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Creating Immersive Worlds: Applying Scenic Design Techniques in 'Eurydice' by Sarah Ruhl

Brynlee Beams

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SENIOR THESIS APPROVAL

This Honors thesis entitled

"Creating Immersive Worlds: Applying Scenic Design Techniques in 'Eurydice' by Sarah Ruhl"

written by

Brynlee Beams

and submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for completion of

the Carl Goodson Honors Program

meets the criteria for acceptance

and has been approved by the undersigned readers.

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Introduction

Typically when one thinks of theatre a particular song or moment will come to mind. Perhaps a story or a particular actor or actress will be what is thought of. For me the moment that comes to mind is usually when I had the opportunity to see *Hadestown* on Broadway with most of the original cast, or more recently, the production of *Anastasia* the OBU theatre department put on. Most commonly theatre is associated with the performance, and though that is an incredibly important aspect of the genre, there is a whole other world that often gets forgotten about, and that is design. In fact, the hallmark of a good design is it being unnoticed by the audience. The fact that it ties in so well and so seamlessly that it doesn't gain unnecessary attention shows the quality of the work. This paper will focus on the design of the set. Walking through each step of the creative process that a designer will go through to create the world in which the players play. The play *Eurydice* by Sarah Ruhl will be the case subject used to walk the reader through each of these steps. But it is of note that the process of scene design is a personal one. Every designer has a different approach and a different order that they take when going through this process. Each designer must develop their own method of creating and walking through this process, but as I am learning, it's always helpful to have somewhere to start. This paper will hopefully be a helpful guide to those just beginning to dive into the subject of scenic design, whether that be simply because they find it interesting, or they intend to pursue it themselves. Here is a place to begin.

I am writing my thesis on scenic design because it was something I wanted to focus on and document the process of both so I can show others how much thought and attention to detail goes into creating the world in which the players play and create the characters that touch the audience, and I wanted to capture the process for myself so I can use it as a guide

and as I pursue design opportunities in the future. My interest in design began in high school when my high school stagecraft teacher saw I had an eye for design and was a creative person; she began to entrust me with a series of tasks building on each other until my senior year when I had the opportunity to design the set for our one act play *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* that took place in our black box theatre each year. I then took that design to the state thespian festival and won the state competition for scenic design. That gave me the push I needed to realize I had a budding skill that I wanted to hone and develop. I decided to go to school for theatre arts here at OBU where I have had the opportunity to work under Eric Phillips, who has helped me greatly to grow and understand my craft. In my time at OBU I have designed two sets for productions and just finished working on my third. I was the sole scenic designer for the original musical *Tanglewood*, written and directed by Sammy Campione in 2022, one of the Co-Scenic Designers of *Clue* with Thomas Lilley directed by Isabella Owen in 2023, and I am most recently the Scenic Designer for *Community Garden*, directed by Abby Burlison. With each show I have worked on I have learned new things, and have worked to hone my processes.

With *Tanglewood* I learned how to work with a director to create their vision. There were lots of drafts and lots of mockups as we had conversations about what was needed for the show. The show was being written and crafted as we were designing so there were no previous productions to help us find solutions. It took a lot of conversations but eventually we came to a set that could fulfill the requirements of the show and could be built in the 3-week time period we had to work with. With *Clue* I learned how to become a puzzle solver. The set had so many different secret surprises that had to be included to make the show feel like the movie and the board game, so it was a fun challenge searching for a way to make that

work on Verser's stage. I also learned how to work with another designer. This was my first time not being the sole designer, so that came with its own challenges in learning where to compromise and where to stand my ground. Luckily I had a really great co-designer who had strengths where I had weaknesses and weaknesses where I had strengths. We worked really well as a team and managed to create the set that I am the most proud of. With *Community Garden* my main focus was having more structure to my process, taking a more traditional and well thought out approach than I had with the designs for the previous two shows I had worked on. It was the test subject to which I applied my process before capturing it in writing for this paper. Through each of these experiences I worked to hone my process and learn more about how to design. In writing this paper I am applying the hands-on knowledge I have gained on top of the information I have learned from design classes as well as my own personal research on the subject.

A rendering of the set for the original musical *Tanglewood* produced at Ouachita Baptist University

A photo of the finished set for Ouachita Baptist University's Production of *Tanglewood* in 2022

A rendering of the *Clue* set in the midst of the planning process for the paint treatment.

A photo of the finished set of Ouachita Baptist University's Production of *Clue* in 2023

The final color rendering of the set design for Ouachita Baptist University's production of *Community Garden*

