AN ART DIRECTOR'S APPROACH TO MOLIÈRE'S DON JUAN

by

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STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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ABSTRACT

The concensus of contemporary critical opinion, reversing the trend of the past three hundred years, now considers Molière's Don Juan, or the Stone Guest, a comic masterpiece of profound content and experimental form. Consequently, the objectives of this study have been to redefine the essential values and characteristics of the play and to present a new visual interpretation which heightens and projects them.

It is proposed that the modern relevance of Don Juan derives from the timeless, universal nature of the subject content while, on the other hand, a great deal of its significance lies in its origin. The final design concept, therefore, must incorporate and emphasize both elements if it is to be a meaningful, visual expression. The approach to the problem and the process through which one solution evolved will be described.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: THE ART DIRECTOR'S APPROACH

Robert Edmond Jones, a truly great artist of the theater, has defined the goal and the task for the stage designer who seeks to be an artist rather than merely a decorator. He says:

Stage designing should be addressed to the eye of the mind. There is an outer eye that observes and there is an inner eye that sees. A setting should not be a thing to look at in itself. It can, of course, be made so powerful, so expressive, so dramatic, that the actors have nothing to do after the curtain rises but to embroider variations on the theme the scene has already given away. The designer must always be on his guard against being too explicit. A good scene, I repeat, is not a picture. It is something seen, but it is something conveyed as well; a feeling, an evocation.

Plato says somewhere, "It is beauty I seek, not beautiful things." This is what I mean. A setting is not just a beautiful thing, a collection of beautiful things. It is a presence, a mood, a warm wind fanning the drama to flame. It echoes, it enhances, it animates. It is an expectancy, a foreboding, a tension. It says nothing, but it gives everything.

The key word for the designer in this eloquent statement is "evocation." Indeed, perhaps Jones has touched upon the essential nature of all art in the theater in his usage of this particular term. It is possible to apply it to the inspired director who functions as a

creative interpreter of the intent and content of the playwright and who seeks to project his interpretation through the most imaginative and effective means. He presents to his audience a distinct, unified concept, an evocation of the playwright's intent, in contrast to the director who concerns himself primarily with the mechanics of staging in the absence of a total creative vision. A poor actor will only be capable of describing, of explaining a character in contrast to a fine actor who will be able to summon the character into being, into an independent existence of its own. The latter creates an image; he evokes, rather than simply represents, the character. In the same manner, a stage designer or art director may content himself with a mere description which functions more or less well, depending upon the degree of his ingenuity, as a background for the dramatic action of the play. Or, he may rely upon the infinite variety of mechanical gadgets and gimmicks to produce the shock value of a spectacular novelty. In neither case, however, will he be likely to approach the stature of the true scenic artist. The goal of the latter, as it is expressed by Jones and as it constitutes the basic approach of the designer in this thesis, is the creation of a visual expression which evokes an image, an atmosphere, a mood that conveys the fundamental feeling, the very essence of the play and which heightens its most characteristic qualities.

The degree of success with which an art director or designer attains this goal depends, first of all upon an innate sensitivity to the
atmosphere and mood instilled in the play by the author. This initial
reaction and subsequent intuitive understanding of the essential qualities
of the literary statement itself are acquired through several preliminary
readings of the play disregarding, as much as possible, all secondary
sources of information and knowledge. The latter represent the second
step in the creative process directed toward the formulation of the final
design. The information and knowledge gathered through research on
the author, the relationship of this play to his other works, the time
and place in which it was written, its production history and critical
reception, and the available literary analysis and criticism will modify,
fortify, and enrich the initial impressions received from the play itself
and will influence many of aesthetic decisions yet to be made. This is
especially true of what is normally labeled as a period piece such as
the one under consideration here.

Armed thus with his own sensibilities and intuition regarding
the inherent values and qualities of the play and with a considerable body
of information and knowledge about it at his command, the art director
must now combine the resources of his intellect, his imagination, and
his abilities as an artist in making the crucial decisions which will de-
termine the nature of the visual statement made on the stage and how
it is to be made.

Each stage in this creative process is integral to the others
and to the visual concepts that issue from it. An analogy comes to
mind here between this creative process experienced by a highly complex, sophisticated form of life and the structure and life processes of a simple cell. If we consider the play the nucleus of the cell surrounded by layers of protoplasm corresponding to a body of literary material, then we may view the scenic designer and artist as the catalyst who acts upon this existing matter, and, through the introduction of his intellect and imagination, produces a new entity in the form of a new visual concept.

This process, directed toward achieving the goals set forth by Mr. Jones, and the conclusions resulting from it, constitute the form and content of the subsequent chapters.

A discussion of the relationship between the producing director and the art director was considered outside the context of the material considered here. It should be assumed, however, that the art director's concept of design must conform to the producing director's interpretation of the play and project the visual image desired by the latter.
CHAPTER II

THE PLAY: DESCRIPTION AND
PRELIMINARY INTERPRETATION

The ideal situation for the art director in this first stage of the creative process would be, of course, to be able to approach the play with a completely open mind unshaded by any prior knowledge of the author, his other works, or the previous interpretations of them. Under the circumstances, the inherent qualities of the play itself would flow more freely, penetrating with maximum intensity and clarity unhindered by preconceived concepts. Obviously, this ideal situation is a virtual impossibility with an author like Molière. There is, however, a distinct advantage in this particular play. Don Juan, or The Stone Guest, unlike le Misanthrope or Tartuffe, has not been classified among his major works in the past and consequently is not as well known or frequently performed. Hence, even though the fundamentals of the legend are familiar, the manner in which Molière has treated them is not.

2. There are various translations and spellings of title due to the uncertainty regarding the survival of the original text. Dom, the French form of Don, is frequently used, and Le Festin De Pierre is often translated as The Stone Banquet. Most of the English translations are derived from the text presented in the fourteen volume edition of Molière's works published in Paris, 1873-1900, by Despois and Mesnard. The translation for this particular production was done by John Gesell and Anne McConnell of the French Department, University of Arizona.
Don Juan is a comedy written in prose in five acts in which the different facets of Don Juan's character are revealed in successive episodes leading up to his final destruction. Act I opens with Sganarelle, the servant of Don Juan, delivering a discourse on the evil nature of his master's character. "... a wicked nobleman is terrible thing." he says, and goes on to predict his eventual destruction by the anger of heaven. He continues to serve this wicked lord because, he explains, "With me, fear takes the place of loyalty: it curbs my feelings and makes me applaud things my soul detests."

In this opening scene, Sganarelle addresses himself to Gusman, the servant of Don Elvira. Don Juan, having seduced Elvira from a convent, married her, and then having rapidly tired of her, has abandoned her in favor of a new conquest. He and Sganarelle have come to the present town in order to embark upon this new adventure. The presence of Gusman, however, reveals that Dona Elvira, unwilling to accept his obvious betrayal, has followed them to confront Don Juan.

In scene two, Don Juan sets forth his philosophy of life in which he defends, with rather arresting intellectual appeal, his right to disregard the conventions of society and religious doctrine and to act solely upon the impulses of his own nature.

The action foretold in the first two scenes commences in scene three with the appearance of Dona Elvira. Her suspicions confirmed, her illusions destroyed, Elvira surrenders to rage and bitterness
berating Don Juan with sarcasm for not masking his departure in the
conventional manner and phrases of the courtier. Finally, after
Don Juan has deprived her of the opportunity of resorting to threats of
revenge from heaven by using the remorse he feels at having coerced
her into breaking her vows with God to account for his own behavior,
she threatens him with "... the anger of an outraged woman," she
exits, and Act I ends with a resumption of the pursuit; Don Juan's new
adventure.

