for yourself before, the perfect opportunity to come check it out is this season's production of "Life Is a Dream!"

– Savannah Smith

A Day in the Life

By Hannah Ades

- 3:15** Mr. Timko sets out food for the perpetually hungry teenagers that make up the cast of “La Vida es Sueño.” There are Veggie Stix!
- 3:16** There are no more Veggie Stix.
- 3:30** Alexis Brianna-Felix doesn’t know whose iPad she’s playing with and begins to feel a little awkward.
- 3:40** Karina Rodriguez and Lindsay Zelson look really, really confused (and even a little scared), witnessing the insanity that defines each and every one of the HMTC members.
- 3:45** When everyone is crying, Thomas Meershwam laughs at them—no he’s not a horrible person, this is an acting exercise.
- 3:55** Shinil Kim and Justine Potemkin’s puppets are kissing even though they haven’t known each other for too long...
- 4:05** Phoebe Gennardo learns how to say, “I’m proud of you!” in Japanese.
- 4:10** The cast learns of Colin Mark’s high-fiving habits: Just when you think he’s going to high-five you, he shake’s your hand the “Horace Mann Way.”
- 4:20** Teo is partner-less when working the king’s puppet. Wendy Kahn (costume designer) comes to the rescue and the other side of the puppet is no longer dragging across the floor.
- 4:25** Allison Chang and Hannah Ades reunite! They realize they were bus buddies and shared packs of gum in 2nd grade.
- 4:35** Roger Golub strangles Asher Baumrin.
- 4:40** Roger Golub uses his fencing skills to fight. He seems to be in a rather violent mood today.
- 4:50** Ana is wearing the prettiest headband.
- 5:00** A major sense of confusion arises when no one in the cast knows which part they are playing.
- 5:05** David Zask begins his monologue.
- 5:15** There is a brief moment of applause for David Zask, who has just finished the longest monologue heard by anyone, ever.
- 5:25** David Zask takes a bow as he is walking out the door, in response to the festive Jewish singing going on, as Megan Goldberg and Asher Baumrin sing “Hava Nagila.”
- 5:35** The cast comes to the realization that we will need to be 50 years old in order to successfully put on this play.
- 5:45** Before leaving, Noah Margulis makes sure to eat the rest of the food that remains. All of it.

Summertime and the Livin' is... Theatre?!

HMTC Debuts Beyond Gross

This summer, I was fortunate enough to be able to spend a few incredible weeks at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music living and breathing musical theatre. Though I have been involved with many shows at Horace Mann, the two weeks were an excellent opportunity for me to get to know 30 other high schoolers who share my passion. While the experience was unique, I hope to be able to bridge everything I learned this summer with my theatrical studies this year and beyond.

Our first day of classes was also an audition. We were preparing for a cabaret after all; a little skit show that would all be centered around a text and theme. We sat in the back of the theatre and watched everyone audition, an experience that was markedly different from the audition process at HM. As I looked around, people were obviously nervous; some trying to shake off the nerves, some portraying a quirky nervous habit in an attempt to not look so scared. Others were just gossiping about whoever was performing at the time. While these auditions were nerve-wracking, they immediately signaled the caliber of the program and the high level of performance that was expected of me. Our usual days would start at 9:30 sharp. We split up into two groups and headed to our classes. During the first week, our classes focused on Viewpoints Acting and either Voice or Dance. Viewpoints is known for its attention to the group rather than an individual. Exercises would include some form of mimicking those around us and trying to create a simultaneous motion without having leaders; just a group working together to achieve a goal. The class was led by Richard Hess, a leading professor in Viewpoints, and his exercises, besides being helpful acting experiences, were excellent ways to bond in such a short period of time. In our Voice classes, the wonderful Lisa Erikson (who taught at a college in Kentucky) would lead us in warm-ups and would then coach some individuals through songs from specific periods of musical theatre. In Dance classes, we would perform small combinations the teacher created over the course of the hour and a half class.

After that first week our classes grew much more exotic, ranging from Pop-Rock voice, to Pairs Dancing, and to Dialects.

Our afternoons were generally geared toward master classes – exciting opportunities to explore our work with renowned actors, directors, or composers. One of the most memorable of these classes was the session with Aubrey Berg, the chair of the Musical Theatre department at CCM. Being a junior, I did not get to work with him one-on-one (only seniors were eligible). Fortunately, the rest of us had a short master class where he explained some basics about auditioning at the school. Although I wish I could have had more time with him, the little bit of time we spent together was interesting and informative.

When I got home after those hectic three weeks, I reflected on the pages of notes, exercises, criticisms, song choices and odds and ends (most notably a sore-throat cure that will definitely come in handy!).

