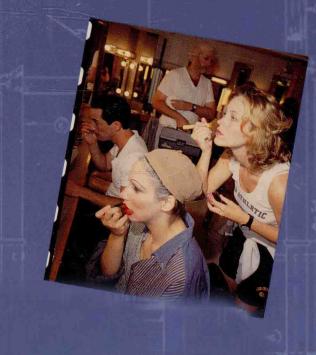
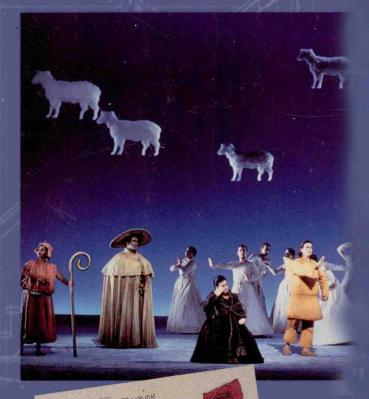
Fourth Edition

Theatrical Design and Production





An Introduction to Scene Design and Construction, Lighting, Sound, Costume, and

J. MICHAEL GILLETTE



An Introduction to Scene Design and Construction, Lighting, Sound, Costume, and Makeup

FOURTH EDITION

J. Michael Gillette University of Arizona

For Joyce Ann, who will always know why

McGraw-Hill Higher Education &

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Preface

First courses in the world of theatrical design and production, like the art they introduce, come in a bewildering array of shapes, sizes, textures, and colors. Some students receive their introduction to this subject area in a general overview course that covers the design and production elements of scenery, costumes, lighting, and sound in a single semester. Other students may enjoy the luxury of an entire year in which to discuss the same material. Still others may take individual courses that specialize in the theory and craft of the separate areas that comprise the field of theatrical design and technical production. The course content is very flexible indeed.

To create a text that will serve the needs of all these courses is a distinct challenge. I've tried to rise to that challenge by organizing the material in two ways. The chapters appear in a logical sequence, but each chapter is also an island of information that can stand alone. My hope is that this organization will enable each instructor to pick and choose the type and amount of material that is appropriate for his or her particular course. This type of organization also makes the text a useful reference work for students to keep throughout their design and technical production careers.

Organization and Content

Just as a play wouldn't start without the scenery being in place, this book doesn't delve into technical procedures without first setting the stage. Chapters 1 through 4, *Production Organization and Management, The Design Process, Theatre Architecture*, and *The Stage and Its Equipment*, provide a grounding in real world issues and are appropriate for use in almost any type of technical production class.

Of special significance is Chapter 2, *The Design Process*. It contains material new to beginning technical theatre texts. It is a problem-solving and conceptual thinking model created specifically for theatrical practice. Its purpose is to increase each student's creative capacity by reducing the effects of two prime ingredients of creative dysfunction—fear and frustration. The mechanism used to effect this change is a seven-step procedure that enables students to make logical, rational, and considered decisions when making the myriad choices involved in creating a design or solving a technical challenge in any area of theatrical production.

Chapter 3, *Theatre Architecture*, provides a concise chronology, both pictorially and textually, of the history of theatre architecture. I've included this information for two reasons: the functional design of the environment in which a play is produced has always been a major factor in determining the type, style, and design of technical elements used in a production, and all too frequently student designers are not required to take courses in theatre history.

Chapter 13, *Electrical Theory and Practice*, provides a concise explanation of the nature and function of electricity and electronics and the practical use of the power formula, as well as information on wiring practices and standards.

The last three chapters in the book, Mechanical Drafting, Perspective, and Drawing and Rendering, contain specific how-to information on the drawing and rendering techniques most commonly used in theatrical production. Chapter 20, Mechanical Drafting, provides information about the materials and types of drafting used in the theatre and helpful hints on the process of drafting. Chapter 21, Perspective, offers a step-by-step procedure with exercises for drawing in accurate scale mechanical perspective. Chapter 22, Drawing and Rendering, provides an overview of the types of paints, pastels, markers, and papers commonly used in theatrical rendering as well as information on basic application techniques used with these media.