In the course of Act II, Don Juan's attempt at seduction on the
high seas is aborted by an unexpected squall in which both the boats of
the lovers and Don Juan and Sganarelle are capsized. The scene and
rescue are narrated by the *commedia* character of Pierrot, identified
here as a Sicilian peasant, to his fiancee, Charlotte. The action in the
following scenes revolves around Don Juan's deception of the two peas-
ant girls who are also counterparts of familiar *commedia* figures. He
leads each of them to believe that she will be his wife. Finally, in a
brilliant scene in which he is confronted by the girls simultaneously,
he manages to convince both of them that she alone has his promise of
marriage. The act closes with the announcement that a group of men
are searching for Don Juan, and he must leave at once if he is to escape
them.

Scene one of Act III finds Don Juan and Sganarelle making
their way through a forest toward town. They are disguised in the
hope of evading their pursuers. Sganarelle's costume is that of a doctor which provides the occasion for a brief satire on the subject of the medical profession. This in turn leads to the more significant topic of Don Juan's beliefs. Sganarelle, stating his faith in the splendid mysticism of heaven, hell, the devil, and the bogeyman, and contending that one simply must "... Believe in something in this world.", challenges his master to state the nature of his beliefs. Don Juan's answer is, "I believe that two and two makes four, Sganarelle, and that four and four makes eight."

It is difficult to interpret the second scene of this act. One has the feeling that what occurs here is quite significant to an understanding of Don Juan's character, and to the whole play, but several equally valid interpretations seem possible. Sganarelle and Don Juan ask directions from a beggar in the forest who, in return, requests money for the directions and his warning about the robbers who inhabit the forest. The Poor Man, it seems, sustains his meager existence by praying to heaven for the prosperity of those who contribute to his existence. Don Juan suggests that he should pray for himself and not worry about the affairs of others. He finally offers the man a gold coin if he will blaspheme. The Poor Man resolutely refuses, and Don Juan ends the scene by giving the coin to him "... for the love of humanity."

In the next two scenes, Don Juan rescues one of Elvira's brothers, Don Carlos, from robbers, and is revealed upon the arrival
of the second brother, Don Alonse, as the seducer they have been seeking.

Don Carlos is eventually able to convince Don Alonse to postpone their revenge for a day in order to repay the debt he owes Don Juan for saving his life. Don Juan replies that he has not asked for this consideration and is perfectly willing to do battle with them at any time they choose.

In the final scene of Act III, Don Juan and Sganarelle come upon the grandiose tomb and statue of a man Don Juan killed a few months earlier. The man has had his statue carved in the pose and costume of a Roman emperor. Taunting Sganarelle, Don Juan requires him to invite The Statue to dinner. When The Statue nods in acceptance, Sganarelle is terrified. Don Juan repeats the invitation and is obviously affected for the first time in the play when The Statue repeats the gesture of acceptance.

The fourth Act is primarily a series of façadeux in which Don Juan manages to pacify a merchant, M. Dimanche, impatiently suffers the remonstrances and threats of his father, Don Luis, and almost succeeds in tempting Dona Elvira to forget her renunciation of earthly love. In the final scene, The Statue of the Commander appears to accept his invitation to dinner and offers an ominous invitation to Don Juan to dine with him the following night, which is defiantly accepted.

Act V opens with the apparent, sudden conversion of Don Juan. He appears to have taken heed of the Act IV warnings, threats, and predictions. As soon as he has restored the good will of his father,
which is indispensable to the comfort and safety of his way of life, how-
ever, the pose is dropped. His magnificent speech upon hypocrisy
follows. Sganarelle counters immediately with his own philosophy
which encompasses a delightful garble of illogical, unrelated truisms,
symbolizing, by contrast, the nature of the concepts by which the major-
ity of humanity lives.

The hypocritical pose is momentarily resumed, a demonstra-
tion of the intent expressed in the speech, when Don Carlos enters to
attempt a final peaceful settlement and reconciliation between Elvira and
Don Juan. Don Juan declares that heaven will not permit this, and
Don Carlos leaves vowing to have his revenge.

As Don Juan nears the tomb of the Commander in the next scene
to keep his dinner engagement, a specter appears first in the form of a
veiled woman, then as Time with scythe in hand. Undeterred, refusing
to repent, he confronts The Statue. Lightning flashes, thunder rolls, the
earth opens up, and Don Juan is consumed by the fires of hell (Figs. 4, 5).

Sganarelle is left alone on stage bewailing the fact that his
master's destruction has satisfied the demands of society and religion.
Everyone is happy; only he is unhappy. "My wages! My wages," he
cries (Fig. 6).

The most immediate reaction one experiences, even while
reading the play, is that of confusion. The usual elements expected in
Molière, as the satire of various mannerisms of social, scientific, and religious conventions, the blending of farce and the refined elegance of high comedy, and the superb style are found here, but it is as if the usual ingredients had been placed in a basket, thoroughly shaken and then allowed to fall out in a random pattern, an exciting, completely new arrangement. One feels an increased sense of vitality and energy. This is probably due partially to the absence of the usually adhered to seventeenth century neoclassical formula for unity of time, place, and action, but there is also a greater degree of physical action called for here. The latter, however, seems to possess a theatrical quality rather than a realistic one.

There is also a difference sensed in the mood and the atmosphere of this play. One is almost inclined to associate it more with the Black Comedy of this century than with Molière's other works. Although it could be argued that plays like Tartuffe and le Misanthrope project a degree of this same feeling, usually in this author there is a sense of magnanimity in his work. One detects a tolerant smile behind his incisive wit. The mood of Don Juan, in contrast, is one of bitterness, of irony, of disgust at the state of man's condition. There is a sharp, almost jagged, cutting edge to this comedy. Not one of the characters in the play, with the possible exception of The Poor Man, or beggar, is even momentarily at peace with himself, with his fellow man, or with his society. The conflict is constant on all levels.
There is also the awareness that a great depth of meaning underlies the surface of play. The subject is not simply a retelling of the traditional Don Juan legend or an adventure story; the author is dealing with something more basic and at the same time infinitely complex. Upon reflection, one discovers that real subject content of the play is the conflict between the basic nature of man and the social and religious institutions he has created to control and regulate his own instinctual behavior. These institutions eventually not only begin to create man, but acquire the power to destroy him as well. Man's predicament is that he cannot exist in a civilized state without these institutions and conventions, and yet he does not seem to be able to find a satisfactory way to exist with them.

This universal and timeless theme, then, is the essence of the play. The problem existed for the Greeks in the fourth century B.C., as it does for man in the twentieth century A.D. As the complexity of societies increases, obviously so does the complexity of this paradox.

It must be noted that each of the characters in the play are also projected to a plane that defies the limitations of a specific time and place. They are stylized, simplified abstractions. Thus, Elvira becomes a timeless symbol of all women who have taken a risk and been betrayed; M. Dimanche is not a particular merchant but all merchants; and Don Luis is an abstract parental image embodying all fathers of every time and place.
Translated into random visual images, these first impressions of the play call to mind large, strong, simple, angular shapes with a great deal of tension existing in the relationships between them. They do not quite achieve equilibrium, yet they do not become completely unbalanced. This is obviously in complete opposition to the tradition of using curved forms and lines for the presentation of comedy. Certain hues have always evoked certain psychological-emotional reactions, hence, the use of color will be a crucial factor in the final design. When the play is considered in terms of color, here again, the images assume angular shapes. Black seems to dominate but it is frequently punctuated with high intensities of the primary and secondary hues. The mental images seem equally divided between the warm and cool hues and tend toward the lower value range. There is the persistent feeling of tension between the hues as there is between the shapes and forms they assume. At the same time, a need for unity and integration is felt. Therefore, the tension must not be allowed to dominate. The stage directions given in the text call for a change of scene in each act. As familiarity with the play increases, the intuition that compliance with this idea would prove disastrous increases accordingly.

