

BIG RIVER

THE ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN



CAPSTONE NARRATIVE
UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI: COLLEGE-CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC
COHEN FAMILY STUDIO THEATER, CINCINNATI, OH
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KATELYN BUDKE



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There have been many people who have influenced and supported me over the years, but there are certain individuals I would like to thank:

Michelle Kozlowski, Lizbee Hannah and Dave Bell for helping me to ignite the theater bug in me and for influencing me to pursue a major in theater.

My professors at University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music (CCM), Michael Blankenship, Mark Halpin, Kat Miller and Tom Umfrid. During my four years at CCM, each has given me their endless support, knowledge, stories, humor and each has encouraged me to branch out of my comfort zone to help me become the individual I am today.

Lastly, I would like to thank my parents for their continual love and for noticing what my passions were when I didn't notice them myself and providing me access to explore and learn about those passions.



INTRODUCTION

In January 2015, I was given the task of designing the musical Big River to open the 2015-16 season in the Cohen Family Studio Theater. My initial reaction to this moment was nerves, not about the show but the fact that I was designing my first realized show. I had been assistant scenic designer for Carrie: the Musical and Living Dead in Denmark in the Cohen Theater and now it was my turn. The following narrative will recount my process of designing Big River. Starting with the initial meetings with the director right up until the show opened in October 2015.

PRODUCTION STAFF

Director: Vince DeGeorge

Music Director: Steve Goers

Choreographer: Patti James

Dialect Coach: D'Arcy Smith

Stage Manager: Michael Medina

Scenic Designer: Katelyn Budke

Lighting Designer: CJ Mellides

Sound Designer: Matt D. Birchmeier

Costume Designer: Tommy Cobau

Hair & Makeup Designer: Shannon Hensley

HISTORY

SYNOPSIS

Big River: *The Adventure of Huckleberry Finn* is a musical based on the sequel of Tom Sawyer, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, written by Mark Twain in 1884. At the beginning of the story, we meet the narrator Huckleberry Finn in Missouri, telling the audience that Tom Sawyer and himself found buried treasure; this happened at the end of Tom Sawyer. Huck is told that he needs to become 'civilized' and learn to read and write by the whole town including Huck's guardians, the Widow Douglas, Miss Watson and Judge Thatcher. To get away from the scrutiny, Huck sneaks out of his room and meets Tom Sawyer and a group of local boys at Injun Joe's Cave. There the boys band together to become robbers and pillage the town. Huck on his way home finds his father Pap waiting for him to take his portion of the treasure. Huck tells Pap that he signed the money over to Judge Thatcher for safe keeping. Pap then takes Huck back to his cabin to live with him. Huck then while Pap is away fakes his death by scattering the blood of a pig around the cabin to make it appear that Huck was murdered. Huck then escapes and hides out on a near by island; Jackson Island. There, Huck meets Jim, a runaway slave of Miss Watson. He has runaway to avoid being sold down to New Orleans and get seperated from his family. Huck offers to help Jim gain his freedom in the north so he can earn enough money to buy his family out of slavery. The two set off down the Mississippi River on a raft and while on their adventure they come across two con men after Huck and Jim missed the mouth of the Ohio River. The two con men commendeer the raft and convince Huck and Jim that they are the long lost Duke of Bridgewater and King to the French throne. After making a stop in Bricktown, Arkansas, the King and the Duke learn of a local family's deceased relative's fortune. The King and the Duke show up to the funeral as the dead relative's astranged brothers and take the money. Huck seeing what the two had done take the money and put it in the coffin. Huck returns to the raft to find the Duke tared and feathered by the town becuase they findout that the King and the Duke were imposters. The Duke tells Huck that he sold Jim to a local farmer Phelps, so Huck sets out to go free Jim. Huck shows up at the Phelps farm and is mistaken by the Phelps for being Tom Sawyer, their nephew. Huck catches Tom coming to the farm explains the situation and agrees to help free Jim. The three get caught and Tom gets shot in the leg by farmer Phelps. In order for Tom to get a doctor, Jim gives up his freedom to save Tom's life. Just when Jim was about to be chained back up, Tom states that Miss Watson had dies and in her will had granted Jim his freedom. Huck and Jim say goodbye to one another and part ways.



A book illustration from the 1885 edition of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* drawn by E.W. Kemble.

“All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called *Huckleberry Finn*”. -Ernest Hemingway



The 2003 Revival Production of *Big River*.

NOVEL

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn was written by American writer Mark Twain and published in 1884. It is called by many as the first “Great American Novel” and considered by some as one of the best works of literature in the American Canon. In today’s day and age, the novel is on some reading lists for high school English classes but back when it was initially released it was banned from the shelves. It was banned from all schools and libraries because of its crude language, the use of racial slurs and stereotypes, even despite people stating that the novel is pro anti-racist. Despite people’s points of view on the novel, the novel and Twain’s other works have collectively created a distinctive form of writing based on themes and language from America back during the mid 19th century. This novel has stayed a prominent piece of literature not just in the U.S. but the world because its themes are universal and are still prominent in today’s culture.

It acknowledges how far we have come but also how far we still have to go.

MUSICAL ADAPTATION

The musical adaptation had music and lyrics written by Roger Williams and a book written by William Hauptman. The music was written in a blue grass, folk style to emphasize the setting of the novel. The first productions were done at the American Repertory

Theater in Cambridge, Connecticut and at the La Jolla Playhouse in San Diego, California in 1984, 100 years after the novel was written. The production was then transferred to the Great White Way in 1985 to the Eugene O’Neill Theater with director Des McAnuff at the helm. The show opened on April 25, 1985 and closed on September 20, 1987, running for 1,005 performances. After the initial production closed there have been a couple revivals of the show, one on Broadway in 2003 with a cast of hearing and deaf actors and one done by Goodspeed Musicals at the Connecticut



Theater in 2008. A U.S. tour was also launched in 2004 after the 2003 revival closed.

Production photo from the 1985 production of *Big River*.

DESIGN PROCESS

On the first day back from Christmas break of 2015, my scenic design professor and advisor for my show, Tom Umfrid, pulled me aside from Scenic Art class and told me that I was designing the fall studio musical *Big River* for the 2015-16 season. To be honest I had never heard of

the musical. After class I did the natural thing and Googled the production and its history. I had not been given the script yet, to gain a better idea of backstory of the show, I listened to the audiobook of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Along with reading the source material I did research on what life was like back during the 1840s. I watched documentaries about slavery in the south and about Mark Twain's life and what life was like on steamboats traveling up and down on the Mississippi River.

On February 13th, I have my first meeting with the director of the production Vince DeGeorge, a musical theater faculty member. In the fall of 2013, I was the assistant to the designer Sara Beth Hall on the studios production of *Carrie: The Musical*, that was directed by Aubrey Berg, and assisting him with choreography was Vince, who was a visiting faculty member in his first year. I never got to know him too well during the production process of *Carrie* but from my first impression was that he was very dedicated to his work and showed a huge passion for the art of musical theater. I didn't have the chance to read over the libretto for *Big River* before my first meeting with Vince because I hadn't received a copy of the material yet. I'm going to the initial meeting with just the background research I have done and listening to the music of the show. But I think that this allowed for me to fully take in the ideas and thoughts he came up with and have those in mind when I read the libretto. There were two things that we discussed and agreed on at that meeting. The first thing was that the set had to be a unit set based on budgetary restrictions. The second was the placement of the show in the apse end of the Cohen Family Studio Theater to allow for multiple entry points for the actors to use and to utilize what the theater had to offer us. *Big River* was slotted in the first supported show spot and the



"Rafting on the Missouri" by John Stobart



"The Jolly Flatboatmen" by George Caleb Bingham



first show gets first pick.

Before my next meeting with Vince I read the libretto a few times and listened to the music. I then met with Tom my advisor on the show and went through what Vince was envisioning for the show. During my research, I came across paintings done by artists during the 1840s such as John Stobart and George Caleb Bingham. Vince initially didn't want the set to be made to look like planked wood because so many productions have used that medium before. However, in arguing my case, I brought up the idea of the set being the raft Huck and Jim travel on during the show. This idea connected back to Vince's initial set of notes at our first meeting and he got enthused about that.