A Photo of Ouachita Baptist University's production of *Community Garden,* 2024

Role of the Designer

The role of the Scenic Designer, or Scenographer is an important one. The scenic designer works with the director and the other designers for a production to create the overall visual interpretation and expression of a production. (Parker 36) They are in charge of designing the physical setting in which the characters exist. The sets they design should be both functional and fulfill the needs required for the production as well as expressively helping to further tell the story trying to be told. In his book Parker states that, "scene design produces more than just a place where events happen. It generates an environment that helps the audience understand the tone and the purpose of the story being told" (37). It is important that the scenic designer has a strong understanding of the text that they are working with because the choices that the designer makes shape the reality that the audience perceives. Payne argues that, "an audience sees through the eyes of the scenographer, since he both rationally and intuitively selects what they view. Moreover, he controls not only what they see but also the context in which they see it. The objective vision of the scenographer very much determines the subjective reality an audience perceives" (153). The scenic designer works closely with the director, together they work out what is required of the set, and what it should evoke. They plan ahead and stay in communication so that the process of integrating the set and actors works well, but a good designer knows that, "direction and design cannot be planned out totally in advance. Nor would it benefit by it…the designer must remain flexible in order to consider the changing shape from page to stage", it is important for a designer to understand that scenic design is both a role in which they must be open and flexible, willing to take others ideas into consideration, and ready to solve whatever issues are presented to them throughout the process (Thorne 80). Another important thing for the

designer to take into consideration when making the design choices for the set is how things change throughout a production. How does the set grow and change with the script? In his book *Playwriting: Structure, Character, How and What to Write*, Stephen Jefferys talks a lot about the importance of the scenery to a play. He says that every good set has a few good mysteries that are revealed throughout a production, and that "the theatre is physical, so physicalizing the space, finding the changes that can occur within the space, is a sure way of making it come alive" (Jeffreys 33), so it is the Scenic Designer's job to discover how the set relates to characters as well as reflects them. There are a lot of steps to take in the design process for a production, and it is a very personal process. The process changes for each designer, so there is no order in which a designer is required to take these steps in. Often a designer will be working on multiple steps at once. In his book *Scenographic Imagination*, Payne describes the design process as circular, you are always coming back around and touching on areas you've already spent time on, and are using information you've learned pursuing one step to help you in another. Each designer must find what way the process works best for them.

Director-Designer Relationship

Every designer and director relationship looks different because every combination of director and designer personalities will be different, but there are some things that are important to remember in every designer-director relationship:

1. "The most successful and unified productions usually result from mutual respect and open-mindedness on the part of both the designer and the director" (Parker 51).

2. “An experienced designer soon learns to not take anything for granted and makes frequent checks with the director and other designers” (Parker 52).
3. “It is absolutely critical that the scene designer and the director communicate with each other often and clearly” (Parker 41).

After reading the script the next big step the designer takes is meeting with the director. It is helpful to arrange to meet with the director as soon as possible after reading the script (Winslow 35). It is at this first meeting that the groundwork for the working relationship, and the production as a whole, is laid. Whether this meeting is one-on-one with the director or a design meeting complete with all designers for a production present is really up to the preference of the director. It is common that after the first reading, the designer will already have some ideas beginning to form of what they envision the set to be; they may have some research, or some quick sketches, or a list of ideas. It is helpful to bring these initial thoughts with you into this meeting because it can help you communicate with the director. Visual images help to get what you are seeing in your head into the hands of the director so they can understand what you are imagining (Parker, 52).

As you head into this meeting, remember that no two directors will have the same expectations of the designer at this first meeting. Some will already have specific requirements in mind going in, and some will seem to have no ideas at all. Come in prepared and willing to be flexible. This is just the beginning of a very long conversation that will last until the final set piece is finished and on stage. Do not get too worried if the director’s views conflict with some of your own. If you can establish a mutual respect for each other’s work then the results you create together will be far better than the results you could have produced individually (Winslow 35).

The biggest task at this first meeting is to find a common method of approach: "A design approach is the *idea*, or the *visual theme*, of design. It is the product of creative thinking, visual imagination, and collaboration with the director. As the 'glue' that holds all the visual elements together, the approach provides control and direction toward a final design. The clearer and stronger the design idea, the easier is every subsequent design decision" (Parker 49). The design approach will be heavily influenced by the director's concept. Many directors work with something called a *central image*, and it is a single image that is a visual representation of their concept for the production. If a director comes in with one, it can be incredibly influential to the approach that all the designers take as they work on their designs. Because the goal in theatre is unity between the designs of all the designers, set, costumes, lighting, props, and sound, having a design approach for all designers to take is incredibly crucial to the cohesiveness of the production. The design approach often takes into account the images, natures of the play and the colors, style, staging, and directorial concept desired for the production (Parker 51-52). Take notes as this is discussed, scribble your ideas down as the meeting progresses, and keep them. Do not throw them away, because they can sometimes be a helpful resource, or source of inspiration as you get further into the design process (Winslow 36).

After the designers and director have reached a mutual understanding of the theme, general interpretation, and design approach for the production, it is now time for the designer to return to the script and read it again. This time "she must pay close attention to the physical requirements of the plot structure and any changes of locale. Then she needs to examine the action and staging requirements…. All in relation to the discussion with the production team and leading to the development of the basic idea and scheme of production"

(Parker 52). It is after this second reading, and a time of more research and sketching, that the designer meets with the director once again, this time armed with rough sketches, idea sketches, preliminary ground plans, a unity statement, or whatever else they have worked on. They will discuss the direction the play is heading, and will continue the cycle of separating to work on their own aspect of the project and then returning together to discuss. What is important most of all is that each of these meetings push the designer and the design a bit further, and mutual respect and understanding is grown so that a production can be successful.