Some conflict is sensed at this point between the need to emphasize the timeless, universal qualities of the play, its general tone and mood, and the desire to include some of the period signposts
of seventeenth century France. A successful combination of abstraction and Louis XIV does not seem likely, but then, this is the time when every possibility, even the unlikely ones, should be considered.
CHAPTER III

THE RESEARCH: HISTORY AND CRITICISM

The second integral step taken before a final concept of the design can emerge is, as previously stated, thorough research of the literary material concerning the period and place in which the play was written, the author, its production history, and the literary criticism it has provoked.

When Molière wrote Don Juan in 1665, France had assumed the leading position among the European states. The period from 1660, when Louis XIV attained his majority, until his death in 1715, is so distinctive within the scope of human history that it has been labeled the Age of Louis XIV. During this period, France represented the strongest, most highly centralized power and set the cultural standards for the rest of Europe. Whether Louis actually made the statement "L'etat, c'est moi," which legend attributes to him, is unimportant; it epitomizes the character and the period of his monarchy. The consensus of opinion among historians appears to be that Louis was not a great man, but that he was a great king. Not a man of exceptional intelligence or learning himself, he was clever enough to surround himself with those who possessed both in abundance.
Although in his later years he became a senile, selfish, bigot, he was in his early years and during the time of Molière, deserving of the title "Grand Monarch." The sun, being a body unequaled in power and radiance, was an appropriate symbol for this man and the age which bears his name.

A large part of Louis XIV's success lay in the skill with which he manipulated the factors of the existing structure to create one over which he alone held control. Richelieu and Mazarin, the Ministers of State who preceded him, had laid the foundations for the strength of France. The policies of his own economic minister, the brilliant Colbert, were largely responsible for its development. Louis, then, consolidated the stable elements of the structure and increased the power of the monarchy, by eliminating the unstable ones.

The medieval division of society into three estates, the clergy, the nobles, the commoners, still existed in the seventeenth century. The great difference between the true medieval system and that of the seventeenth century, however, was the addition of a monarch who ruled by divine right. Under Louis, the existing conflict was resolved in the following manner. The first estate, the clergy, was populated by the select of the impoverished feudal aristocracy who were more than happy to receive the lucrative appointments as bishops and abbots. The will of the church and the wills of the troublesome old feudal lords were both thereby subordinated to the will of the state. The older nobles
not included in this group, who comprised the second estate, were provided for with pensions or with harmless, but impressive, duties at the court such as the elaborate ritual of dressing the King. In either case, they were well paid for their obedience and loyalty: the feudal lions were domesticated. To the commoners of the third estate were given the political offices as councilors and administrators. The danger of an ambitious, industrious middle-class was thus reduced, and this group became the new nobility. The existence of the majority of the third estate, the less fortunate lower classes, was to continue unchanged until the end of the next century. This was the flaw in Louis' system.

France continued its economic growth during the early part of Louis' reign under Colbert's mercantilism. Since one of the major tenets of this policy was the elimination of imports through the production of goods of equal quality within the national boundaries, the arts and sciences flourished in the effort to supply the vast court with enough of the 'Flemish' tapestries, 'Dutch' cloth, 'Italian' glass, and 'Venetian' lace that were made in France. Although this appears amusing on the surface, Colbert's policies, in fact, created the national industries and products for which France has become famous and was a major factor in the developing spirit of nationalism which pushed France toward European supremacy.
Versailles, built at this time to house Louis' huge, elaborate court is estimated to have cost the equivalent of one hundred million dollars. It was the center of intellect, culture, fashion, and social life in Europe in the baroque period. There are those who see Versailles as a reflection of the grandiose, empty artificiality of this age as well. The paintings of Le Brun, Callot, Mignard, Nocret, Baily, the tapestries of Testelin, Seve, and Gobelin, and the engravings and paintings of numerous anonymous artists provide a rich pictorial record of this era.

The ideals that permeated the atmosphere of this culture appear contradictory at first glance. On the surface, the society is characterized by grandiose excess, extravagance in speech, dress and manner, artificiality, and over-refinement. Its stated ideals, however, are those of order, reason, sensibility, and moderation. Obviously the latter represent a problem in semantics. If "order" and "reason," in the vocabulary of Louis XIV, are translated as the maintenance of equilibrium necessary to the preservation of his absolutist state; then "moderation" can be understood as it applies to the control of any excesses in thought or action that might cause a disturbance, and "sensibility" as a natural attribute of the resulting ineffectual and excessively polite society. In the classical period, these terms had defined realistic motivations directed toward a meaningful way of life.
In the neoclassical definition of seventeenth century France, they were reduced to mere echoes, employed to cultivate subservient contentment among the middle class and an effete sterility of the aristocracy. The monarch was thus enabled to rule without opposition.

Abundant entertainment was an obvious necessity in this society, and consequently, under royal patronage, theater and music flourished. The developments in the arts were also a natural outgrowth of the nationalism spirit, but unfortunately, when this culture viewed itself in its profusion of mirrors, it saw a recreation of the classical world. The Renaissance had been slow in reaching France, and the growing spirit of nationalism was not yet strong enough to produce a more realistic expression in a body of literature, drama, art, or music. There were beginnings in this direction in all areas, but for the most part, the expression of the period clung to the classical models reconstructed by the Italian humanists.

Boileau, a leading writer and critic of the period, codified the classical formulas for dramatic literature. The rules were originally derived from Aristotle's doctrine of the three unities of time, place, and action, and the separation of the tragic and the comic. They also dictated the use of the refined alexandrine verse. The results were a rather stale formalism for most French writers. Literature was also expected to project the general objectives, which were also classical
derivatives, of the society; that is, order, reason, moderation, and sensibility. Excess individuality, eccentricity, intellectualism and novel thought were to be avoided. Molière's principal contemporaries, Corneille and Racine, allowed this restrictive dogma to become an insurmountable obstacle. It was also their misfortune to be primarily tragedians in a society which was infinitely more attuned to comedy. Molière, on the other hand, took the liabilities of the form and transformed them into assets. To the unity of time, place and action, he added the unity of character. Perhaps it would be more accurate to consider the latter as a result of the first three unities and to attribute to him the skillful development of character without the excessive complications such as those found in Shakespeare's Hamlet. The classical theory also discouraged the presentation of realistic details and personalized emotion. In accepting, and then transforming this principle, Molière managed to elevate his characters to a plane of stylization where they exist as generalized types but retain their individuality and vitality.

Molière also finds his point of view in the neoclassical ideals of this period and then uses the discrepancy between these ideals and the overt behavior of the times as his point of departure for comedy. Nature controlled by reason, sincerity and simplicity, the subjugation of the freedom of individual behavior to the good of society as a whole,
described by the frequently encountered terms *honnêteté* and *raisonnable* in the period vocabulary, were the ideals. Comedy is derived in proportion and to the degree from which these principles are deviated.