The remainder of the text provides an overview of the function and responsibilities of the scenic, lighting, costume, and sound designers. It also contains primary information about the tools and basic techniques that are used to bring each designer's concepts to the stage.

As with any art form, the basic element necessary for creating a successful design in theatre is an understanding of design principles and chosen medium. I hope that this text not only provides those basics but also offers encouragement and inspiration to create.

Features

In many ways, Theatrical Design and Production is a traditional introductory text for the various design and craft areas of theatrical production. A number of features, however, strive to set this text apart.

Philosophy The underlying spirit of this text is firmly rooted in my belief that learning and creating in the various fields of theatrical design and production can be, and should be, fun. With that thought in mind, I've tried to make this text not only informative and practical but also motivating and inspirational.

Color Analysis The sixteen-page color analysis section presents a discussion of the practical applications of color theory by analyzing the interactive effects of the color selections for the scenery, costumes, and lighting for two productionsone with a very narrow, muted palette and the other with a full-spectrum, heavily saturated color style.

Safety Tips Safety tips are discussed throughout the text. They have been placed in special boxes adjacent to the relevant text to help readers integrate learning about a tool, material, or process with its safe use.

Running Glossary To help students learn and remember the vocabulary of the theatre, new terms are defined in the margin on the page where they first appear.

Boxed Material Additional material that provides further depth and practical information has been placed in boxes outside the mainstream text. This added material is included to enhance student understanding by providing insights into and solutions to real theatrical problems.

Illustration Program An extensive photo and illustration program provides a very strong adjunct to the textual information. Photos from professional theatre productions are used to provide a model that students can strive to emulate.

New to the Fourth Edition

Once again the basic features and organizational structure of *Theatrical Design* and *Production* remain the same as in the previous editions. A new feature—boxed information about design inspiration—has been added to various chapters. Almost all of the chapters have been extensively revised to include new and updated information. Tools and materials that are no longer used, such as the folding rule, have been removed. Others, such as the clout nail, which is also obsolete but which holds a special place in the author's heart, have been elevated to a position of historical significance, which is duly noted. Many chapters include new photos and illustrations reflecting manufacturers' current equipment. Because the use of computers in all areas of theatrical production has become so commonplace, the material on computers has been integrated into the appropriate chapters rather than remaining in a separate chapter.

Once again, I would like to thank those students, friends, and colleagues who have offered suggestions for improving *Theatrical Design and Production*. I would particularly like to thank Jeffrey M. Gress, Denison University; Bonnie Kruger, Washington University; and Michael Rolleri, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill for their thoughtful, close readings of the third edition. I also genuinely appreciate the comments and suggestions offered by the following reviewers of the fourth edition: Alison Ford, University of Iowa; David Martin Jacques, California State University, Long Beach; Loren Schreiber, San Diego State University; and Cheri Vasek, Central Washington University.

Brief Contents

1	Production Organization and Management	1
2	The Design Process 19	
3	Theatre Architecture 35	
4	The Stage and Its Equipment 47	
5	Style, Composition, and Design 74	
6	Color 89	
7	Scenic Design 105	
8	Tools and Materials 127	
9	Scenic Production Techniques 190	
10	Scene Painting 239	
11	Stage Properties 268	
12	Lighting Design 288	
13	Electrical Theory and Practice 321	
14	Lighting Production 333	
15	Projections 374	
16	Costume Design 385	
17	Costume Construction 408	
18	Makeup 432	
19	Sound Design and Technology 453	
20	Mechanical Drafting 490	
21	Perspective 512	
22	Drawing and Rendering 536	