For the designing of *Eurydice*, since it is an independent project I do not have a director or other designers that I am working with, so I am essentially acting as the sole creative force for this project. In order to get an outside perspective, and have feedback from another source, I have been working closely with my thesis director Eric Phillips on each step of the process; he designed for the production when OBU did *Eurydice* in the past so he has an intimate knowledge of the show. He has been my sounding board for ideas, and offered suggestions and guidance as I've gone along.

Step One: Reading the Play

When setting out to begin working on a new production, the designer's first task is to read the work in which they are to design for. The designer's first reading of the play should be for its *content*. This is important because this is where you begin to answer the questions of "What kind of play is (this)? What is the action and where is it taking place? What is the dominant mood? What is the nature of the conflict in the play?" all of which are important questions for the designer to answer, as they will all affect the design of the production

(Parker 42). I like what Darwin Payne sayys in his book *Scenographic Imagination* when discussing the importance of the first read:

> But it is in those first attempts to feel out the play's emotional undercurrent and subtext, paying as little regard to the technical workings of the theatre as possible, that we will make our most important discoveries. The key to all good research, whether as a director or as a scenographer, lies in our ability to make that all-important first reading as an absorbing experience as possible. (Payne 147)

It is very important to take in as much about the play as you can during the first reading, it will help you with your overall understanding of the play as you begin the design process.

Before one can begin any work on the design of the selected play, they must first read the work itself and begin to study and familiarize themselves with it. The first reading consists of simply reading it, looking at it with a complete outside perspective with no intent to design, as if they were just a member of the audience taking in the story for the first time. This approach allows the designer to see the story as it is, to form opinions, follow themes, and get to know the setting and characters without the distraction of trying to figure out how to bring it out of the page. This is where a designer begins to fall in love with the world they are about to bring to life.

Don't underestimate the importance of this first read. This is where you discover the mood and atmosphere of the piece which will be pivotal in your final design. Soak in the story, enjoy it for what it is because, "What is read with delight is commonly retained, because pleasure always secures attention; but the books which are consulted by occasional necessity, and perused with impatience, seldom leave any traces on the mind"(Payne 146). You will take more from the play if you simply go in with the intention of enjoyment and

understanding than if you go in with the mindset of trying to pull the image of the set from the pages. I so often find myself tempted to skip this first reading, to just dive in headfirst to the puzzle solving adventure it takes to bring the script to the stage. To look at the script from the very get-go with a designer's eye. But every time I try to skip this step, I find myself lost and overwhelmed in the middle, and I have to start all over again with fresh eyes.

This first read is the designer's chance to take in the story to its entirety with no constraints, to form opinions and ideas without the weight of bringing them to life. Mordecai Gorelik, a famous designer of the 1920s and 30s maintains "that one of the most creative acts a scenographer ever performs is the first reading of the play he is to design," after finishing the play for the first time it is important to sit down and write out your first impressions (Payne 109). Your first impressions might not always be workable, or make it to the stage, but it is important that you write out any feelings the play gave you, any words it made you think of, and any images that caught your attention. For *Eurydice* one of the things I noted after my first reading was the repeated motif of the sound of water in rusty pipes being used throughout the script. This idea was not only something that was intriguing to me audibly, but I felt like it could really inform the play visually as well. Another thing that is important to note after the reading is the character relationships shown in the play, because character relationships will inform the blocking and movement of the play as well as many of the important visual elements used on the stage. At this point you don't have to come to any conclusions, nor do you have to try to implement any of these ideas yet. First impressions are just important because they cannot be created later, and they often create lasting marks on the creative mind. So write them down! Then continue on with the process.

Step Two: Reading the Play…Again

After the first reading, in which you've had a chance to mull over the play, discover the mood, and start to dissect the important parts of the story, you can do a second reading of the text, this time taking it in with a designer's eye. The second time you read through the play is when you read for the play's intent (Parker 42). This is when you can begin to think about how to solve the specific requirements the play has for the set, and how to creatively approach them. I usually take the opportunity to dream, to imagine to what great heights or depths I can take the set to, and to discover how I personally imagine the world that this play is set in looks, works and moves. In *Stage Design: A Practical Guide* Thorne suggests we "give time to develop your interest for the play. Allow the readings to take you through stages of understanding. Give yourself over to accepting that a good deal of time, plenty of discussion, and much creative work will assist in unraveling its intricate interwoven nature" (Thorne 82). This stage is all personal discovery, a chance to play with any and every idea before meeting with the director. Lists of ideas, thumbnail sketches, random bits of inspiration are great to catch at this stage before going in and meeting with the director. This is also a time to study the language of the play, and how it contributes to the overall feel of the production. Parker suggests that, "suggestions of life outside the immediate environment, repeated images, and any patterns that emerge bear attention. The imagery in particular serves as a strong guide to the designer in developing ideas. It may lead to a metaphor for the play that can be quite useful as an approach to a production" (42). Take note of these as you read, include them in your sketches, they can be very helpful as you get acquainted with the world within the play, and begin to figure out how to bring it to life.

In his book Thorne also lists some questions to ask yourself after the second reading that can help you spark creative ideas as you begin the process of sitting down to design the set. I filled out these questions (italicized here) myself for the play *Eurydice*.