In keeping with the times, Molière's is a social rather than a religious morality. It deplores impiety not so much as it does hypocrisy, the convention not so much as the pretension, affectation, and egotism which spring from it.

It is interesting that this man, who was so distinctly a product of his own time and place in so many ways, was able to view his society from a sufficiently objective vantage point to ensure the survival of his plays long beyond the period in which he wrote, and yet to have had such popularity in his own time. Perhaps this is partially due to the fact that he never considered himself anything but an entertainer.

A complete biography of the author containing all the obscurities, uncertainties and disputed details, would be superfluous here. Consequently, only the material which is pertinent to an understanding of his general viewpoint and that which has a particular bearing on *Don Juan* has been included here.

Of his family background, it is important to know that Molière, christened Jean-Baptiste Poquelin, came from a family of successful merchant-craftsmen. The Poquelin family possessed the title of *Tapisier du Roi* and their clients included a great many of the noble families of France. Hence, the French court and court life was an
established part of Molière's life from the beginning. Molière, therefore, possessed the best of two worlds without being bound by either. The significance of this environment as the foundation of the point of view found in his plays becomes especially clear when it is compared to that of his younger contemporary, Racine, who had to cut the ties of one world in his attempt to force entrance into another. Consequently, Racine remained a courtier-author unable to perceive his environment except subjectively. A great many interesting comparisons between Molière, Racine, and Corneille are to be found in Gossman's study of Molière.3

Molière's education was the best available in this period. According to his biographers, four or five years were spent as a very successful student in the rigid Jesuit study program at the College de Clermont. Evidence of his knowledge of Aristotle and the Latin authors, statesmen, poets, and philosophers is to be found throughout his thought and his work.

The years between 1645-1653 that Molière spent in company with the Béjarts touring the provinces of France constitute his apprenticeship in the theater. It was also during this period, especially the years spent in the southern provinces, that the concepts and techniques

of the *commedia dell'arte* became an essential ingredient in his work, first as an actor and then as an author.

The period of Molière's life in which *Don Juan* was written was marked by grief, marital problems, bitter disappointment, and ill-health. In 1660, the King gave Molière the theater of the Palais-Royal thereby establishing him and his company as the royal favorites. Two years later at the age of forty, he married Armande Béjart. Armande, only half Molière's age, is declared in the marriage contract to have been the sister of Molière's earlier mistress-companion, Madeleine Béjart. There were those who claimed that Armande was actually Madeleine's daughter, however, and Paris echoed with talk of incest. Due to the differences in age and temperament, the marriage was an unstable and unhappy one from the beginning. *L'Ecole des femmes*, produced in 1662, was the first of his plays to incite religious opposition even though it was his greatest popular success up to that time. Added to the controversy over the play and his domestic difficulties, he began to suffer acutely from tuberculosis. The next two years saw *Tartuffe* banned, the death of his first child and his sister, increasing illness, continuing problems with his wife, and financial difficulties. The only visible bright spots in this period were the immediate popularity of *Don Juan*, the birth of a daughter, and Louis' pronunciation of Molière's company as the *Troupe du Roy* in 1665.
There is a great deal of speculation as to the source of Molière's *Don Juan*. Tirso de Molina dramatized the first version of the Spanish legend in Spain in 1630 under the title *El Burlador de Sevilla y Convidado de Piedra*, or *The Seducer of Seville and the Stone Guest*. The Italian players transported the original to Italy, where it appears to have been more popular than it was in Spain. It was often presented in pantomime by the commedia companies who brought the piece to France in 1657. The Frenchman, Dorimont, published a verse dramatization in 1657 entitled *le Festin de pierre*, ou l'Athéée foudroyé, translated as *The Stone Banquet*, or *The Atheist Struck Dead*, which was produced with success in Lyon in 1658. Another French version in verse was published by de Villiers in 1659 with the title reduced to simply *le Festin de pierre*. The original Spanish version may have been presented in Paris by one of the visiting Spanish companies. The Italians with whom Molière shared the Palais-Royal undoubtedly produced their altered form of the play, and the two earlier French adaptations had been performed in Paris, one of them at the Hotel de Bourgogne. Whenever and wherever it was presented, it had proven itself a popular piece due primarily to its combination of romanticism and spectacular effects. A few of the critics among those who have classed *Don Juan* with Molière's failures, contend that it was written in haste and in anger, intended as a sure success to fill the gap left when *Tartuffe* was banned.
and to strike back at the sponsors of the ban. If these were the author's only motives, which is doubtful, the play achieved its objectives. It was first acted at the Palais-Royal in February, 1665 and ran for fifteen very profitable performances. Its run was cut short by the forthcoming Easter ceremonies, but it probably would have been included in the repertory the following season had it not incited almost as much antipathy from the same factions as Tartuffe had. Some historians have concluded that Molière sacrificed Don Juan for the annual subsidy his company would be ensured if they were granted the title of Troupe du Roy and for the royal promise of further consideration for Tartuffe. Obviously, the acceptance of Tartuffe was extremely important to him, and he may have been willing to pay for these conditions at the expense of Don Juan. Four years after Molière's death, his widow gave Thomas Corneille the rights to the play which he converted into tame alexandrines. This is the version which has been used for the extremely few performances given in France until this century.

Don Juan remained dormant for the next hundred years until Mozart wrote Don Giovanni in 1787. Lord Byron's rebellious and aristocratic Don Juan appeared in 1819. In this version he is a more passive figure, seduced as much as he is seducer. Don Juan Tenorio by Jose Zorrilla y Moral was first produced in 1844 and is still performed in Spain and Mexico on All Saints' Day. Since the nineteenth
century demanded a happy ending. Zorrilla's Don Juan repents in the final scene and is saved.

If the figure of Don Juan, as he is represented in the original and traditional concept, is considered as the main theme of the Molière version and the subsequent treatments, then the disappearance of this figure as the stature of the female rose in a Protestant, middle class society partially accounts for the lack of productions. The only way in which this theme could have been treated in recent times is as Bernard Shaw has done in Man and Superman. He is the victim here rather than the victor. In his introduction to the play, addressed "To Arthur Bingham Walkley," Shaw states that Mozart's Don Juan was the last representation of the original character possible.

Civilized society is one huge bourgeoisie: no nobleman dares now shock his grocer. The women . . . are become equally dangerous: the sex is aggressive, powerful; when women are wronged they do not group themselves pathetically to sing "Protegga il gristo cielo": they group formidable legal and social weapons, and retaliate. Political parties are wrecked and public careers are undone by a single indiscretion. A man had better have all the statues in London to supper with him, ugly as they are, than be brought to the bar of the Nonconformist conscience by Donna Elvira. Excommunication has become almost as serious a business as it was in the tenth century. 4

Although it seems incredible, the consensus of critical opinion in the last three hundred years regarding Molière's *Don Juan* appears to be founded upon the idea that its main theme is the presentation of libertine propaganda. The play is considered to be the product of an angry mind hastily combining an alien legend and a popular spectacular to ensure a certain financial success. Hence, the characterizations are found to be faulty and inconsistent, the theme distasteful and problematical, and the construction uneven, exhibiting the Molière brilliance only at brief moments.