The first design presentation was on March 24. I presented the photos of the paintings, research images and a few sketches I had drawn up. People's initial reactions to the images were positive. CJ the lighting designer was out of town and could not Skype in for the meeting but he saw the photos a day later and liked the research images and had similar ideas for lighting the show. When I brought up the idea of having the set being made of planked wood Tommy the costume designer, brought up a concern about women's heels if there was any possibility of ladders being used. I told him that the floor could either be a planked or painted floor but I was gravitating toward playing to wood so we could light from underneath the deck to provide a different lighting element for songs like "River in the Rain". I would make sure that the spacing between the planes would be small enough to not catch the women shoes on the deck. As for the ladder I said that I would try to minimize the number of ladders used. Vince still had not finished his blocking for the show, but we would make sure that women would not have to climb the ladders to the second story of the theater. I discuss with Vince after the meeting and we both agreed that we needed to go simpler and go back to the ideas we talked about in our first meeting.

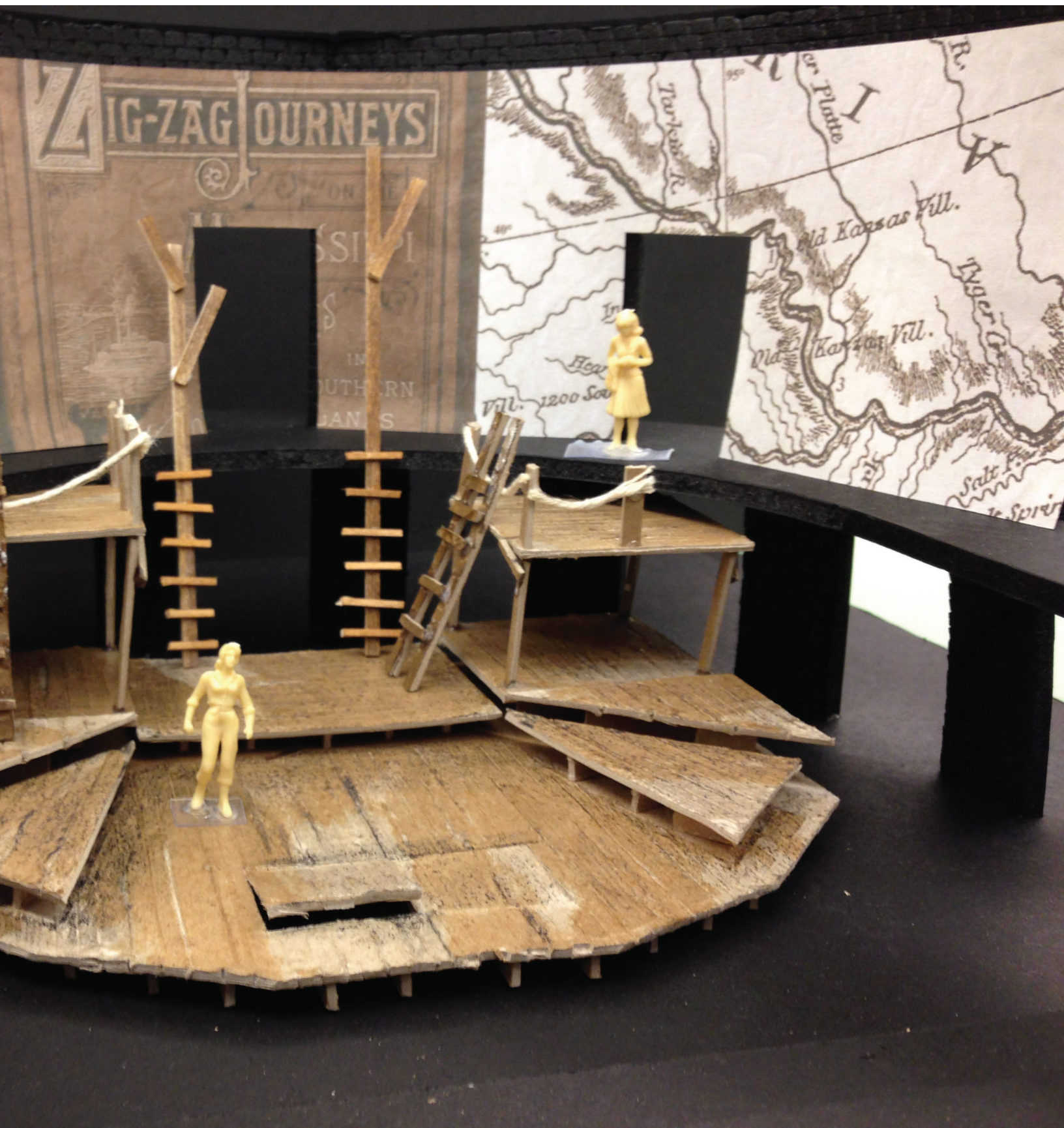
"We need a single overall organizing visual language that embodies the most important themes of this piece: storytelling, self-education and transformation, reframing, ridiculously fun / an adventure and nature ". - Vince DeGeorge

I looked back at the research images I had collected in an effort to find a spark for a new design. I then looked away for a second to a pile of school papers next to me and I saw it. The papers acted in such a way that in my mind's eye, I could see the plane spaces, I could see the scenes being played out on the set deck. I met with Vince on March 31 to present him my new design and he loved it. He loved the 360 degree accessibility of the set. With this new design, I incorporated a trap in the center stage platform that could be utilized for scenes when the boys go to Injun Joe's Cave and when the coffin is dug up in Act two. Vince really liked this idea of another playing space that is never seen by the audience until it is used by the actors. Vince expressed concern about the planked floor and how danceable it was. I told him that I could make the spacing between the boards a $\frac{1}{4}$ ". If we went even smaller the lighting effect wouldn't really be worth the extra money of buying the wood and the using the extra light fixtures. Vince also expressed concern about the platform heights and accessibility for the actors. Vince also brought up the use of the Cohen Family Theater's balcony level and how he didn't think the red brick would work well for the show. I then brought up the idea of maybe hanging a cyclorama (cyc) across the front of the brick and then project images on the cyc to show the many locations in the production. In the end, we agreed that we needed to meet with Stirling Shelton the Technical Director of the show, and ask him what is and isn't feasible.

The design presentation was on April 9th. Prior to that meeting, Theron, my assistant, and I built the model box and then I went onto making the first white model for the presentation. People really liked the design presented, but there was still concern about the ladders and the planked floor and their usability. Vince then spoke up and said that he was envisioning only the men climbing the ladders and keeping the women on the ground. At the end of the meeting all the designers decided that it was a good idea to meet and go through the script and address any concerns that may come up.

Right: The first white model for *Big River*.





After the meeting, Vince and I got pulled aside by Stirling. He told us that the set was too big and that we needed to reduce our scope. Vince and I briefly talked and he said he would

was first drawn to the flow of the two platforms and the use of the small set of stairs on the left side of the stage right platform. He liked the easy access from each platform and ultimately the balcony. Vince

likes to call it, to balance and to give a visual flow to the set. I then recommended adding a platform to stage left using the language we have already established. A post would be placed on the downstage left



Model Version 2: a smaller deck with the two smaller platforms stacked on one another to reach the balcony.

like to see one of the platforms go from the ground up to the balcony. So I went back to the drawing board, with the challenge of designing a simpler set.

I met with Vince a week later and showed him the new version of the set. He

didn't like how small the main deck was. He felt that we lost too much playing space for the actors. Vince wanted the deck to be bigger and also allow actors access all the way around the deck. Vince felt that the balcony needed a scenic element or "playing space" as he

corner of the platform to provide that feel of a deck. Vince liked that idea and off we went.

The following day, all the designers for the show and Michael Medina the Stage Manager for the production, met in Vince's



Model Version 3: a bigger deck with a platform added up on the balcony with a cyc placed behind the balcony door openings.