Contents

	Preface	V		Roman Theatre Medieval Theatre	35 35
1	Production Organization			Renaissance Theatre	38
1	and Management	1		Elizabethan Theatre	39
	and Management	.1		Restoration Theatre	41
	The Production Sequence	2		Modern Theatre Structures	43
	Script	2			
	Concept, Design, and Construction	2	1	The Steep and Its Equipment	
	Rehearsals	4	4	The Stage and Its Equipment	45
	Theatre Organization	5	100018800000	Proscenium Stage	45
	Production Job Descriptions	7		Proscenium Arch	45
	Producer	7		Stage	47
	Playwright Director	8 8		Wings	47
	Production Manager	8		Apron	48
	Stage Manager	9		Orchestra Pit	48
	Scenic and Property Personnel	11		Auditorium	50
	Lighting Personnel	15		Proscenium Stage Equipment	51
	Costume Personnel	16		Fly Cystoms	51 52
	Sound Personnel	18		Fly Systems Stage Drapes	56
				Thrust Stage	63
2	The Design Process	10		Arena Stage	65
_	The Design Process	19		Black Box Theatres	66
	Commitment	19		"Found" Theatre Spaces	67
	Analysis	20			
	Analyzing the Script	20			
	The Questioning Process	21	5	Style, Composition, and Design	68
	Research	22		Style and Stylization in Theatrical Design	68
	Background Research Conceptual Research	22 24			
	Incubation	25		Production Style	68
	Selection	25		Design Styles and Design Periods Stylization	69
				Literary Style and Theatrical	07
	Implementation	27		Design	70
	Evaluation	32		Elements of Design	70
				Line	70
_				Shape	71
3	Theatre Architecture	33		Mass	71
				Measure	71
	Greek Theatre	33		Position	71

x Contents

	Color Texture	71 71	Visual Presentation of Scenic Designs Sketches	114 114
	Principles of Composition	72	Models	116
	Unity	72	Computer Presentations	117
	Harmony	73	Other Presentation Techniques	119
	Contrast	74	Designer's Plans	119
	Variation	74		
	Balance	76		
	Proportion	76 8	Tools and Materials	127
	Emphasis	77		TENNES TO LESS
	-		Hand Tools	127
	Design Analysis of The Kitchen	77 77	Measuring Tools	127
	Unity	78	Marking Tools	129
	Harmony	78 78	Hammers	129
	Contrast	76 79	Cutting Tools	131
	Variation	79 79	Drilling Tools	133
	Balance	79 79	Clamping Tools	135
	Proportion	79 79	Screwdrivers	140
	Emphasis	79	Miscellaneous Hand Tools	140
			Metalworking Hand Tools	141
	0-1	OM CO	Power Tools	143
6	Color	81	Stationary Power Saws	143
5050		Property Carl	Power Handsaws	146
	Defining Color	81	Power Drilling Tools	147
	Color Terminology	81	Battery-Powered Tools	147
	Seeing Color	83	Pneumatic Tools	148
	Color Mixing	85	Metalworking Power Tools	149
	Primary Colors	85	Miscellaneous Power Tools	151
	Secondary Colors	85	Wood	154
	Complementary Colors	85	Stock Lumber	154
	Filtered Light	85	Molding and Trim	156
	Color Mixing in Paint	88	Sheet Stock	156
	Integrated Color Wheel	88	Manufactured Wood	161
	A Practical Postscript to Color Theory	89	Metal	161
	Application of Color in the Theatre	89	Mild Steel	162
	Meaning of Color	91	Proprietary Structural Systems	163
	Practical Color Use	92	Aluminum	165
	Color Analysis of Terra Nova and Cabaret	94	Plastics	
	•	94 94		165
	Terra Nova Cabaret	9 4 96	Acrylic	166
	Cuburei	90	Epoxy Fluorocarbons	167 167
				167
_	Casula Dasian		Polyesters	168
/	Scenic Design	105	Polyetyrone	168
		40=	Polystyrene Polyvinyl Chloride	168
	Considerations for the Scenic Designer	105	Pyroxylin	168
	Mood and Spirit of the Play	106	Urethanes	168
	Historical Period of the Play	107		
	Locale of the Play	107	Fasteners	169
	0 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1		Nails	170
	Socioeconomic Level and Personality	100		
	of the Characters	109	Screws	172
	of the Characters Season of the Year	110	Screws Bolts	172 174
	of the Characters		Screws	172