Within the last thirty years, however, there has developed a new body of critical thought. It has come about not as a result of newly discovered material on Molière or the play, but because recent research has discarded the old method of fitting the play to the preconceived measure of French neoclassical form and style and instead, seeks understanding from an internal analysis of the play itself. This revolution in the study of Molière has affected no other play quite as much as it has *Don Juan*. The consensus of critical opinion has now almost completely reversed itself and the play is held to be a profound, coherent piece of human comedy and a fascinating experiment in form. The unity previously dispaired of is now discovered to exist in the character of

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5. W. G. Moore, James Doolittle, Lionel Gossman, Judd D. Hubert, and Jacques Arnavon are the principal spokesmen of the group.
Don Juan as it is revealed in his encounters with the various other characters. Each character, in turn, represents a different aspect of man's most common relationships, his servants, his wife, his parents, his creditors, and those of lower social status. As each one divulges the key to his own existence, he reveals another facet of Don Juan's character. Together they present a synthesis of the themes to be found singly in the other plays such as the subject of devotion in Tartuffe, money in l'Avare, medicine in le Malade imaginaire, marriage in l'Ecole des femmes, arts and sciences in les Femmes savantes, and the honnêteté of le Misanthrope. In each encounter the theme that individual freedom at the expense of social institutions and conventions simply cannot be tolerated by the society is reiterated. Heaven, in the seventeenth century scheme of things, will eventually destroy the offending individual. By refusing to repent, however, Don Juan maintains his individual freedom; by his destruction, society maintains its equilibrium.

Perhaps it is only now in this century as life has become incredibly complex, that we have come to recognize the similarity between the paradox in Don Juan and in that of our own time. There cannot be many people who, at one time or another, have not felt themselves caught in the vice of the institutions we have created, their lives controlled by the machines of our own invention.
Just as the characters in *Don Juan*, and possibly even more so, we must live according to relentless social and religious laws external to us. The laws derive their force from our acceptance of them, and ironically, those who do not accept them lose their physical existence while those who do accept them without question or thought, for the most part, lose their essential human dignity. The characters Don Juan encounters have accepted the laws and have substituted empty gestures for the real, meaningful relationships between humanity and nature upon which the laws are founded. Sganarelle, constantly expounding this approach to life, presents one extreme while Don Juan, opposing it with equal vigor, presents the opposite extreme. In the end, Don Juan is deprived of his existence for his refusal to play the game: Sganarelle is deprived of the wages and the luxury of his former existence for which he betrayed his dignity as a human being.

Viewing the play in this manner, the scene with The Poor Man (III. ii) is a key one. The Poor Man has found a way of life in harmony with nature, with his fellow man, and with God in which he possesses enough strength of conviction to withstand Don Juan's temptation. Don Juan, having tested this conviction and integrity, and finding the man unwilling to betray himself and his beliefs, respects and rewards him "... for the love of humanity." This is the ideal of human excellence sought for in the play and found only in a single character.
What Molière is saying in this play is, in essence, that complete freedom for the individual is not possible in organized society, yet individuals can no longer exist without organized society. The task of the individual in this paradox, then, is to create a way of life in which his behavior toward his fellow human beings, his relationships with nature, and his own integrity as an individual are motivated by the principles upon which the laws of society are founded, that is, reason, moderation, sincerity, and simplicity, rather than the grotesque distortions of the conventions fostered by the social institutions and laws as such.

In Don Juan as with Tartuffe, Molière has used multiple sources to plot the action and familiar figures from his own environment to structure the characters, but his comic genius and universal outlook have transformed these elements into a profound statement upon the basic nature of mankind.
CHAPTER IV

THE DESIGN: FINAL INTERPRETATION

AND VISUAL CONCEPT

It is now the task of the art director to reconsider his intuitive reactions, his preliminary interpretation of the play, to incorporate into it the information and understanding he has accumulated in the research, and to make the final decisions concerning the visual image he feels must be projected and the most effective methods of evoking the response he desires.

The two outstanding productions of this play, which probably represent at least a quarter of the total number, presented in Paris by Louis Jouvet in 1947 and Jean Vilar in 1953 were partially responsible for the renewed interest of the critics and historians. Christian Berard designed the Jouvet production which is briefly described as "Sumptuous and pseudoclassical" with "Very Spanish costumes." Vilar's production was somewhat less baroque in feeling with modified French period costumes.

Earlier in the century Meyerhold did a production of Don Juan in St. Petersburg in 1910. In discussing his approach he says that:

The public will only . . . appreciate the full sublety of this charming comedy if it enters at once into a rapport with the smallest facets of the epoch in which the work was created. . . . In order to make the modern spectator listen to the perforations without getting bored, in order to make him follow a whole series of dialogues without finding them remote, it is necessary to remind him insistently throughout the play of all those thousands of looms of the Lyonnaise manufactories which supplied the silk for the monstrously large court of Louis XIV, of the Hotel des Gobelins, that veritable city of painters, sculptors, jewelers, cabinetmakers, of the furniture built under the superintendence of the outstanding artist Le Brun, of all those craftsmen who made mirrors and lace according to the Venetian models, stockings according to the English, cloth according to the Dutch, tin and copper according to the Germans . . . to reveal as behind an incense-laden veil the perfumed and gilded realm of Versailles. 7

Obviously, what Meyerhold is actually saying is that according to three hundred years of literary criticism _Don Juan_ is simply not a very good play, and consequently, it could not possibly hold the interest of his 1910 audience on its own merit. Under the circumstances, the only thing to do was bury the play in the most elaborate, sumptuous setting he could devise, one in which they could become completely immersed during the most boring sequences.

This quotation is modified somewhat when considered in the context of the whole excerpt, and much of what he writes in a general nature about the designer's approach is valuable, but the specific

material quoted here serves as a superb illustration of the lack of understanding with which this play has been approached until recent years.

At this point, the designer is probably reasonably sure of the direction the staging of the play will take. It seems wise, however, to consider as many other feasible, visual interpretations as possible before the final commitment is made. If nothing else, they should serve to confirm the validity of his present concept.

Among the possibilities to be examined here are the author's stage directions for the play. Molière, for unknown reasons, selected Sicily for the setting of the play with the scenes moving from the exterior of a palace, to a village by the seashore, through a forest, to an interior scene, and ending finally in the countryside near the tomb of the Commander. One possible interpretation, therefore, would be to present the play against a Sicilian background which could be realistic or stylized to varying degrees. The idea is eliminated almost immediately, however. It has no relationship to either the Spanish origin of the play or to the French version of it. It offers only a kind of neutral, Latin-Mediterranean background which would be far more suitable for the Tirso de Molina or Zorrilla plays than for Molière.

8 It would be interesting to try to discover why the author chose Sicily for his setting. No information pertaining to this was encountered in the course of the present research.
On the stage of the Palais-Royal, where there was little variation in settings, it would have been presented on a bare stage between two fixed architecturally decorated sets of wings, which could not have been used due to the audience seated on either side of the stage, or between a third set of legs in front of an unobtrusive backdrop with a set piece or two, such as a table and chair. Candles in chandeliers hung a short distance over the actors' heads on the forestage where they were accustomed to playing most of the scenes, flanked on both sides by the select members of the audience. It is reported that the contemporary dress and speeches of the actors, except for the members of the company playing the traditional commedia parts, were difficult to distinguish from those of the audience. One cannot help but wonder how the special effects called for in the play were handled in this situation. They no doubt involved the use of the elaborate machinery devised by the Renaissance Italians, but its effects upon the portion of the audience seated on stage must have been rather unnerving even though they were infinitely more attuned to theatricality and artifice than the audiences of today.

This approach would be suitable only if the objectives of the presentation were to offer historically authentic duplication of the original production. As such, it would be a fascinating project, but undoubtedly a more representative work could be selected, preferably one in which
the verse style of period was employed, as *le Misanthrope*, for instance.