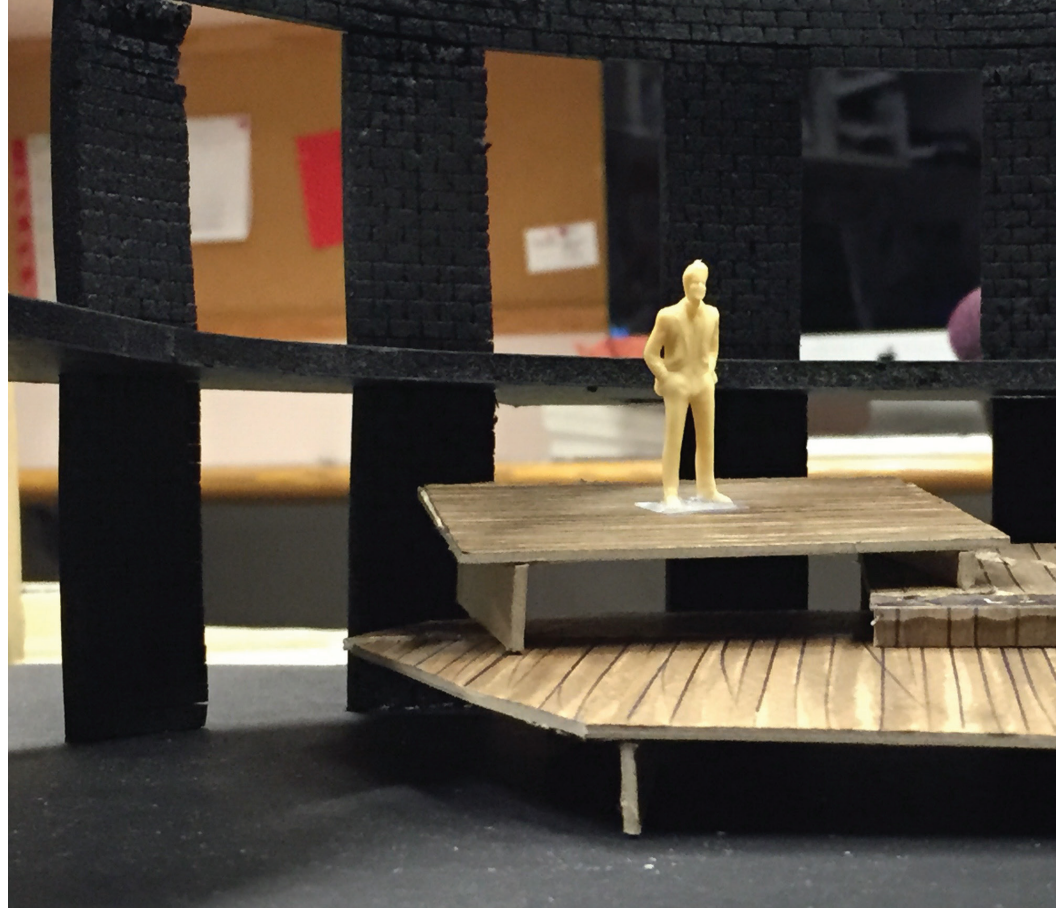
office to go through the script and brainstorm about the world and look of the show. We walked through the events of the show and Vince told us where he was thinking about staging each scene and what he envisioned each character's actions. As Vince was talking about placing the scene where Huck gets kidnapped by Pap he thought that the platform on the stage right going up to the balcony should be wider so the actors could have more playing space to act on. He also wanted to place the platform on a steeper angle

and up closer to the edge of the balcony level. Vince then pinned the platform to the balcony's edge, shown in the photo. Hesitant about what I was seeing, I asked him whether there be a ladder or a set of stairs going from the main deck to the third platform. Then I thought up the idea of placing the third platform of 4"x4" posts and then attaching wooden pegs to the posts as a way to gain access to the platform and balcony. This way we could place the band under the platform and have them on stage. Vince agreed

but then still pushed for the floating platform off of the balcony. CJ then stepped in and started to talk about lighting the deck from below. Vince stated that he wanted to see all of the platforms and the main deck glow up. CJ said that he would have to place lighting fixtures under platforms 2 and 3 because the lighting illuminating from the main deck would not be strong enough to light up platforms 2 and 3. CJ next brought up the cyc and projections. I told everyone that we could either paint a drop with map images

Right: Model Version 4:
platforms 2 and 3 stacked on one
another with platform 4 (balcony
platform) hung over the balcony's
edge with rope ladder.

Below: Model Version 5:
platforms 2 and 4 are elevated on
posts.





and then project name of the location we were in during the show, or just project the images onto a black or dark gray drop. If we didn't want to incorporate projections into the show, we could paint a map drop and then incorporate the posts like the one on the balcony platform and make banners with the locations on them and hang the banners off the posts. Olivia Leigh, the Props Master, seemed on board with that idea and Vince. Thought it would provide the actors something to do during the scene changes. Vince then added that he wants a cyc on each level to provide visual unity. CJ then brought up the idea of hanging the cyc in front of the balcony openings. We would have to either cut holes or slits where the openings are or the actors would have to walk all the way around the cyc to get to the front of it. The thought was brought up that we wouldn't be able to see the drop on the bottom level because of the set's height and the shadow casted from the balcony. Vince was still persistent about having two cycs hung.



A few days later, Vince sent an e-mail stating that he felt the direction we had taken with the set in the previous meeting was not the direction he wanted to go after looking at model photos. He was curious to see a version of the set with platform 3 set just a little higher than platform 2 so there would be easy access from platform to platform. I replied back saying that I liked that as a better option than what we decided in our last meeting.

I made a couple of different model options took photos and sent them out to the appropriate people. For the first option(model version 4), I lowered platform 3 to be just a step above platform 2. To help tie the balcony platform in with the set, I pushed the platform over the edge of the balcony and added posts to the underside to provide support. In addition, I added a rope ladder going from the balcony to platform 2 as a balcony access. For the second option (model version 5) I placed platform 3 on posts to provide an additional playing space where the band could possibly go and added pegs to one of the posts to provide access to the top of the platform.

I met with Stirling and Tom to discuss the progress of the show. The preliminary draftings were scheduled to be due April 20th, but I emailed Stirling stating that the design was still evolving and it wouldn't be beneficial to him to receive draftings that could change in a week. I knew that the design process was taking longer than usual but all of the designers and Vince felt like we were on the right track with the show design. During the meeting, I got Stirling and Tom caught up on the new developments since the design presentation. When I was finished, Stirling said that the set was still over budget and we needed to prioritize the elements we wanted. To plank the whole set was going to cause us to go over budget so we needed to pin point the critical areas of the set that needed to be planked.

Vince, CJ, Michael and I met a couple days later to discuss the topics brought up in the meeting with Stirling and Tom. At the end of the meeting we decided to make the main deck a solid floor that will be given a paint treatment to help cut down on cost and also cut one of the platforms on the main deck. The remaining platform would be planked and have a trap door used for set dressing. The other change that occurred was that the wrap around cyc on the balcony was cut down in size to a width that would cover three or four door openings and have a wrap around cyc on the bottom level.

I met with Stirling, Michael and CJ and decided that a fully raked deck would allow for platform 2 to move around freely. We also discussed that the trap in platform 2 should be moved to the main deck to function as the hole where the coffin will be dug up from in Act two. And as a way to gain access to the balcony platform, we decided that a rigid ladder would be the best option because it is moveable.