	Auxiliary Scene-Painting Tools Preparing Scenery for Painting	248 250	Controllable Qualities of Light	288
	Aniline Dye Applicators	243 245	12 Lighting Design	288
	Scenic Paints	239		
	Materials	239	Wood Turning	287
	- Jeene Funding	237	Fiberglass	286
10	Scene Painting	239	Heat Forming	285
			Molds Foam Carving	282 283
	o D need	201	Vacuum Forming	279
	3-D Trees	237	Papier-Mâché	277
	Platform Anchoring Techniques Rocks, Irregular Platforms, and	233	Decorative Curtains and Draperies	276
	Winch-Drive Systems	233	Upholstery	276
	Skids Winch Drive Systems	233	Furniture	275
	Revolves	233	Craft Techniques	275
	Trusses	231	Organizing Props for a Production	271
	Wagons	229	Property Acquisition	270
	Staircase Railings	229	Real or Fake?	270
	Stairs	225	Property Design	270
	Stage Platforming	218	Decorative Props	269
	Three-Dimensional Scenery	218	Hand Props	269
	Soft Scenery	215	Set Props	269
	Flats	203	What Is a Prop?	268
	Two-Dimensional Scenery	203		
	Soldering	202	11 Stage Properties	268
	Welding	197		
	Woodworking	192		
	Techniques	191	Drop Painting Techniques	267
	Scenic Construction		Wallpapering	266
9	Scenic Production Techniques	190	Specialized Finishing Techniques	264
0	Coopie Duodunties Tealerias		Applications of Painting Techniques	263
			Cartooning Standard Texture Coats	260 261
	Safety Equipment	188	Spraying Techniques	
		188	Painting Techniques with Aniline Dye	258 259
	Block and Tackle	188	Base Coats	255
	Wire	187	Painting Techniques	255
	Aircraft Cable	187	Scene Painter's Palette	253
	Nylon Rope Monofilament Line	187	Vinyl Acrylic	
	Clothesline	186 187	Latex Vinyl Acrylic	253 253
	Sisal Rope	186	Casein	253
	Manila Rope	186	Dry Pigment and Binder	253
	Rope, Cable, and Wire	186	Paint-Mixing Techniques	253
	Stage Hardware	180	Prime Coat	252
	Construction Hardware	177	Size Coat	252
	Hardware	177	Preliminary Coating	252
	Adhesives	176	Horizontal and Vertical Painting	250
	Glues	175	Flameproofing	250
	Glues and Adhesives	1/5	Applying Dutchmen	250

Intensity	288	Step Lens	334
Movement	289	Fresnel Lens	334
Color	289	Lamps	335
Functions of Stage Light	289	Incandescent Lamp	335
Visibility	289	Tungsten-Halogen Lamp	335
Selective Focus	289	Arc Sources	335
Modeling	289	Color Temperature	336
Mood	290	Lamp Structure	337
Designing with Light	290	MR16 Lamps	337
Key and Fill	292	Light Output of Lamps	339
Psychological Effects of Light	292	Color Media	339
The Light Plot and Related Paperwork	293	Lighting Instruments	340
The Light Plot	294	Ellipsoidal Reflector Spotlight	340
The Legend	295	Fresnel Spotlight	344
The Vertical Lighting Section	295	Striplight	347
The Instrument Schedule	298	Cyc Light	349
The Image of Light	298	Ellipsoidal Reflector Floodlight	349
The Lighting Key	301	Beam Projector	349
Using the Lighting Key to Draw	501	PAR Can	350
the Light Plot	305	Followspot	350
Layering	306	Specialty Instruments	352
Designing Lights for Thrust	000	Dimmers	355
and Arena Stages	310	Dimmer-Control Techniques	355
	0.10	Autotransformer Dimmer	358
Drawing the Light Plot and Lighting Section	312	Silicon-Controlled Rectifier Dimmer	359
Determining the Sectional Angle	313	Control Consoles	361
Selecting Instrument Size	313	Cables and Connectors	367
9		Electrical Cable for Stage Use	367
Rehearsal and Performance Procedures	315	Wire Gauge	367
Electrician's Cue Sheet	315	Connecting Devices	367
Recording Dimmer Intensity Levels	317	Extension Cables	368
Designer's Cue Sheet	318	Circuiting	369
Lighting Rehearsal Technical and Dress Rehearsals	318	Permanent Wiring	370
Instrument and Dimmer Check	319 320	Spidering	370
Instrument and Dimmer Check	320	Connecting Strips and Patch Panels	370
		Dimmer Per Circuit	373
40 Floridad Therman			0.0
13 Electrical Theory and			
Practice	321	15 Projections	274
Flancisia Adlanta 62	221	13 Projections	374
Electricity—What Is It?	321	Lensless Projectors	374
Electricity at Work	323	Linnebach Projector	376
Ohm's Law	324	Other Lensless Projectors	377
The Power Formula	326		
Electrical Circuits	329	Lens Projectors	377 377
Electrical Current	331	Scenic Projector	381
		Slide Projector Gobo	381
14 Lighting Production	333	Projection Screens	381
		Front-Screen Material	381
Lenses	333	Rear-Screen Material	382
Double Plano-Convex Lens Train	334	Slide Preparation	383