I plan to use all this knowledge to change the way I approach acting. Thanks to my summer experiences, I better understand how important it is to bond with cast mates, to always be aware of everyone on stage, to stand straight, and, perhaps most importantly, not to overact – what we affectionately call “shmac”ing.” All of these components can be seamlessly transferred into anything I do, whether it be learning a song, performing a monologue, or wowing the audience with a show-stopping tap number. I would definitely recommend participating in a program like this; it really helps people experience a new environment, and find that no matter how well you have been doing with your craft, there is always something to improve on. In a way, that is the magic of musical theatre: there will always be something to learn about your craft, about your character, and about life. All it takes is the right training and time.

– Rachel Simerka-Smith

I Could Have Danced All Night...2011 Dance Workshops:

Friday, October 14	Bellydancing	6:00-8:00 PM
Thursday, October 20	Yoga	4:00-5:45 PM
Thursday, November 3	Ballroom	4:00-5:45 PM

Summer Performance Opportunities

Taking the Stage Away from HM's Beloved Gross

This summer I spent three weeks at the University of Michigan's summer musical theatre intensive (known as "MPulse"). The program was highly selective, requiring the submission of an audition tape which showcased two musical theatre songs and a dramatic monologue. Singing, acting, and dancing have always been my passions and I've been doing shows at Horace Mann ever since I can remember. My experience at MPulse, however, was wholly unique. With 2-3 hours of intensive dance, vocal, and acting training each day, I was able to hone my skills as a musical theatre actress in a way that I never have before. Classes about musical theatre history, theatre as a career and a business, and master classes with famous casting directors, composers, and actors helped me to gain a new understanding of the reality of a life in the theatre. My peers participating in the program were the most talented young people I had ever met, and we all looked up to the head of the program – Mr. Brent Wagner (who is also the chair of the college department) – as a source of inspiration. By the end of the summer I had mastered jazz, hip-hop, ballet, and tap combinations as well as countless techniques for interpreting musical theatre songs from all periods in American history. One of these techniques in particular – the practice of writing out the lyrics of a song and analyzing them like a poem or monologue – helped me to achieve more complex, nuanced, and authentic performances. At the same time, MPulse allowed me to appreciate even more the fantastic training I have received at HM. I owe so much of who I am as a performer to these shows and these casts, which have also taught me that being a better actor involves (in addition to all the technique) understanding and enjoying other aspects of life. The well-rounded nature of the HM theatre program produces intellectually curious actors. Moreover, my experience at MPulse will compliment everything I have learned at Horace Mann and improve my performances to come.