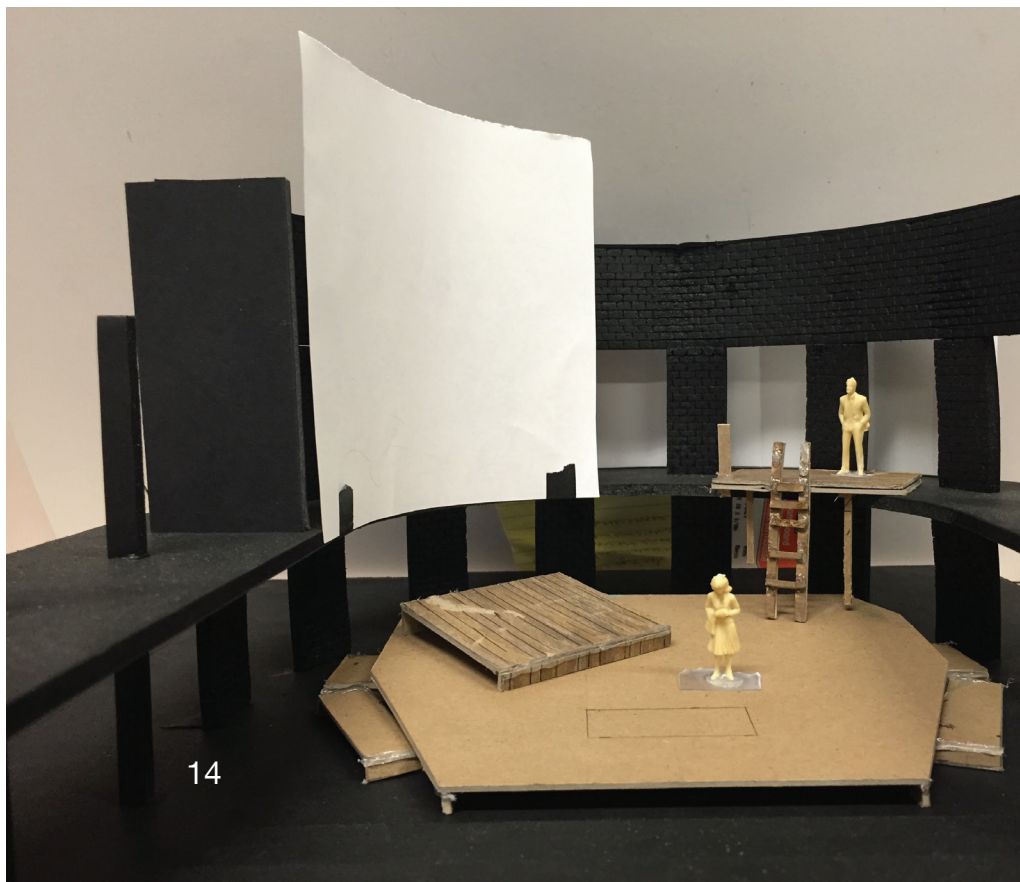
Michael sent our notes from the meeting to Vince. Vince was on board with making the floor fully raked but was concerned about how many people he will need to move the raft around the stage. He

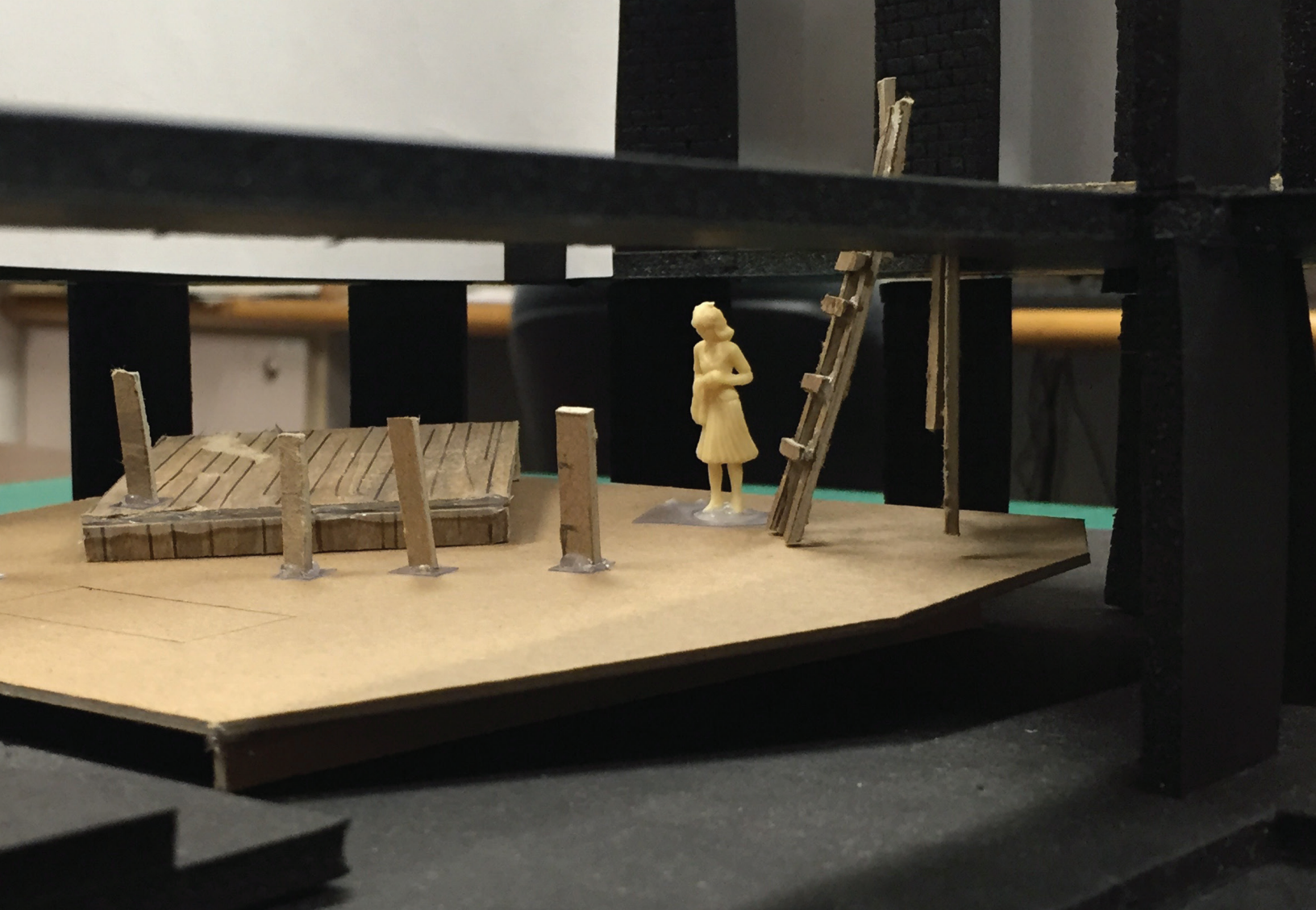
also wasn't set on the ladder idea and wanted to see these changes done in the model including the RP screen that CJ had recently found.

It was mid July and everyone (including myself) had gone off to their summer jobs. I was working as a props intern at the New York Stage and Film and Vassar College's summer season when I received an email from Vince. He wanted to get rid of the RP screen and instead have a drop that would wrap around behind the openings on both levels and add a platform to balcony stage right. I was concerned with how the actors will exit and enter from stage, not knowing how willing Stirling was to allowing us to cut holes in drops that big. We decided that we should have this discussion when we all get back to Cincinnati.