Questions to ask yourself:

- *Does any one moment have significance over another? In what way does the play build up or down?*

  This play is one of three acts: there is the first when Eurydice is alive, and the climax of this section comes at the end, when her escape attempt fails and she falls down the stairs to her death. Then there is Act Two, where Eurydice is dead; this act is a time of learning, Orpheus is trying to learn how to get Eurydice back, and Eurydice is learning from her father how to be dead and still remember. Lastly there is Act Three and this is the moment the play has been building to: who is Eurydice ultimately going to end up with? Is Orpheus going to get her back, or is she going to stay with her father? The most important part in this scene is not when the question is answered and we come to a resolution of sorts, but when we come to the end of the scene and we see it all fall apart. Falling apart is the true resolution.

- *Is there a balance in the emotion throughout? How expressive is this language, how colorful?*

  The overarching emotion throughout this entire play from the first scene to the very last is love. Everything is colored by the love the three main characters feel for one another. But that is not the only emotion experienced, there is fear and sadness, loneliness and desperation, lust, and frustration. The language is modern, and kind of

funny, the words feel weird on the tongue occasionally, and some of the ideas expressed get to their points in a roundabout way.

- *Is there an atmosphere in terms of being hot or cold? How contrasting are the scenes?*

  There is a cool emptiness I feel in the words. Emotion is there, and love is there, but there is an emptiness that is present with all the forgetting and remembering occurring, as well as the use of the water motif, everything feels cool in temperature.

- *What themes run through each scene? Is there an overall theme?*

  I think the overall theme is one of love and relationship, both romantic and familial. You will do anything to be with those you love. There are some people in your life with whom you just fit, and without those people life can feel empty.

- *Is there an apparently fragile or solid structuring?*

  The structuring is solid between the acts, but the scenes within are fragile, like the string metaphor used they intertwined with each other, some being only the briefest of moments.

- *Does the portrayal of life seem to rise, fall, tilt, or sway?*

  It's fall. Like Eurydice's in Act 1, the characters are falling ever deeper into the afterlife. Though there is a moment of reversal where you hope it will be a rise and return to life.

- *How can you best describe the various moods created by each situation?*

  There is a feeling of hopelessness and nostalgia, it's wonderful that Eurydice is returned to her father, but it is at the cost of her marriage. It makes me want to talk to

my dad. There is a darkness that lingers. Because of the separation, you cannot be happy for Eurydice one way or the other, there is always something that is missing.

- *Are you more focused on one aspect, one issue or one scene?*

  I'm focused on the story as a whole, but one scene I find especially touching is the father building the string room for his daughter. That is an important scene.

- *What quality of light is there? Are there any dark secrets?*

  The quality of light is mixed: I think it's warm in the string room and in the world above, but when the separation is heightened it cools, The only secrets are the fact that Eurydice and her father retain their memories after being dipped in the river, and those aren't necessarily dark.

- *What are the most obvious historical period details?*

  The 1950's bathing suits, the water pump she drinks from.

- *Do you feel spatial relations? Are people and scene huddled together, or spread out and airy?*

  They are in groups separated by one another. Eurydice is almost never alone.

- *Which places from your experience and memory come to mind for one location then another?*

  I think of my time in Italy walking through the ruins of ancient temples, where this myth originated. I think of the cell Paul was kept in that I got to visit and the deep cold of the stone under the earth. I think of the beaches in Okinawa that I grew up on and the warmth of the water in the summer. The underworld to me feels like a timeless place, a place where usually the lost aren't found. It's a dreamless place of limbo.

- *What does it remind you of?*

  Hadestown the musical was my first thought, but that is only because of the source material. *Alice and Wonderland* because of the train platform scene, and the confusion of Eurydice upon her arrival in the underworld.

- *What appears positive, what negative?*

  Our three main characters are positive. They are contrasted with the negative characters of the stones and the interesting man/ lord of the underworld.

- *How does the play make you feel in terms of happiness or sadness?*

  It's a tragedy — the ending leaves you sad, but it is a bittersweet sadness. The characters are together, but not truly.

- *What may contribute to you favoriting an issue or character?*

  The appeal of love and family. I love the way Eurydice's father cares for her when she arrives in the underworld, but is willing to give her up for her to have another shot at life.

- *How do the characters balance out to one another?*

  Eurydice is the book-smart one who likes to read, and she contrasts with Orpheus' head in the clouds creativity. She has her feet planted — until she dies. Then she becomes dependent on her father who already knows who he is and teaches her who she is again.

Step Three: Research

The next step commonly taken after one reads the play is beginning the process of research. This is the longest and most ongoing part of the design process, it typically extends

through the whole of the project. A designer will continually return to the images and ideas that they pull in this stage, and will often add to their library of images and notes as new ideas arise. A designer must be patient as they explore ideas and topics; research must be done thoroughly as it adds to the understanding of the play and the ideas applied to the design, As Payne argues, “Impatience is the common enemy of any good research regardless of the field in which it is done”, so don’t act with impatience (146). Follow the rabbit trails, you never know what you will find and how it will add to your final design.