Other Projectors	384	Footwear	428
General Projection Techniques		Jewelry	429
and Hints	384	Armor Masks	430 431
16 Costume Design	385	19 Malcoup	422
The Nature of Costume Design	385	18 Makeup	432
Types of Costume Designs	387	Designing the Makeup	432
The Psychological Meaning of Clothes	387	Makeup Drawings	434
Objective Information Provided		Types of Makeup	436
by Clothes	389	Cake Makeup	436
General Considerations for Costume		Creme Makeup	437
Design	392	Liquid Makeup	439
Analyzing the Script	392	Dry Makeup	439
Other Conceptual Considerations	393	Greasepaint	439
Practical Considerations	395	Rubber-Mask Greasepaint	440
Organizational Paperwork	396	Makeup Removers	440
Costume Chart	397	Application Techniques	440
Costume List	399	Highlights and Shadows	440
Character-Actor Dressing List	399	Highlight and Shadow Colors	441
Costume Calendar	399	Stippling	442
Visual Presentation of the Costume		Corrective Makeup	443
Design	399	Three-Dimensional Makeup	443
Preliminary Sketches	400	Nose Putty	443
Costume Layout	404	Derma Wax	443
Costume Sketch	405	Gelatin	444
		Latex	445
		Prosthetics	447
17 Costume Construction	408	Beards and Mustaches	450
Organization of Costume Shops	408		
Costume Shop Tools	408	19 Sound Design and	
Basic Shop Equipment	408	Technology	453
Sewing Equipment	411	reemotogy	
Fabrics	414	Functions of Sound in the Theatre	453
Fabric Fibers	414	Music	453
Weaves	416	Effects	454
Fabrics and Nonfabric Materials Used		Reinforcement	455
in Costume Construction	417	The Nature of Sound	455
Fabrics	417	Frequency	455
Nonfabric Materials	419	Intensity	456
Special-Effects Treatment of Fabrics	421	Timbre	456
Fabric Dyeing	421	Basic Acoustics	458
Fabric Painting	422	Sound Production	
Costume Aging	423	AND AND AND AND AND ADDRESS OF THE PARTY OF	461
Garment and Accessory Construction	424	Basic Sound-System Configuration	461
Patterns	424	Sound-System Equipment The Sound Booth	463 479
Costume Software	424	Rehearsal and Performance	4/9
Wigs	424	Procedures	481
Millinery	428	Playback Layout Pattern	482