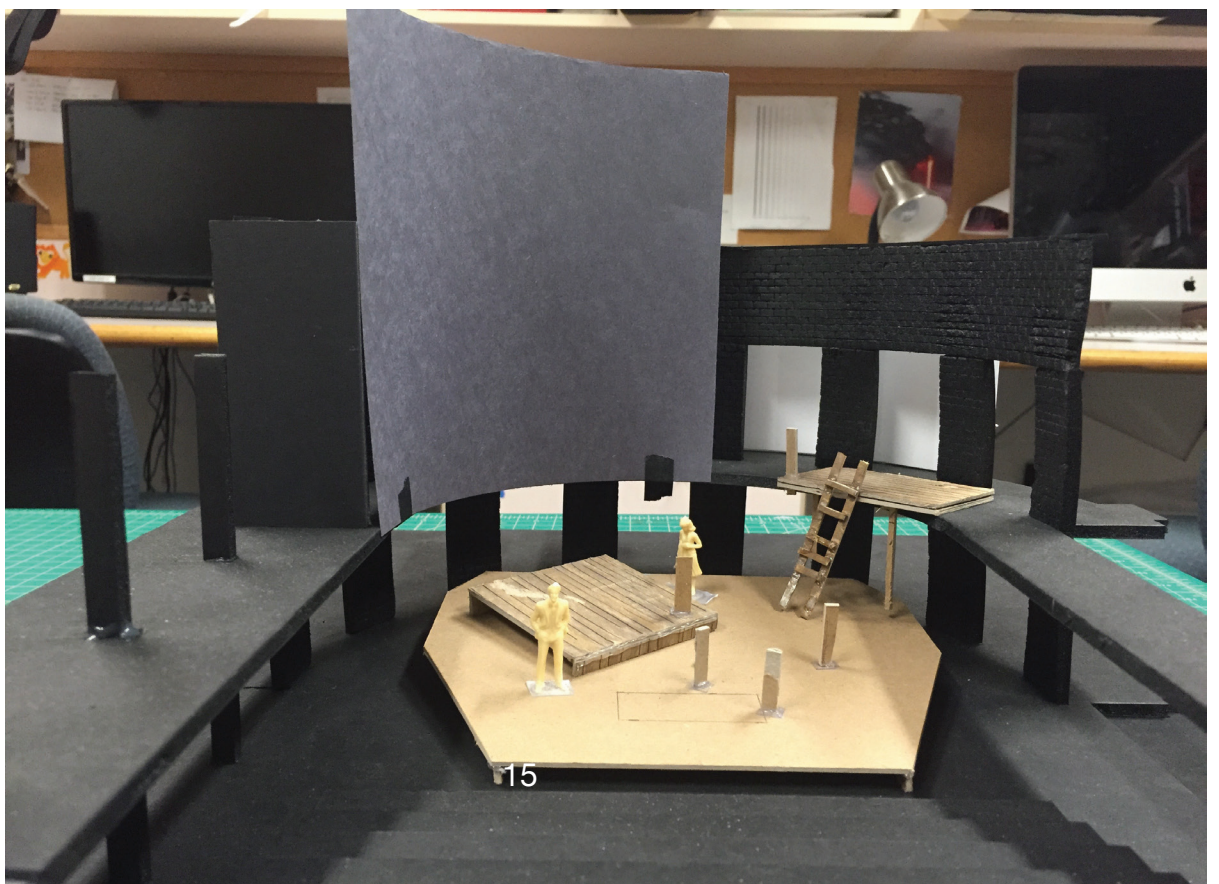


Above: close up of Model Version 6.





Bottom Left: Model Version 6. | Bottom Right: Model Version 6 : with gray cyc.





On August 15th, the whole design team met in CCM scene shop to talk about the new changes. Before the meeting, Stirling told me that he had bought the RP screen for the show before he went on his summer break and he couldn't return it because it was custom. This created a huge hole in the budget for the show, taking away 40 percent of the budget for scenic, paints and props. I wondered how we were going to stay in budget on this show with 40 percent of the money gone even before we start building? With the help of Tom, Jeremy Lee the Sound advisor, and some persuasion we were able to make it happen. We first asked Vince if he could do away with the platform 2. CJ backed this idea by saying that he could use different lighting gobos to create different textures on the deck. *Big River* was his thesis project so he was given a ~~little bit~~ bigger budget for lighting to use more moveable lighting fixtures. Vince was hesitant but then Jeremy suggested using big tree branches to help distinguish the area of the raft. The next topic was the wrap around drops. Tom suggested curtains that could be hung in each

Above: Model Version 7

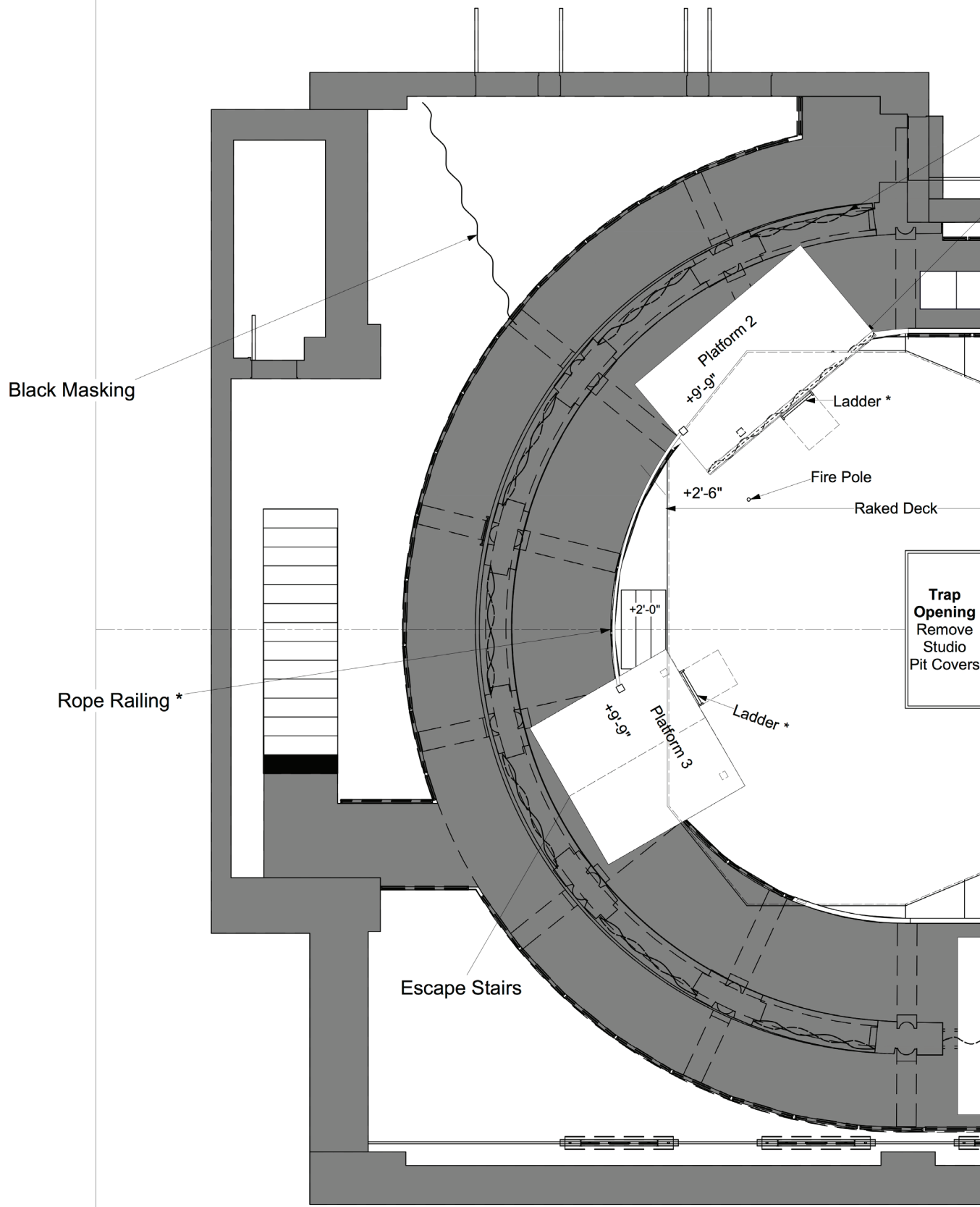


opening and all Vince could envision were the black curtains CCM has in stock. We all agreed to go into the Studio Theater. Stirling grabbed a piece of muslin and hung it behind one of the openings. Tom started to play with it, showing Vince the versatility of the curtain. With that, the show was designed and off I went to my marathon of drafting.

After a fun filled weekend of drafting, I sent out all of the construction drafting plates the Sunday before the new school year began.