The goal for research consists of two main parts, first to understand the context in which the characters live, and the action of the show occurs. This includes trying to learn information about when the play was written, why it was written, and the author who wrote it as well as information about the place and time in which the play is set. This is especially important in works set in history or current times, more than works set in fantasy settings or timeless spaces, but this research is important to all theatrical works. The second is finding inspiration and evocative images. These images can tie to the initial historical research or they can be completely unrelated other than the fact that they inspired some connection to the production on a visual or idea level. In his book Payne states that, “The scenographer must search for those elements of an image that evoke meanings and information that lie beyond recognition of surface features”(151). These images should not only tie to the visual idea you are beginning to form but should connect to the play on a deeper level as well, whether they represent a character or a moment in the show because they tie to a motif or emotion, the images you choose should work with the play on multiple levels.

It is important to remember as you begin your research that “ideas may come from any period and from any source as long as they are used to support the playwright’s dramatic

concepts" (Payne 169). The goal for this section is to understand "the visual image of a period along with the myriad facets of that image" and "the forces that molded the people who in turn determined the character of the age in which they lived" (Payne 177). It is so important that the designer do enough research that they feel they can fully understand the content of the show and the characters within it. Remember that your research is only useful to the extent that it clarifies the themes of a production and stirs inspiration in the designer. For Eurydice, I have written about much of my research so that we both could have an understanding of the production as we move forward in this project.

The original myth of Orpheus and Eurydice as told by Edith Hamilton in *Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes*, focuses mainly on Orpheus and his life before, during and after his trip to the Underworld. It does not give the reader very much information about Eurydice herself other than Orpheus wooed her and directly after their wedding she died. Orpheus was given the gift of music from his mother, a Muse. The myth says that he had no rival to his music in all of Greece except for the gods themselves: "there was no limit to his power when he played and sang. No one and nothing could resist him. Everything animate and inanimate followed him. He moved the rocks on the hillside and turned the course of rivers" (Hamilton 139). Orpheus wooed Eurydice with his song and they were soon married. But their joy was short-lived. After the wedding Eurydice walked in a meadow and was bitten by a viper which led to her death. Orpheus, unable to endure his grief, decided to go down to the Underworld to try and retrieve Eurydice. Because of this bold choice of bravery, Hamilton writes, Orpheus " dared more than any other man ever dared for his love" (140). With his song he convinced the King of the Underworld to return Eurydice to him. His story "drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek, and made Hell grant what love did seek," even the

stones wept at his song (Hamilton 141). Eurydice was given to Orpheus, with one condition: that he could not look back to her as she followed, until they had both reached the world above. Orpheus fought within himself, knowing she was behind him as they traveled but desperately desiring to glance behind just to make sure. As soon as he stepped out into the daylight of the world above he joyfully turned to her. But it was too soon, she was still in the shade of the underworld. He reached out to her, but she was gone in an instant, "all he heard was one faint word, 'Farewell.'" as she was taken from him once more (Hamilton. 142). He tried to follow her back into the Underworld but he was not allowed to return the same way a second time. He lived out the remainder of his life alone, wandering the wilderness and playing his lyre in utter desolation.

In *Eurydice*, which is the play I have chosen to explore and design for in this paper, Sarah Ruhl reimagines the story of Orpheus and Eurydice from the point of view of Eurydice herself. This play uses a less classical context and a new point of view to add fresh ideas to the original mythological tragedy while still holding true to the message of the original tale.

The story starts with Orpheus and Eurydice's engagement and then introduces the audience to her father, who has died and is watching his daughter from the underworld. The story is told from different locations going back and forth from her father in the underworld and Eurydice and Oprheus celebrating on their wedding day. In the midst of the celebrations Eurydice slips away for a breath and some water. There she meets a strange man who tries to lure her away. He is unsuccessful on his first attempt. But he eventually manages to get her to agree to come with him to his apartment by telling her he has a letter from her father to give her. In his apartment on a very high floor of a building with no elevator the man tries to seduce Eurydice, and when that doesn't work, tries to force himself upon her. She flees him,

stealing away the letter as well. On her way out the door Orpheus comes after her to save her but he is too late as she descends the stairs she trips and falls to her death. The next scene of the play opens with her arrival in the underworld. Her memories have been wiped in the river and she is very confused where she is. She can only remember that she has a husband. But his name has escaped her.

While she is standing there confused and puzzled her father arrives but she does not remember who he is and assumes he's a porter. He plays along and tries to help her remember who she is. The stones, characters in the underworld that are much like guard dogs of the rules (and are a connection to Cerberus and the idea of a Greek chorus) tell him that what he is doing is not allowed. He does it anyway and he builds Eurydice a room of string. They create a home together in the midst of the underworld. While Eurydice and her father slowly work to regain and remember their relationship, Orpheus is in the world above writing Eurydice letters, and searching for a way to find her. Orpheus' first letter to Eurydice is what sparks the returning of her memories; it is the remembering of his name that unlocks the door of her mind. She waits for him, contentedly spending time with her father.

Meanwhile, Orpheus searches for the musical note he can use to ride the rain down into the Underworld, and finds it. He sings and the stones weep, allowing Orpheus to take Eurydice back with him, requiring that he doesn't turn to look behind to see if she's there. Eurydice doesn't want to leave her father but loves Orpheus so her father convinces her to go with him. She catches up to him, calls out his name and he turns to see her. They both realize their mistake and mourn as they are pulled back to two different worlds.