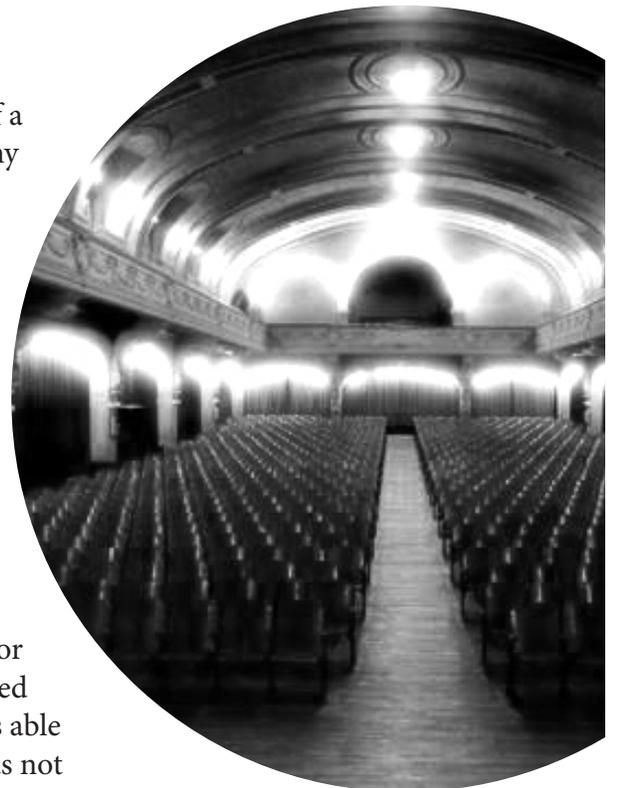
– Katie Birenboim

Theatrical Internships in NYC

Working with the Artistic Dept. at Primary Stages

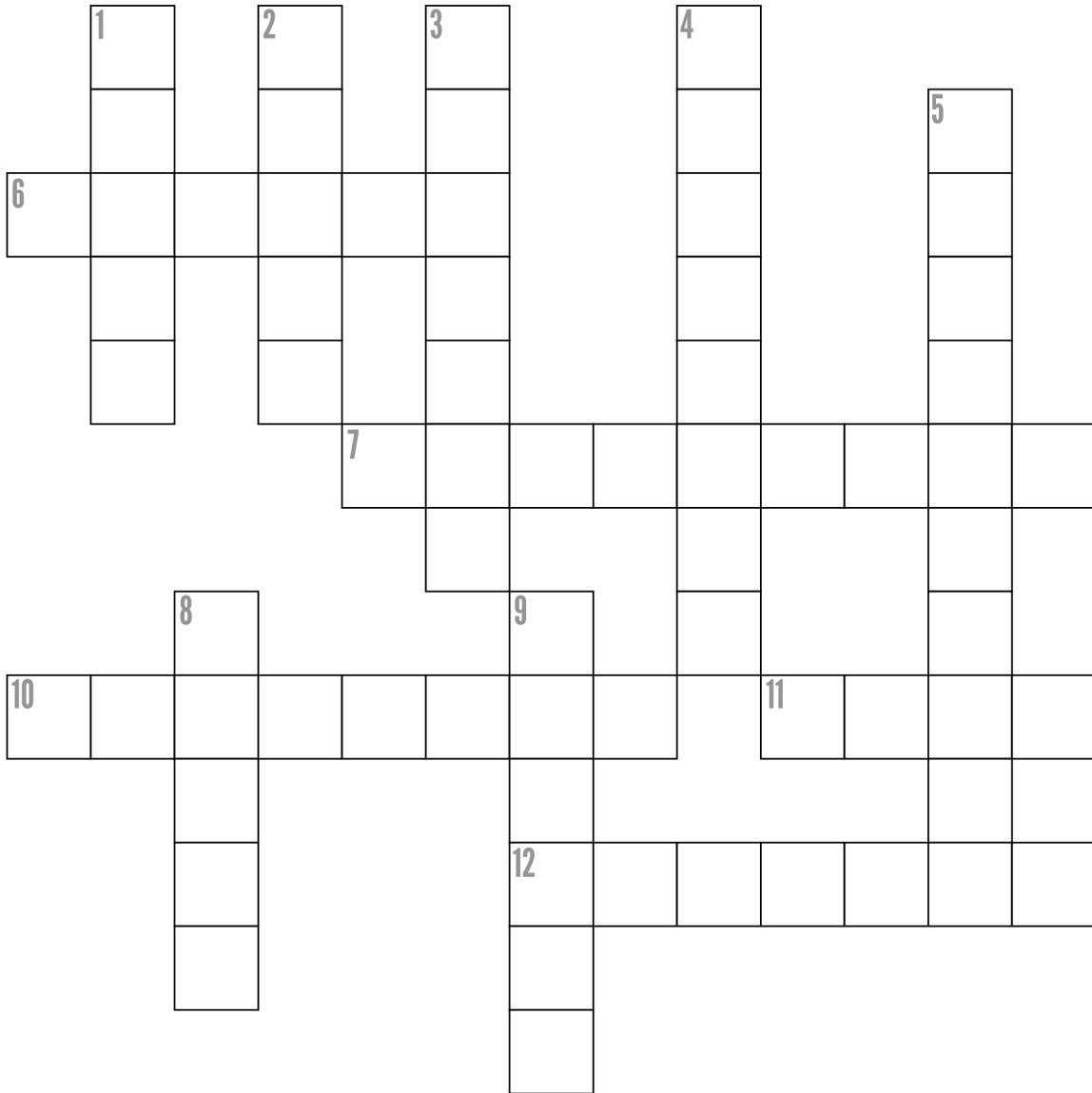
This past summer I worked as an artistic intern at the executive offices of a non-profit theatre company called Primary Stages. Nearing the end of my junior year, I knew that I wanted to be around theatre during the summer, and that I wanted to have a job experience as opposed to a kind of performance opportunity. Narrowing my search to specifically Off-Broadway theatre companies, I stumbled upon Primary Stages where I secured a position as an intern with the Artistic Department, working directly under the Associate Artistic Director, Michelle Bossy. Interestingly, my work experience was able to bridge the areas of business and art. In the beginning I performed mainly office tasks, such as sorting actor headshots and resumés. I also worked on compiling spreadsheet databases for the company archives, including one that catalogued all the awards that the Primary Stages had won since its creation and one compiling the contact information for most of the actors that Primary Stages has worked with. Soon thereafter rehearsals for Charles Busch's "Olive and the Bitter Herbs" started. The play was directed by Mark Brokaw, and starred Marcia Jean-Kurtz and Julie Halston. I was able to work next to these big names for the next two months. Although I was not always in the rehearsals, I worked in tandem with the actors, and ended up running the sound cues for the Tech rehearsals. Moreover, I had a rewarding, interesting, and generally incredible time working at Primary Stages. Most importantly, my experience solidified my interest in theatre beyond HM.

– Dan Froot



Who's Line Is It Anyway?

Test Your Knowledge about the Fall HMTC Season



ACROSS

- 6 The only frog who dates a piggy
- 7 The creator of the Muppets
- 10 A small space conducive for experimental theatre
- 11 The HMTC Officers' Ambassador to the Great State of New Jersey
- 12 The only street for singing puppets.

DOWN

- 1 Dream in Spanish
- 2 A Film-Loving Director
- 3 The HMTC officer who is Fluent in Spanish
- 4 The type of puppetry being used in this season's show
- 5 French Puppets
- 8 She eats, sleeps, and sings
- 9 The setting of *La Vida es Sueño*