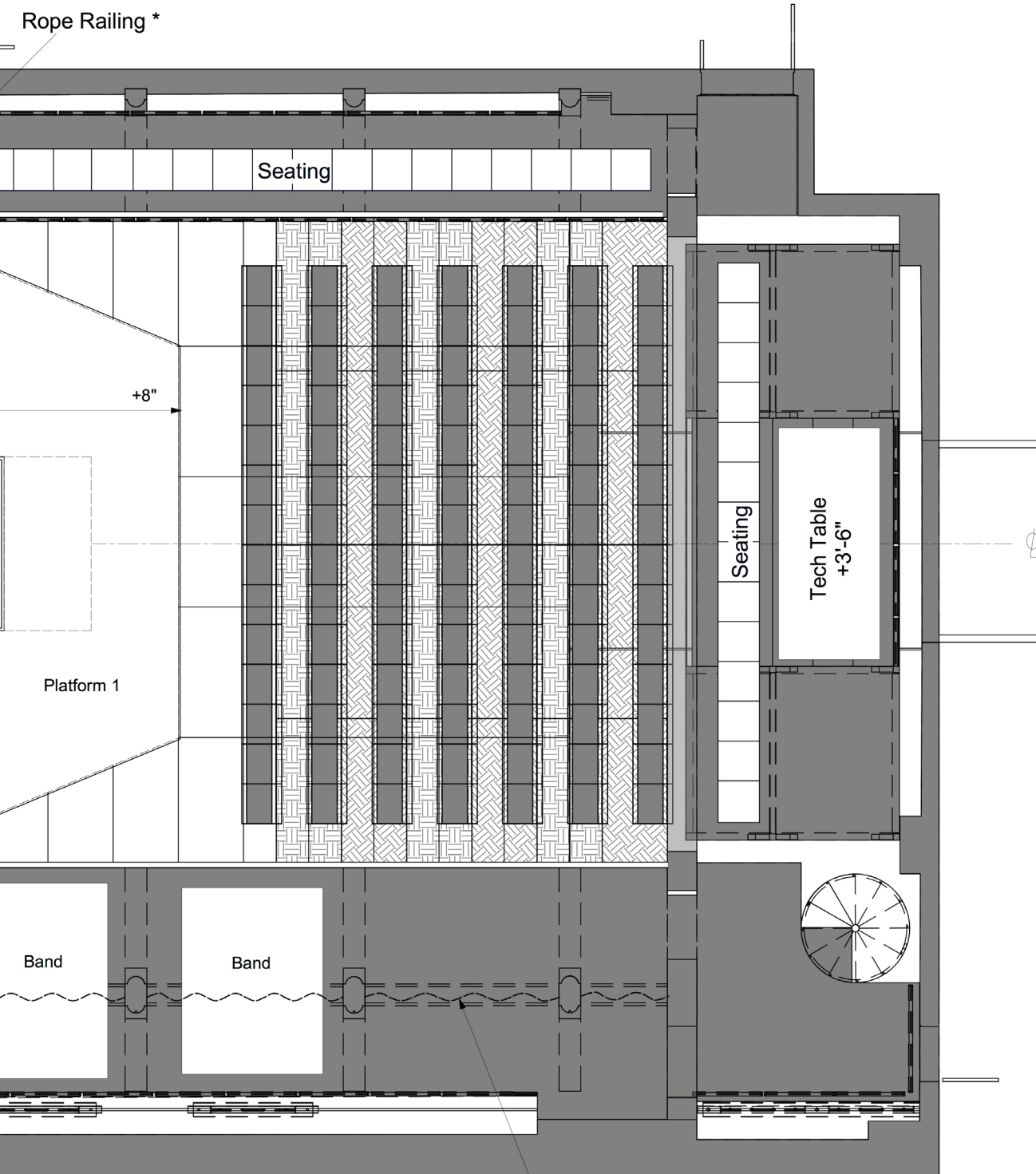
The design presentation to the cast of the show was on August 31st, Theron and I had spent the previous week making the colored model. I then took pictures of the finished model and made Photoshop renderings of possible looks for scenes in the show. The presentation went really well, and the actors seemed really excited with all of the ideas the designers presented.

Above: Model Version 7 placed in the painted model box.