While that was occurring Eurydice's father has dipped himself in the river to forget because he couldn't bear being parted from his daughter once more, so when Eurydice

returns she finds him asleep, his memory is wiped and he is unable to wake up. Having lost everything and with the King of the Underworld claiming her as his bride, Eurydice writes a letter to Orpheus' future wife, wishing him well and asking her to take care of him. She then decides to dip herself in the river to forget. She does so, and as she does Orpheus arrives in the underworld — the proper way this time, dripping with rain from the river. The audience is left with a tragedy once more. All the characters are present together, but none of them remember the other because of the choices they made from a heart unwilling to live without each other.

After reading this story we can turn to Stephen Jeffery's book *Playwriting: Structure, Character, How and What to Write*, where he discusses nine different story types. There we can try to connect this story to the larger categories of the story types. The second type he discusses is "Orpheus: The Gift That is Lost", and here Jefferys points out how the story of Orpheus and Eurydice that Ruhl writes in *Eurydice* follows this original archetype. The gift is lost, searched for, and in the end not returned. This is a story type that resonates deeply within humanity, because reality is not all happy endings, and gifts are lost every day. Sarah Ruhl uses this archetype to explore her themes of growing up and the loss that one experiences with change. This universal story makes her story's connection to the loss of a loved one more poignant.

After looking into the basis of the story, it is important to look into the history for the author as well to help create the context in which this play was written. The context often informs the overall message of a story. Sarah Ruhl is an award-winning American playwright who has written many plays that have been produced on Broadway and both across America and internationally. She is originally from Chicago but now teaches at Yale School of Drama

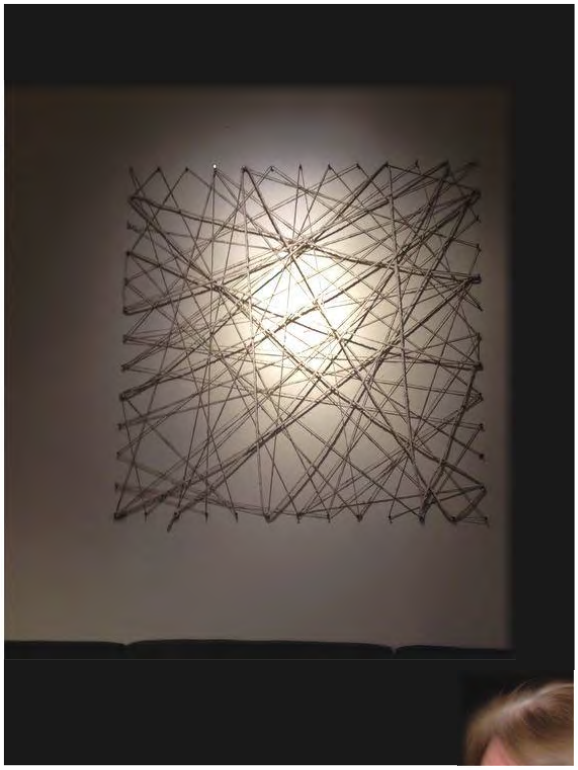
and lives in Brooklyn with her family. Her approach to writing comes from Shakespeare and the Greeks. She says that she "tries to 'interpret how people subjectively experience life…' Everyone has a great, horrible opera inside him. I feel that my plays, in a way, are very old-fashioned. They're pre-Freudian in the sense that the Greeks and Shakespeare worked with similar assumptions. Catharsis isn't a wound being excavated from childhood'"(Ruhl).

In an interview with Ruhl posted by the Metropolitan Opera while *Eurydice* was being adapted into an opera, Ruhl discussed why she wrote the play and her own personal connection to it. She begins by talking about how she first discovered the story of Orpheus and Eurydice between the pages of a children's mythology book but "it's one of those myths that you feel like you're born knowing, or at least I feel like I was born knowing it" (Schelling). She then discusses her own autobiographical connection to the play saying that she wrote it for her father who was diagnosed with cancer and died two years after she turned 18. Upon reflecting on her motivations when writing the play she says, "I think in many ways I wrote it to have more conversations with him" (Schelling). You can see the traces of this in the many conversations Eurydice and her father have throughout the play, and the strong bond that ties the two together. When reading the play, one is left with the sense that Eurydice would have been perfectly content to stay with her father in the Underworld forever if Orpheus hadn't attempted to rescue her. Yes, her love for Orpheus is great—so great it is his name that triggers her memories, but there is an unmistakable weight and value placed on the relationship between Eurydice and her father that is impossible to ignore and is even more important and beautiful when viewed through the lens of a daughter grieving the father that was taken from her too soon.

One aspect of the play she delved into that is very important visually is the use of string. In the interview Ruhl was asked about the significance of the use of string throughout the play (Orpheus' ring for Eurydice and her father's string room) and she explained that it connected to the play on many different levels: "The string is the umbilical cord, and it's the string of an instrument. It's also the idea of improvised care for others: If Orpheus can't afford gold, what does he have? He has a string, a more fragile tool. The father can't create a home out of bricks or straw, but maybe he has a bit of string. How can we show love and care for people with these very thin, tender, improvised objects?" (Schelling). This idea was incredibly important as I thought about the design of the set. The room of string must be made of string, no matter how difficult or complicated it would be to work through. Lines and overlapping connections would be important to call to mind this idea of string. There must be an immediateness to the set that is as true and authentic as the characters on the stage. This is their whole world, not just the backdrop for their stories.