Then there is Meyerhold's approach which tries to capture the general flavor of the time and place in which the play was written by recreating it through its visual detail. This may be accomplished in the almost hyper-realistic manner Meyerhold describes, or by extracting and stylizing the most characteristic elements. In either case there is the danger that the resulting design may not have much to do with the theme or the values expressed in the play itself, or as in Meyerhold's approach, the design may actually obscure them. One of the most essential characteristics of *Don Juan* is that the subject content and characters transcend any particular time and place. A designer may choose to include any number of references to the origin of the play or he may call attention to the various period elements it contains, but never should this be done at the expense of its real values which stand outside the boundaries of the period in which it was written.

There is, on the other hand, the possibility of the opposite extreme. The play could be presented in contemporary style *à la* Tyrone Guthrie with either a completely abstract background utilizing simple geometric shapes or a typical suberbia U.S.A. setting with the characters appearing in various forms of modern dress. This concept offers some interesting problems for a creative imagination to explore,
but, here again, many of the most important elements of the play itself would be lost. The principle merit of this approach lies in its emphasis on the fact that twentieth century individuals face the same dilemma as those of the seventeenth century. The fundamental problem is the same, but in this century the individual's revolt against society has taken different forms. As Shaw points out, a traditional Don Juan is an anachronism in our time and place. Hence, presenting a modern interpolation would defeat the purpose of the production in many ways.

The problem, then, is to create a visual expression which retains the idea that this was Molière writing in 1665 about the problems of individual existence in an organized society, but an expression which also projects the idea that the problem itself has plagued man from the earliest civilizations to the present day.

The author repeatedly stresses this duality in both the form and content of the play. He chose to discard the dictates of the literary form considered proper in his age for a freer, more experimental one that transcends the boundaries of time and place. In his other works he only bends the seventeenth century neoclassical formula slightly to conform to his own purposes. In Don Juan, he does not completely violate it, he simply ignores it. The characters here are not the usual, generalized portraits of seventeenth century types, but obviously abstracted, broader symbols of humanity.
The visual expression must, in addition, preserve the fact that the play is a comedy. It is not a comedy of manners, situation, or character, in the traditional sense, nor is it a farce. Don Juan is a comedy of life which synthesizes all these elements. The comedy is derived from the human predicament and is expressed through irony, paradox, and farce. Its mood and atmosphere are dark. As previously mentioned, its spirit is close to that of the Black Comedy of recent years.

The traditional style and methods of the commedia dell'arte are also an integral part of this play. These, like the other essential characteristics of Don Juan, however, have a timeless, universal quality. One should be reminded that this form of entertainment originated in the earliest times and that its elements survive in the comic techniques of the present day.

These are the most fundamental considerations upon which the art director must base his visual interpretation. If a list of the various visual images and associations evoked by these ideas and concepts were compiled it would include such words as abstract, dark, angular, contrast, intensity, tension, black, stylize, color, structure, balance, simplicity, red, green, blue, monumental, space, flowing, yellow, fast, realism, light, white, unity, clarity, sharp and variety. These, then, are the images to be translated into a meaningful, functional form.
The Set

The sketch of the final design presented here evolved through several variations on paper and from a scale model (Fig. 1). Basically, it is a unit set, a stage on a stage, employing a highly stylized interpretation of the typical wooden structures hastily put together by itinerant troupes of commedia players throughout Europe for hundreds of years (Figs. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11). It provides for a division of the vertical space into three areas; the platform of the stage symbolizing the world or earth on which the drama takes place, the superstructure and substructure representing, respectively, the heaven and hell so frequently referred to in the play (Fig. 3).

The principal scenes are played on the platform with the action flowing freely on and off of it (Figs. 4, 5, 6). It thus emphasizes the unity and continuity of the character of Don Juan in contrast to the fâcheux technique used in the presentation of the other characters. The presence of the actors bring the stage to life. In their absence, it is hollow and empty. A trap door is located in the surface of the platform to allow for Don Juan's defiant exit into hell in the final scene.

A front curtain is used for the commedia stage as it was for most of the authentic structures, but without the hole in the center for the narrator's head (Fig. 2). The house curtain is omitted as it was in
the Parisian theaters of the seventeenth century where there was no real separation of audience and actor. Much of the commedia action takes place on the main stage floor, and on the steps of the commedia stage. At several points, it involves direct contact with the audience as it did in Molière's time.

Three sets of legs and a backdrop provide the masking for the main stage and also serve as a reminder of Molière's theater. The offstage portion of the legs are black velour. Black scrim is used for the onstage portion to provide transparency and variation in texture and color. The transparency prevents heaviness and allows partial exposure of the lighting equipment, which is employed functionally as well as to add emphasis to the theatrical quality of the set, placed between the onstage portions of the first two sets of legs.

The onstage legs and two additional scrim panels are hung at diagonals on the last masking pipe in order to provide variety and to repeat the angular pattern of the commedia stage.

Lighting, though not officially a part of this thesis, is a basic factor in any stage design. The lighting for this particular design was not simple. The general lighting for the commedia stage had to be confined to the area of the raised platform and had to be more intense than the general lighting for the main stage. Several of the scenes required specific effects in which both overhead and sidelighting were employed,
Instruments were generally left exposed, as previously stated, to heighten the feeling of theatricality.

Color, being the most universal and timeless of the fundamentals of visual expression, was a crucial ingredient of the design. Striplights placed on the main stage floor provided strong intensities of the primary and secondary hues used to color the backdrop or skytab.

Photographs seldom capture subtleties and often do not reproduce color well. The ones presented here are no exception. They do, however, offer some indication of the overall design concept.
Fig. 1. Preliminary Sketch of Set
Fig. 2. Photographs, Front Curtain and Set with Warm and Cool Backdrops
Fig. 3. Photographs, Close-up of Set and Step Unit.
Fig. 4. Photographs, Sequences One and Two, Act V. vi
Fig. 5. Photographs, Sequences Three and Four, Act V. vi
ACT V. vi

Fig. 6. Photographs, Sequences Five and Six, Act V. vi.
Fig. 7. Ground Plan and Hanging Plot
Fig. 8. Working Drawing #1, Construction of Platform
Fig. 9. Working Drawing #2, Surface of Platform

NOTES: USE 6 SHEETS OF 5/8" PLYWOOD TO COVER PLATFORM AS SHOWN. USE REMAINDER FOR TRAP DOORS. PAD SURFACE WITH RUG PADDING AND CORRUGATED CARDBOARD. COVER WITH MUSLIN, SIZE AND PRINT WITH LATEX.

PLAY: "DON JUAN"
ALL SCENES SCALE: \( \frac{1}{4}" = 1' = 0" \\
DESIGNER: C.R.P. PORTER
APPROVED BY: R.B.
Fig. 10. Working Drawing #3, Construction of Step Unit
Fig. 11. Working Drawing #4. Construction of Superstructure

**SUPERSTRUCTURE: REAR OF PLATFORM**

- **NOTES:** Use 2" x 2" strap iron on back of joints where necessary for stability. Adjust height of proscenium according to make of house to eliminate illusion of forward tilt. Connect front and rear superstructure with 2" x 2". Cut two 11'-6" long. Brace angles with strap iron.

**PLAY:** Don Juan

**WORKING DRAWING #4**

**ALL SCENES**

**SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"**

**DESIGNER:** C.B. Porter

**APPROVED BY:** XCB
The Costumes

This same general approach and interpretation applies to all facets of the design, of course, and is only adapted to express different aspects of the same principles or adjusted to the requirements of the different media. The designs for the costumes, therefore, progressed through the evolutions already described regarding the overall interpretation.