Muslin Curtains *

Rope Railing *



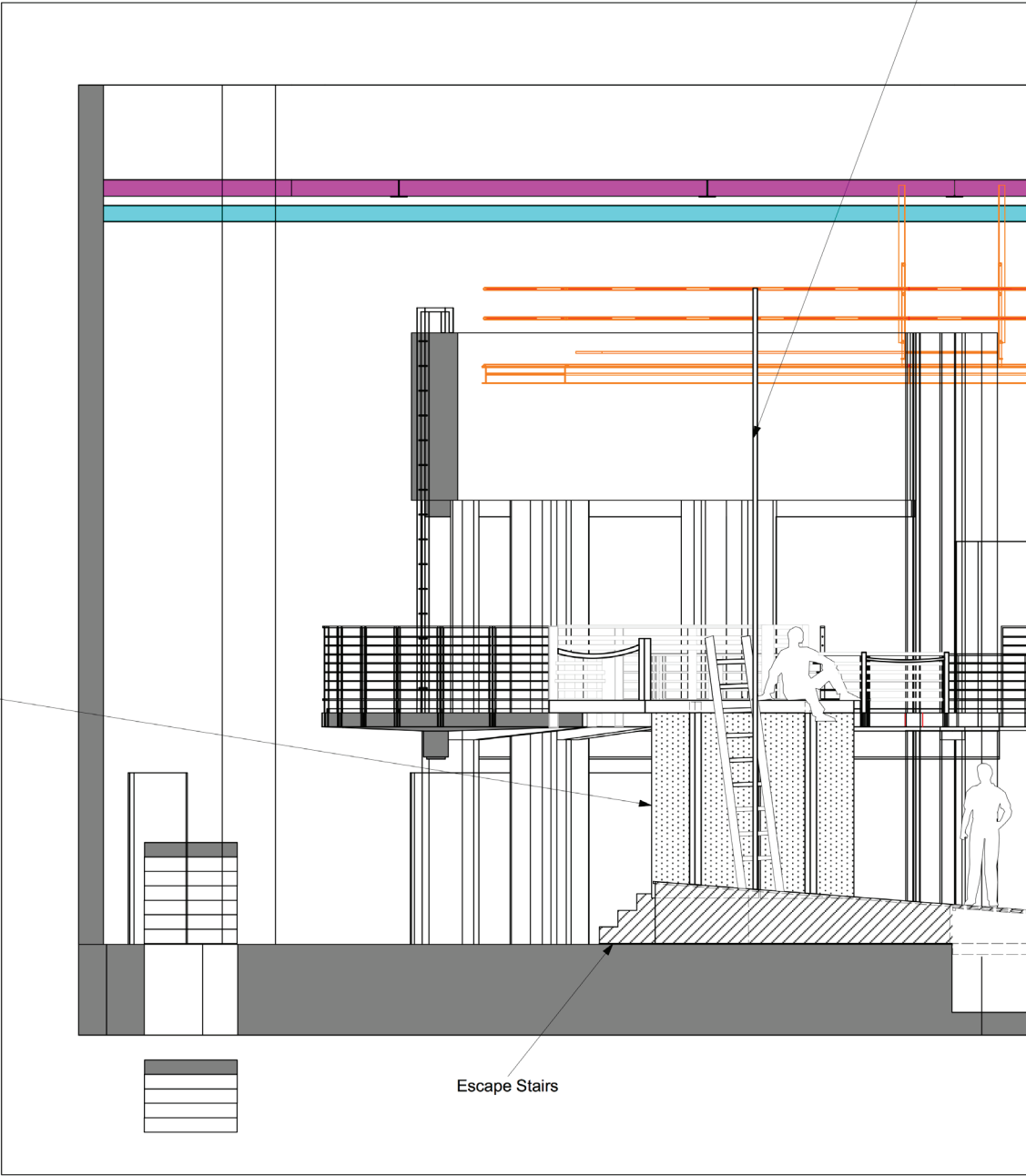
Black Masking

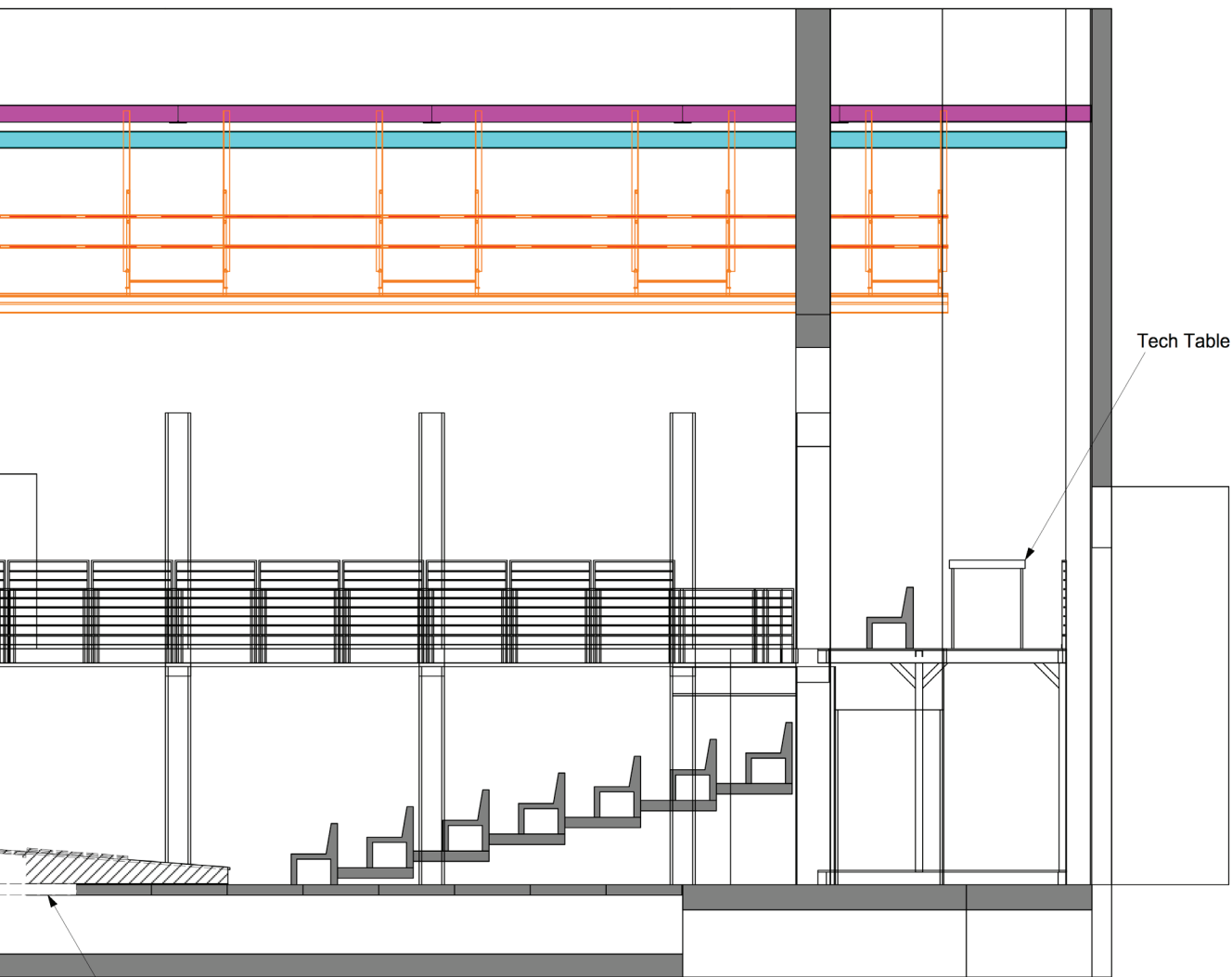
Above: Ground Plan | Scale: Proportionate

Fire Pole

The Nonesuch Curtain *

Escape Stairs

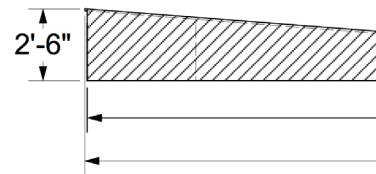
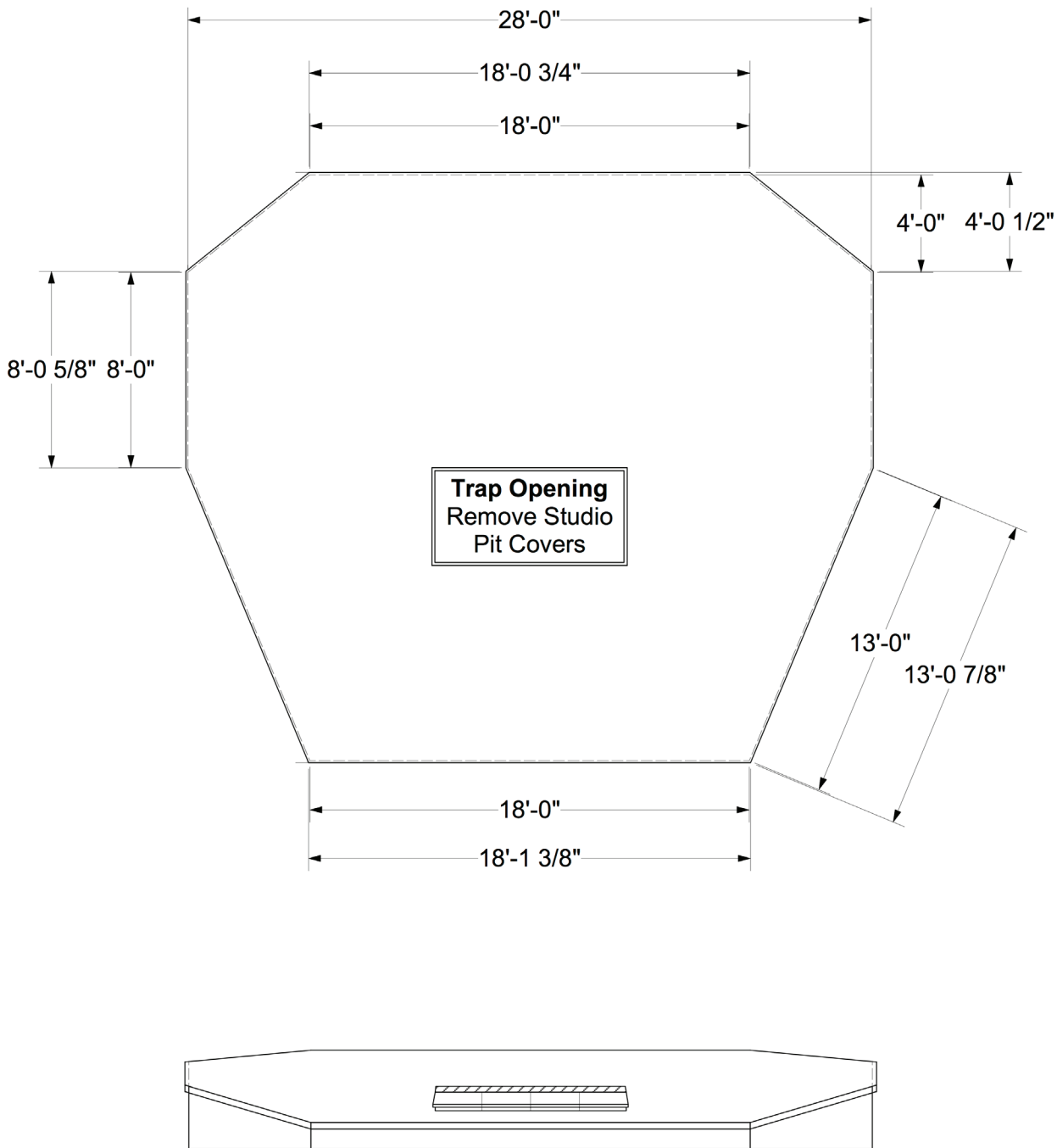




Tech Table

Studio Floor Trap Removed

Above: Section Drawing | Scale: Proportionate



Plat

- Made up of stock top
- The MDF will over 0'-1
- A strip of 0'-1"x0'-1" underside of the MDF 1 has thick
- Platform 1 will be th
- The facing

Tr

- Inside the opening made of steel that is that is 0'-1 3/4" down

- Made of 0'- 3/4" pin 0'-1/2" plywood
- Either finger holes be put in the top o retrieve the lid from

Above: Main Deck Drawings | Scale: Proportionate

Form 1 Notes

Stock and custom platforms and
built with MDF.
to hang the under structure by
" on all sides.
1" wood will be applied to the
to give the illusion that Platform
thickness. See image C.
then closed on all sides except
the U.S. side.
will be made of lauan.

Trap Opening

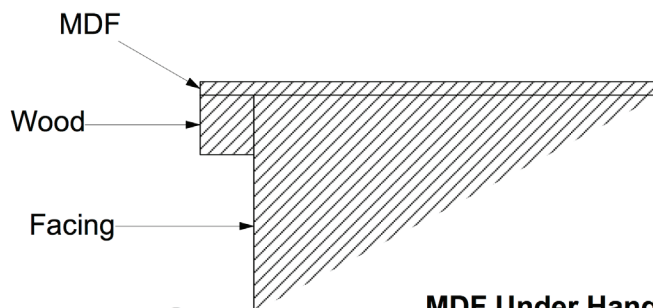
- 4'x8'
there is a 0'-1 1/2" square lip
all the way around the opening
in the opening for the trap lid to
sit on.

Trap Lid

- 4'x8'
be set in between two pieces of
and then topped with MDF.
or flush pieces of hardware will
of the trap lid for the actors to
from the opening. See image B.