In his book *The Handbook of Set Design*, Colin Winslow talks about the importance of serendipity in research. He says, "Do not ignore the value of serendipity in research, it can sometimes produce unexpectedly rich results. Pictures or objects that do not immediately appear to be relevant can often turn out to be a source of inspiration" (Winslow 38). I had my own version of this as I worked through the research for *Eurydice*. I was gathering images that I liked for my mood board (mentioned later on in this paper) and I stumbled across some images of spider webs. Immediately I connected them to the string room that appears in the show, and the importance of string that the author stressed in the earlier article that I had read. This then tied to string being used as an art medium, so I began to look at different string art installments. The moment in the show when her father builds her the room, is a

moment of tenderness that the audience gets to watch unfold. The room is not created in a scene change or a blackout; it is built before their very eyes. So, I wanted there to be an artistic, organic performance to the piece, like the father is taking what little he has to demonstrate the beauty of his love for his daughter. It is crazy that all these thoughts were stirred by the simple idea of a spiderweb.



In my research I also discovered these lights, which were created by the Japanese artist Nao Tamura. I added them to the set because the light they cast looks like the rippling of water. I wanted to incorporate more light into a portion of the set because of the idea of a dark underworld and a bright world above, and I thought these lights would be a very unique way to incorporate that and keep in mind the water motif which is an important element of the show.

Step Four: The Unity Statement

The Unity Statement comes next as you begin to prepare to bring something to the table for your meeting with the director. Every director is a little different in how much input they'd like to have when it comes to the design of the set, and every director will have a different set of expectations when it comes to what they expect you to bring to them that first meeting. But it is always good to have a working knowledge of the show and a unity statement to show them what direction you are beginning to go. Some directors may have a central image or metaphor they'd like you to take into consideration as you think about the design, and some may have no clue what direction they would like to go, and would be grateful for a statement to start the conversation. Whether or not you present your unity statement to the director, it is good to have one as a guide.

The Unity Statement originated with two scenic designers in my own design lineage, Henry Kurth and Arch Lauterer. It is common for the arts to be taught through a mentor/student or master/apprentice model, and stage design is no exception. Many designers often credit a mentor in their development, even as they become mentors themselves, thus creating a lineage of design. In my time here I have studied stage design under Eric Phillips. He studied under Danny Grace in his undergraduate studies at Hendrix College. Grace studied under Henry Kurth at Case Western Reserve. Kurth worked as a professional designer in his younger years, and then began to teach design at Case Western where he met Arch Lauterer. He was so impressed with Lauterer's work that he began to work closely with him and viewed him as a mentor as well as a colleague. Lauterer worked as a designer from high school and eventually landed a job as the Artistic Director at the Cleveland Playhouse, a respected regional theatre in the 1920s. His main influences were the New Stagecraft

designers Appia and Craig who revolutionized stage design. The focus of this design lineage is creating evocative spaces for movement with an emphasis on what Appia called “Living Light”. The Unity Statement is unique to my lineage of designers with Lauterer having a version of it he used which he derived from reading Kenneth Burke (a social scientist) which Kurth turned into a system that he taught to students that eventually made its way to me.

The Unity Statement is a sentence that utilizes specially chosen words that call up images to use as you create the visuals of the play. The words you select should be visual, and should be specific to the actions of the play, while remaining general enough to apply to the whole play. The sentence framework is as follows:

To ACT in order to PURPOSE by means of AGENTS and AGENCIES in a time of SCENE.

ACT - The word you chose to fill in this blank should be the primary thing done in the play. You should ask yourself, *What are they doing?*

PURPOSE - Is the reason the act is done, or the hoped for outcome of the action. You should ask yourself, *Why are they doing it?*

AGENTS and AGENCIES - Are the forces or strategies used for accomplishing the ACT. Usually these are opposites, or contrasting strategies that are used to accomplish the PURPOSE. You should ask yourself, *What tactics are the characters using to achieve their purpose?*

SCENE - Is the environment or circumstances that generate the need for the ACT. It consists of the situational environment, not the physical one. You should ask yourself, *What is the feeling, mood, or emotion that these characters are living in?*

After creating a word bank of words associated with the play I slowly developed a unity statement which I felt would be a good guide.

Word Bank: lost, forgetfulness, memory, remember, love, juxtaposition, separation, apart, connect, bond, tie, kin, care, communicate, write, searching, words, language, trickery, trap, tragedy, alone, exploit, overcome, community, comfort, heartbreak, naivety, youth, beauty, spirit, death, parallel, music, orchestration

My Unity Statement for Eurydice read as follows…

To Orchestrate in order to Bond by means of Persistence/Passion and Surrender in a time of Parallel Separation.

I chose the word *orchestrate* for my ACT word because I wanted to depict the fact that each character is actively working towards their own goal. For Orpheus it is to be with Eurydice; for Eurydice's father it is to be a good father; for Eurydice it is to be with those she loves; for the Stones it is to keep the rules; and for the Lord of the Underworld/Interesting Man it is to capture Eurydice and make her his bride. I also liked *orchestrate* for its visual quality, the connection it has to Orpheus' music, and the idea of several lines of the story going at once, but there is still an organization to it.