It should again be pointed out that the most essential quality of the characters in Don Juan is that they exist primarily as symbols, they are abstractions of the real people they represent and must be presented as such to emphasize this quality. If they are allowed to become realistic individuals, then a large portion of the value of this play will be lost.

Therefore, a combination of the fundamentals of art, applied according to theatrical requirements, which will produce a timeless, universal, symbolic impression to echo and heighten the most essential values and elements of the play is sought. The costumes must, in addition, give some indication of the relationships between the characters as well as establish the nature and mood of the individual figures (Fig. 12).

The final visual interpretation takes form in simple, curved outlines and high intensities of the primary and secondary hues for the
principal characters with higher, less intense, values in stylized geometric patterns for the commedia characters. The fabrics have a matte finish and are fairly heavy to maintain the feeling of simplicity and to concentrate attention on line and color. Trimmings and small details are omitted or minimized to prevent any distraction from the main idea.

There are three basic character divisions. Don Juan, first of all, must stand alone, but he must also reinforce a sense of unity. His costume should conform to the common image of the courtier-cavalier-swashbuckler-individualistic breed of men who have existed in every age without becoming representational of any particular period or a caricature of the type. There must be a feeling of virility and masculinity, but again, it must be an abstract quality rather than any particular definition. The cut and fabric of costume must also be especially suitable for a great deal of physical action. It must contain elements which can be varied during the course of the play (Figs. 13, 14).

Red was selected as the hue to best denote the qualities of the character and provide the necessary dominance and unity throughout the scenes. Double-knit jersey was used for the trousers and cape; corduroy for the doublet and crepe for the shirt. The robe Don Juan wears in Act V is a reference to the religious orders the author is satirizing, but also serves to protect his costume during the action of the final scenes (Fig. 15).
The second division of characters includes the principals, Sganarelle, Dona Elvira, Don Carlos, Don Alonse, Don Luis, and M. Dimanche. To each costume in this group the same basic principles were applied with the addition of a comic element. Sganarelle appears in a simplified, stylized version of the traditional commedia costume assigned to this character which Molière wore when he acted the part. The color was selected to emphasize the nature of the character and to coordinate with that of Don Juan and the other costumes since Sganarelle is on stage in almost every scene. The material is corduroy with felt used for the commedia detail. The disguise he wears in Act III is a parody of the gown worn by the medical profession in the seventeenth century (Figs. 16, 17).

Dona Elvira is costumed in an intense blue-violet cloak for her first scene in Act I, with three diamonds, the most representative commedia motif, placed vertically down the center. The gown she wears in Act IV is a medium value, intense blue-green to which is added a wrist-length veil appliqued with teardrops. The materials are corduroy and bonded crepe. These hues were chosen to connote passion, uncontrollable emotion, melancholy, and weeping (Figs. 18, 19). The blue-violet was also intended to relate to the red-violet worn by Don Luis, the hue commonly used to indicate royalty, paternalism, and nobility. The pretentiousness of the old man is indicated by the
contrast between this color and the foolishly striped hose and dickey. The over-garment is a light-weight wool. The hose and dickey are of bonded jersey (Figs. 22, 23).

In Don Carlos we have a character who indicates he would like to behave as his instincts dictate, hence the basic color of blue, but who is unable to break free from the social conventions which dictate his overt behavior, thus depicted by the equally strong, contrasting hues of the geometric patterns of his jacket.

There is no conflict of this nature in Don Alonse. His costume is of bold stripes and intense orange to suggest the rage of a simple mind which has been thwarted from its objective. The materials for both costumes are orlon knits and heavy cotton blends. Both characters wear parodies of the typical cavalier style of hat (Figs. 20, 21).

M. Dimanche wears the green of the merchant in a simple overgarment with obviously large pockets on either side of the front. The smaller, tense diamond pattern is used for the dickey and pocket detail here to project the anxiety and agitation of this figure (Figs. 22, 23).

The costume of the Commander, or Statue, parodies the Roman toga in accord with Molière's obvious satire on the neoclassical affectations of his society (Fig. 24).

The Poor Man's costume conforms to the most commonly held mental image of such a figure. The color green was selected to denote the character's harmony with his forest environment (Fig. 24).
The commedia dell'arte troupe constitute the third group of characters. Since it was neither desirable nor practical to duplicate the authentic costumes, the most characteristic features of these were extracted, stylized, and translated into versions which functioned aesthetically in the context of the design.

The material used was a medium grade of one hundred per cent cotton hopsacking. It was dyed in a base hue, the patterns were then drawn on it and painted by hand. A permanent black ink was then applied to define the geometric patterns. Unfortunately, most of the color was lost and the patterns are not distinct in the photographs.

Experiments and tests extending over a period of several weeks were made to determine the qualities and potential of the various readily available dyes. Their permanency, the intensities and values they produced, the various methods of application, the possibilities of mixing a full range of hues from the three primaries, and the characteristics of the fabric to be used had to be ascertained.

The first tests were made with aniline dyes. These provided exceptional clarity and produced strong intensities particularly in the higher value range when blended. Spreading and bleeding occurred when two hues were used in close proximity, however, even when the areas were blocked with gum arabic. They also proved to have very little permanency and are toxic in some hues.
Textile paints were tried next. These proved difficult to work with and impractical for large areas. They are also prohibitive in cost.

Of the permanent dyes, as opposed to tints, Liquid Rit proved the most satisfactory. Putnam Dyes were also tried and found to be exceedingly permanent. They are excellent for the dark hues and for lower values. Their primary disadvantage is that they come in powder form which is more difficult to use, and there is always the danger of undissolved crystals. This was also the case with Tintex, and it was slightly lacking in clarity and permanency. The Liquid Rit provides the ease and safety of a premixed solution, which also saves time, its hues are easily blended and retain their clarity and intensity when mixed, it is permanent and presents no problems of spreading or bleeding, and it is reasonable in price. It is not yet available in a wide range of hues, but no difficulty was encountered in obtaining a sufficient variety from the primary and secondary hues now on the market. With all the dyes tested it was found that most hues had more depth and intensity when they were obtained in successive steps building toward the final hue desired. A much truer, more brilliant orange, for instance, was produced by dyeing the fabric in a strong solution of yellow first, and then while still wet, in a weak solution of red. Red dyes were rather uniformly disappointing. It is difficult to produce a clear spectrum
red. Again, however, the results were more satisfactory when a yellow base was used. This process is indispensable in achieving a deep, true black. Blends of red and green produced the richest browns. Small amounts of salt added to the solution even when the contents of the dye container specify salt as an ingredient, appeared to increase both clarity and permanency slightly.

The general rule to be followed when working with dyes is to proceed from light to dark. There are many similarities between the methods used in this medium and in those of watercolor. The fundamentals of the latter serve as a guide, for the use of dyes.

There are a great many variables to be considered when deciding on a process to be followed in dyeing costumes; the type of fabric to be used, the quantity of material to be dyed, the range of hues and the effects desired are among the most important.

In this instance, the objective was to obtain clear high values of the same hues, the primaries and secondaries, that were used in the costumes of the principles in order to establish both a relationship and a distinction. This group of characters performed a dual function in reproducing the traditional commedia dell'arte techniques and routines, so much a part of Molière's theater and works, and in symbolizing the concept of anonymous mankind as a whole throughout the course of the action. The commedia costumes were intended to
reflect and project this duality. The most distinctive elements of traditional costumes had to be stylized and combined to produce an effect that was distinctive, but unobtrusive (Figs. 27, 28, 29).