Practical Considerations Preamp and Power-Amp Output Speaker Hookup Methods	484 484 485	Exercise 3 Exercise 4 Exercise 5 Exercise 6	525 525 527 529
20 Mechanical Drafting	490	Exercise 7 Exercise 8 Exercise 9	531 533 534
Drafting Materials and Instruments	490		
Drafting Board	491	22 Drawing and Rendering	F3.6
T Square	491	22 Drawing and Kendering	536
Triangles	492	Materials	536
Compass and Circle Template	492	Pencils	536
Architect's Scale Rule	492	Inks	537
Drawing Pencils	493	Paint	537
Eraser	493	Pastels	538
Drafting Tape	493	Markers	539
Computer Drafting	494	Paper	540
Drafting Symbols and Conventions	496	Computer Drawing	540
Line Weights	498		
Drafting Conventions	498	Drawing and Rendering Techniques	543
Lettering	499	Sketching	543
Title Block	499	Figure Drawing	545
Dimensions	499	Graphite Transfers	548
Symbols	502	Watercolor	549
Types of Drawings	502	Pastels	550
Ground Plan	502	Pencils and Markers	550
Sectional Drawings	506	Combined Media	551
Front Elevations	506		
Rear Elevations	507	Amazadia A. Listasaa Caa	
Detail Drawings	508	Appendix A: Listservs for	
Detail Drawings	000	Theatre Production	552
31 B		Appendix B: A Revised Standard Graphic Language for Lighting	
21 Perspective Drawing	512	Design	555
Principles of Perspective	512	•	
Creating a Perspective Drawing	515	Glossary	561
A Review of Perspective Procedure	521	Selected References	578
Perspective Exercises	523	Credits	
Exercise 1	523	Credits	580
Exercise 2	524	Index	581
		and the state of t	

Production Organization and Management

"Great art conceals art." That statement has been attributed to Konstantin Stanislavski, founder of the Moscow Art Theatre and developer of Method acting. He was referring to the phenomenon that occurs when actors create brilliantly believable roles. Great actors don't seem to be working. They make us believe that they *are* the characters they are playing and that everything they say or do is happening spontaneously, without thought or effort. Stanislavski meant by his aphorism that a seemingly effortless job of acting is the end result of years of training, dedication, and just plain hard work.

Great art *does* conceal art, but not just the art of the actor. Imagine a male actor, wrapped in a heavy fur cape, standing in the middle of the stage and delivering a soliloquy. The stage resembles a craggy mountain peak, with an angular platform surrounded by an immense expanse of solemn purple and blue sky. The actor strides to a rocky outcropping. Under his weight the platform slowly starts to tip. The actor scrambles backward to save himself and catches the hem of his cape on another "rock." The cape comes off, and the **followspot** reveals the actor standing in his BVDs with his cape around his ankles. The spotlight operator, horrified, tries to turn off her light. But she doesn't hit the right lever and, instead of turning it off, changes its color from deep blue to brilliant white.

This unlikely scenario illustrates the fact that less-than-great art conceals little. It also demonstrates that Stanislavski's injunction can be just as true for the design and technical elements of the production as it is for the actors. Together, they can create the delicate illusionary reality that we call theatre. The illusion that the spectators see is just that. A great performance doesn't simply happen; it is the product of a great deal of organization, teamwork, talent, and dedication.

Theatre folk have always delighted in surrounding the process of putting on plays with an aura of mystery. This tradition stems from the probably accurate belief that a play's entertainment value increases if the audience thinks that the production just spontaneously happens. The Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland movies of the 1930s are perfect examples. Mickey, Judy, or one of their friends says, "Let's put on a show!" Someone chimes in that her uncle owns a barn. Amazingly, the barn happens to have a highly polished linoleum floor that is perfect for tap dancing, and the barn is equipped with a full orchestra, sets, lights, and spectacular costumes. The show is an astounding success.

followspot: A lighting instrument with a high-intensity, narrow beam; mounted in a stand that allows it to tilt and swivel so the beam can "follow" an actor.

production team: Everyone working, in any capacity, on the production of the play.

production design team: The producer, director, and scenic, costume, lighting, sound, and other designers who develop the visual and aural concept for the production.

production concept: The creative interpretation of the script, which will unify the artistic vision of producer, director, and designers.

production meeting: A conference of appropriate production personnel to share information.

supernumerary: An actor, normally not called for in the script, used in a production; an extra; a walk-on.

The real world of theatrical production isn't like that. Getting a play from the written word to the stage requires a lot of challenging work. The result of all this effort, the **production team** hopes, will be artistic and artful, but the business of making a script come alive on the stage is a process that isn't all that mysterious.