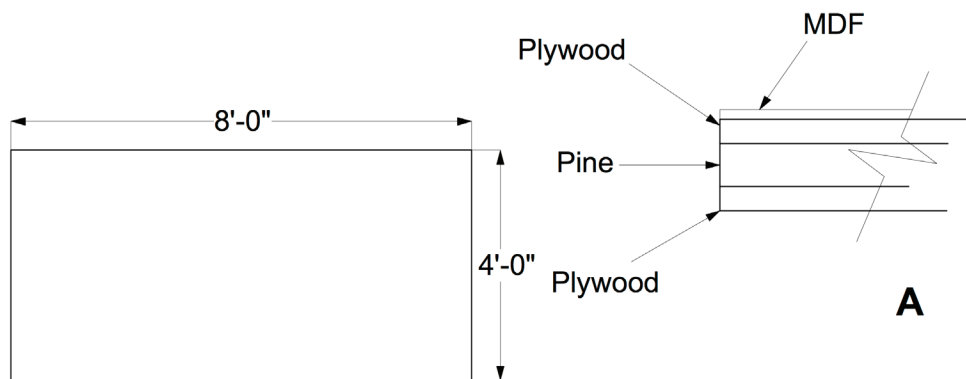
Trap Opening Detail View

Scale: Proportionate



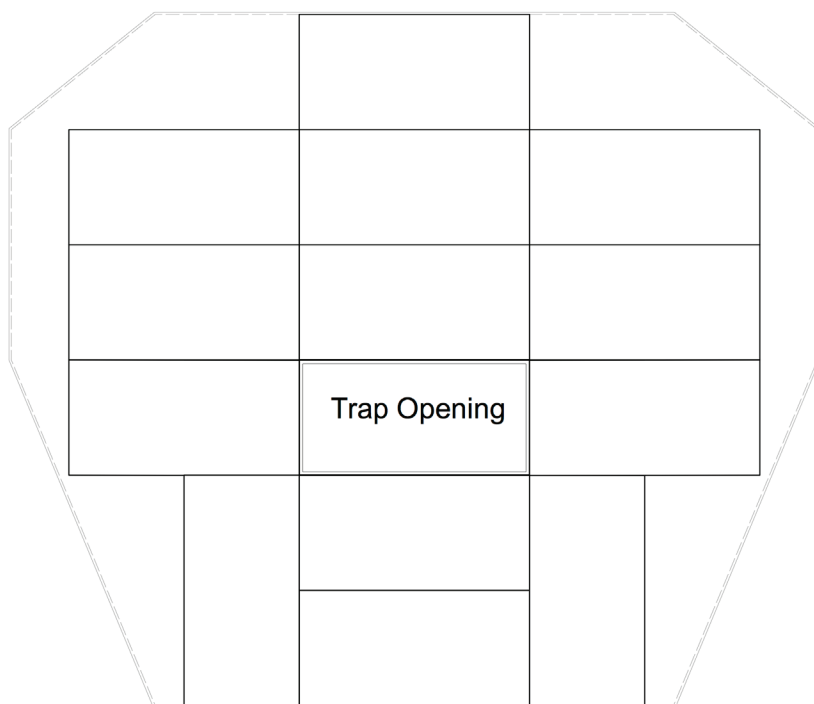
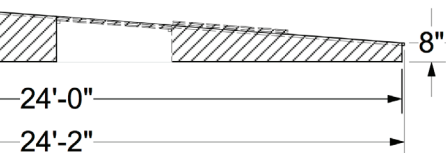
MDF Under Hang Detail View

Scale: Proportionate



Trap Lid

Scale: 1/2" = 1'-0"



Right: Finished colored model rendered in Photoshop.

Bottom Left: Model rendering of “River in the Rain”.

Bottom Right: Model rendering of when Pap takes Huck from his bedroom.





Once I got back from summer break, I was not only working on Big River but I was also the Props Designer on CCM's drama production of Pentecost. At the end of the previous school year, there were two main stage productions for the coming year that did not have Props Designers assigned yet. I was approached by Kat Miller, the Resident Props Master, to see if I wanted to be the Props Designer on Pentecost. I agreed to do it because, back in March I thought that I was in a good place with the design for Big River and would draft the show over the summer. Unknown to me that would not be the case. I was juggling two shows at once that opened a week apart from one another. This was hard for me because some days I would be in two or three meetings for both shows and wouldn't get into the props shop until 3 or 4 that day. I felt that I wasn't giving my full attention to either shows because I would be working on one show and then I would get pulled aside to work on the other and vice versa. Both productions turned out beautifully, but I still felt like I could have done more.

SET CONSTRUCTION



The set construction began in early September, and by the second week the scenic painting had begun. The Paint Charge, Will Sawyer, was able to create the rough wood grain texture by applying the paint with a P-50 sprayer and while the paint was still wet used a broom to drag the paint. He did this for each layer applied and it turned out very well.

For the most part, the construction portion of the show process was very uneventful. I let Olivia take the lead on the props

because I was propping my own show but allowed for her to ask me any questions that came up. All props for the show were placed around the deck. No props were housed backstage unless they were needed for a scene up on the balcony. This arrangement allowed for actors who were not in a scene to sit on a chair or crate and become a spectator like the audience.

LOAD IN

The load in for the show was on October 2. The night before Vince had a space rehearsal with the cast in the Studio Theater. While Stage Management was taping out the ground plan on the floor they realized that they had measured the down stage side of the trap not from the edge of the deck but from the first row of audience seating. The trap was actually to be supposed three feet upstage from where it was placed in the rehearsal room. This created a tense morning for load in. Stirling couldn't stop the load in because there was a rehearsal with the cast on the set at 7. Vince came

and talked to me and said that the trap was in the wrong place and the ground plan was wrong. I assured him that the ground plan had not moved since I turned in the draftings. Stage Management had made a mistake in measuring. Vince wanted to move the trap down stage, but by doing that Stirling would have to stop the whole load in take the whole deck back into the shop to rebuild it with time we didn't have. In the end we all got past it, and Vince in the end just had to move some of the blocking upstage.

Left: Set load in photo
Below: Set load in photo



TECHNICAL REHEARSALS / OPENING NIGHT

Tech rehearsal started on October 4th. Pentecost had its last performance that day so I had to leave props strike early to go to tech rehearsal, switching my props designer and set designer roles for the last time. The tech started at 6 which is early for a tech but Vince wanted an extra hour because Act 1 had some big music numbers. Even with the extra time we didn't get all the way through Act 1. On Monday we started where we had left off on Sunday and got through Act 2. On Tuesday we ran through a few scenes in Act 2 and then we ran the show. This would be the only chance to run the show before an audience would see the show. The following day was the dress rehearsal. The theater was full of people and energy. Thursday was opening night. The show opened to rave reviews from fellow students and faculty and a full house. I was full of excitement, but nervous. The nerves I felt back at the beginning of this journey came back. People were giving up their time to come and see a show that I had designed that was remarkable to me. Saturday's show came and just like that it was over. All the long and hard work that had been building to those three performances was now over.

Top Left: Production photo of "River in the Rain".
Photo by Adam Zeek.

Top Right: Production photo of "Free at Last".
Photo by Adam Zeek.

Bottom Left: Production photo of the coffin being dug up.
Photo by Aaron Bridgman.

Bottom Right: Production photo of "Do Ya Wanna Go to Heaven".
Photo by Aaron Bridgman.









REMINISCING ON THE RIVER

Big *River* in the end turned out to be a successful show and a unique take on this beloved musical. Looking back I wish I had done a few things differently. I wished I had been more confident in my design choices. I think I let this happen because I didn't know where the boundary was between the director's and designer's decisions. I should have been more proactive in asking those questions. I wished I was more involved in the decisions made about the props used in the show. It was in part because of working on *Pentecost*, but the other part was me not checking in on Olivia and Vince.

I learned so many things during this process I would not have learned by reading a book or told by another person. I have learned that I need to stand up for my designs and articulate why I made certain decisions. Having clear communication with your director and design team is key that makes your show go from being good to amazing. Being able to read and understand the director you are working with is key to how you will go about approaching a project. You need to understand how they work and go about visualizing ideas. Some can take a napkin sketch you give them and they give the green light. Others need to see a model at all the various stages of the process to understand what you are trying to convey to them.

Big *River* provided me with the first glimpse of how a theater production is put on from the preliminary meetings to closing night. This project really allowed me to use all the knowledge I have learned from my four years at CCM and then some that were applied to my design process. I have gained a confidence in myself as a designer, a confidence in myself that I will carry with me as I leave CCM and start the next chapter of my life.