As stated, the fabric was dyed the base color with the contrasting color painted over it. This process was most successful when green or orange was painted over a yellow base. Where analogous hues were not used, as with red and green, it was necessary to apply the dyes by hand.

The fabric was first cut for the desired costume, dyed in lots according to the base hues, the patterns drawn and painted on it, and the pieces sewn together. It was much less difficult to apply the patterns before the pieces were attached and fitted.

In retrospect, however, it is recommended that the quantity of material needed for the costume be estimated and dyed intact to reduce the problem of raveling edges. An additional amount of material should always be dyed in each basic hue to provide for unexpected modifications.

The tights for the male costumes were white lycra which took the dye exceedingly well. The caps and hats worn by this group are primarily stylized versions of the traditional headgear.

Within the commédia troupe, a slight distinction must be made between the characters of Gusman, Charlotte, Pierrot, and
Mathurine and the rest of the troupe. They occupy a position midway between the principals and the rest of the commedia players. Hence, the hues of their costumes are slightly more intense and lower in value, the patterns are larger and more distinct, and there is more detail (Figs. 25, 26).
Fig. 12. Costume Plot
Fig. 13. Don Juan: Sketch & Photograph of Basic Costume
Fig. 14. Don Juan: Sketches and Photograph - Variations of Costume
Fig. 15. Don Juan: Photographs of Costume Act V
Fig. 16. Sganarelle: Sketches for Costume
Fig. 17. Sganarelle: Photographs of Costume
Fig. 18. Dona Elvira: Sketches for Costume
Fig. 19. Dona Elvira: Photographs of Costume
Fig. 20. Don Carlos, Don Alonse: Sketches for Costumes
Fig. 21. Don Carlos, Don Alonse: Photographs of Costumes
Fig. 22. Don Luis, M. Dimanche: Sketches for Costumes
Fig. 23. Don Luis, M. Dimanche: Photographs of Costumes
Fig. 24. The Poor Man, The Statue: Sketches and Photographs of Costumes
Fig. 25. Charlotte, Mathurine, and Pierrot: Sketches and Photograph of Costume
Fig. 26. Gusman: Sketch and Photograph of Costume
Fig. 27. Commedia Company: Sketches for Costumes
Fig. 29. Commedia Company: Photographs of Costumes
The Properties

The properties used were reduced to a minimum, the commedia players themselves were used to provide the pieces of furniture called for in Act IV, and were designed to heighten the theatricality of the production (Fig. 30). Each was intended to project the idea that it was obviously an artificial, stage property, and in most cases, the intent was to parody the real object it represented (Figs. 31, 33). Again, the primary and secondary hues were used at maximum intensities. Often, as in the case of the swords used by the commedia troupe, the design originated in the authentic objects (Fig. 32).

A variety of materials was used, but in most cases, the objects were cut from solid wood or 3/4 inch plywood, painted with scene paint, and coated with clear shellac where necessary. The sword blades were wrapped with muslin to prevent chipping before they were painted.

The use of the masks in this production has multiple implications. They act as a timeless symbol of theatricality in general and of the commedia dell'arte in particular, and they reinforce the idea that the characters in this play are human beings in disguise from themselves and from their fellow human beings (Fig. 34).
The basic forms of the masks were molded of Celastic and allowed to dry thoroughly. The apertures were then cut out, the features added, and the dowels attached. Finally, they were sprayed with black enamel and the detail was painted by hand.
# PROPERTY LIST

**DON JUAN**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACT</th>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>CHARACTER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PRELUDE TO ACT I</strong></td>
<td>12 HALF-MASKS; 3 FULL MASKS; CONFETTI.</td>
<td>Commedia Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 SWORDS</td>
<td>Don Carlos, Don Alonso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SHEAF OF ACCOUNTS</td>
<td>M. Dimanche</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WALKING STICK</td>
<td>Don Luis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT I.</td>
<td>SNUFF BOX</td>
<td>Sganarelle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT II.</td>
<td>2 GOLD COINS</td>
<td>Pierrot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 WAVES; 2 BOATS; 1 FISHING POLE; 1 OAR; 3 STOOLS; 1 ROSE; 1 LUTE;</td>
<td>Don Juan, Sganarelle; Commedia Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT III.</td>
<td>1 MIRROR; 1 BRUSH; 1 COMB; 1 ATOMIZER.</td>
<td>Don Juan, Sganarelle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT IV.</td>
<td>2 SWORDS</td>
<td>Don Juan, Sganarelle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 MEDICAL BOOK</td>
<td>Sganarelle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 SWORDS; 5 HORSES</td>
<td>Commedia Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 GOLD COIN</td>
<td>Don Juan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT V.</td>
<td>6 SWORDS; 3 HORSES</td>
<td>Commedia Company, Don Juan, Don Carlos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 TREE BRANCHES</td>
<td>Commedia Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT VI.</td>
<td>ALL PIECES OF FURNITURE ARE ACTORS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT VII.</td>
<td>SHEAF OF ACCOUNTS</td>
<td>M. Dimanche</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WALKING STICK</td>
<td>Don Luis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT VIII.</td>
<td>1 TRAY OF FOOD; 1 WINE BOTTLE-3 GLASSES; 3 PLATES; 1 HATPIN.</td>
<td>Don Juan, Sganarelle, Commedia Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT IX.</td>
<td>TORCH</td>
<td>Statue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT X.</td>
<td>CROSS</td>
<td>Don Juan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT XI.</td>
<td>SCYTHE; 1 SWORD</td>
<td>Commedia Player and Don Juan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8 PAIR OF SILK FLAMES; 2 WHIPS</td>
<td>Commedia Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 SWORDS</td>
<td>Don Carlos, Don Alonso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WALKING STICK</td>
<td>Don Luis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 30. Property List
Fig. 31. Working Drawings and Photograph of Properties, Act II
Fig. 32. Working Drawings and Photographs of Properties, Act III, i, iv
Fig. 33. Working Drawings for Properties Used in Various Scenes
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In the preceding chapters the objectives have been, first of all, to present a new critical and visual interpretation of a badly misunderstood, and consequently, rarely performed play, and secondly, to define and outline the creative process through which an art director who aspires to be a genuine artist progresses in achieving these goals.

When a reconsideration of Molière's Don Juan was conducted through an internal analysis of the play itself, rather than measuring its value by the literary standards of the period in which it was written, the play was found to contain a profound, timeless, and universal statement upon the nature of mankind presented in an intentionally experimental comic form.

The problem, then, was to seek an equally new visual concept which would capture and project this interpretation and yet retain references to the origin of the play. Through research and experimentation a concept evolved in which the abstract elements of visual expression, as color, line, and shape, were incorporated with the stylized or abstracted elements most characteristic of this author and his world, as the scheme and staging of Molière's theater and
the conventions of the *commedia dell'arte*. The former served to emphasize the timeless, universal observations and values expressed in the play while the latter functioned as specific references pertaining to the particular time and place. Obviously, the final concept and design had to be one which served the practical and functional requirements of the play as well. The set and costumes had to be constructed to allow and withstand a great deal of physical action and movement, and the properties had to be strong and easily handled. Thus, new materials and methods of construction were tested to find solutions to both the practical and aesthetic problems involved. These proved the source of many invaluable learning experiences for everyone involved in the production.

Hopefully, the concepts and ideas projected in this production will serve to foster further interest in this exciting piece of dramatic literature.
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