THE PRODUCTION SEQUENCE

How does a play happen? What sequence of events must occur for it to move from the pages of a script to a live performance before an audience? Every play goes through several stages of development.

Script

The overwhelming majority of theatrical productions begin with a script. This is not true, however, for every theatrical performance. The production of some plays begins with just an idea. That idea may be developed by the performing group in a variety of interesting and creative ways. Some of these concepts may evolve into written scripts, and others may remain as conceptual cores that the actors use as guides when they improvise dialogue during the actual performance.

Concept, Design, and Construction

We will assume that our hypothetical production begins with a traditional script. After the script has been selected, the producer options it, or secures the legal rights to produce it, and hires the director, designers, and actors. The members of the **production design team** read the script and then develop the **production concept**, also referred to as the "production approach."

The production concept is the central creative idea that unifies the artistic vision of the producer, director, and designers. In many ways, any production concept originates with the personal artistic "points of view" of the members of the production design team. The personality, training, and prior experiences of each team member will shape and color his or her thoughts about the play. One of the primary jobs of the director is to mold these individual artistic ideas and expressions into a unified vision—the production concept—so that, ideally, each designer's work supports the work of the other designers as well as the central artistic theme of the production. Normally, the production concept evolves during the first few **production meetings** from the combined input of the members of the production design team. The principles of the production concept are best explained by example.

Let's assume that our hypothetical production team is working on a production of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. Most productions of this play would probably be traditional: Elizabethan costumes and a set that mimics the appearance of the Globe Theatre, the theatre most scholars think was used by Shakespeare. However, some production groups might choose, for a variety of reasons, to develop a nontraditional production concept. In a production of this play directed by Cosmo Catellano at the University of Iowa, the performance was set inside a World War II Nazi concentration camp. In this production, all of the actors in the play were portrayed as Jewish interns of the camp. **Supernumeraries**, dressed as Nazi officers and their female companions, sat in the auditorium and watched the play alongside the paying audience. Additional extras, in the uniforms of concentration-camp guards and carrying weapons, patrolled the



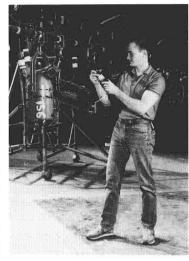
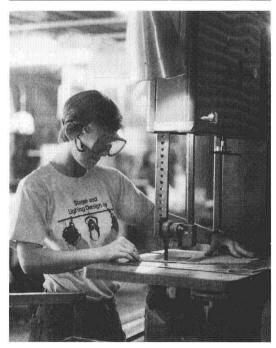
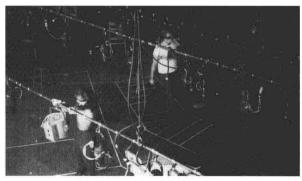


FIGURE 1.1 A great deal of backstage activity occurs before the production reaches the stage.









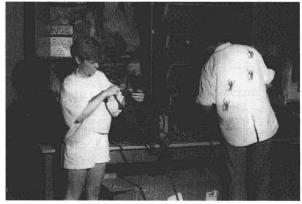


FIGURE 1.2 The director discusses a scene with the actors.







FIGURE 1.3 Scene shifting must be carefully organized and choreographed.

stage throughout the performance. While the script wasn't altered, the radical production concept forced the audience to concentrate on the Jewish persecution themes that are very much a part of the script.

After the production concept is agreed on, the sets, props, lights, costumes, and sound are designed. Then the various diagrams, sketches, and other plans are sent to shops for construction, fabrication, or acquisition of the production elements (see Figure 1.1).

While the various visual elements are being built, the director and actors are busy rehearsing (see Figure 1.2). After the rehearsal and construction period, which usually lasts three to seven weeks, the play moves into the theatre, and the technical and dress rehearsals begin.

Rehearsals

Technical rehearsals are devoted to integrating the sets, props, lighting, and sound with the actors into the action of the play. During this hectic period, the

technical rehearsals: Run-throughs in which the sets, lights, props, and sound are introduced into the action of the play.