I chose the word *bond* for my PURPOSE word because I wanted to include the idea of kinship and connection. The characters in the show are constantly seeking to restore bonds with each other, especially within the main three characters: Orpheus wants to be with Eurydice, her father wants to be with her, and Eurydice wants to be with both. Visually this word is better than simply "connect" because it has a connection to relationships both in the romantic and familial sense. It is also connected to the word "tie", which is another visual

word. Words like “bond” and “tie” fit well with the architectural idea of the set, and can be immediately connected to the string room that Eurydice’s father builds for her.

I chose the words *Passion*, *Persistence*, and *Surrender* for my AGENTS and AGENCIES because there are two different ideas of love represented in the play. There is the passionate, persistent love of the beginning:there’s Eurydice’s father, breaking the rules of the underworld to keep his memory from being wiped and finding out how to write to his daughter so he can still be a part of her life; there’s Eurydice’s love for Orpheus being strong enough that his name returns her memories; and there is the passionate love of Orpheus when he searches the world for the answers on how to get his wife back, and the courage he has to sing his way through the gates to save her. But there is also a surrendering love represented mostly in the way the story ends: the father surrenders his daughter to return to her husband, and in turn surrenders to the river because he doesn’t want to continue his existence without her. Eurydice surrenders to fate when they fail the test, content to return to her father in the underworld only to find him without his memories. Eurydice also surrenders to her story as she writes a letter to Orpheus’ future wife, asking her to be kind to him and to care for him as she had before she surrenders her memories to the river as well. Lastly, Orpheus surrenders to the rules of the underworld, coming back through the gates the proper way this time so he can be with his love again.

I chose the words *Parallel Separation* for my SCENE because I kept seeing this idea of separation playing out in the script. The characters are always battling separation, and in the end, even when they are all together, they are apart from one another because the river has taken their memories. But I didn’t want simple separation to be the visual guide in this part of the sentence, because I felt there was also a juxtaposition that was important to

account for. We have these two worlds onstage that are living and breathing simultaneously, representing the two very opposite ends of the human spectrum: life and death. So I knew I needed to incorporate that idea into my visual language thus including *parallel* with my choice of the word *separation*. Someone is always alone in this show. It trades around between the main three characters, but there is always separation present on stage.

Step Five: Scene Breakdown

After crafting your unity statement you can go several directions, but I like to start with a scene breakdown, especially with a play like *Eurydice* where the locale is constantly shifting. This breakdown just gives you a feel for the movement of the play, and can help you track the importance of specific locations. In my breakdown below I realized there was a really important juxtaposition between the underworld and the world above. They cohabitate the stage, and are simultaneously developing, and characters are changing and interacting within them, separate from each other, but also tied together through the letters. So that juxtaposition will be an important piece to think about as I create the ground plan and begin to define the paths of movement and focus in the set. There are a lot of scenes, and many of them are very short, so there will not be a lot of shifting within the set; it needs to be able to develop and morph into whatever is required before the audience's very eyes. Levels will be very important here as well, with the idea of the *underworld* and the very high apartment, there is a juxtaposition between those things as well.

<u>First Movement</u>

Scene 1: Beach, sky, an extensive unseen boardwalk towards the water. What direction is the water? They need space to move towards it.

Scene 2: Underworld (Eurydice's father)

Scene 3: Eurydice by the water pump, in the world above: running water? Somewhere to sit, a stoop?

Scene 4: Underworld (Eurydice's Father)//World above, Eurydice and Orpheus dance together at their wedding.

Scene 5: Eurydice at water pump.

Scene 6: Orpheus at water pump.

Scene 7: The Interesting Apartment (a giant loft space with no furniture); stairs; a door perhaps, radio of some sort? (Brazilian mood music); offstage access; high up (top of a highrise apartment), wall for him to back her up against.

Second Movement

Scene 1: The Underworld: Raining Elevator w/ door that opens and closes, train platform

Scene 2 : World above: Orpheus writes a letter

Scene 3 : Underworld: a room made of string

Scene 4 : Underworld; in the string room

Scene 5 : World Above: Orpheus writes a letter

Scene 6: Underworld: in the string room

Scene 7 : World Above: Orpheus writes a letter

Scene 8 : Underworld: in the string room

Scene 9 : Underworld: in the string room (time has shifted)

Scene 10 : World Above: Orpheus writes a letter (drops a copy of Shakespeare on a string, needs to be elevated)

Scene 11 : Underworld: in the string room (Eurydice has book now)

Scene 12 : World Above: Orpheus makes a phone call

Scene 13 : Underworld: in the string room

Scene 14 : Underworld: inside and outside the string room (Lord of Underworld comes for a visit)

Scene 15 : World Above: a rain storm, Orpheus matches pitch to the rain

Scene 16 : Underworld: in the string room

Scene 17 : World Above: Orpheus writes a letter

Scene 18 : Underworld: in the string room

Scene 19 : Darkness, Orpheus lit within it, slipping into the Underworld

Scene 20 : Underworld

Third Movement

Scene 1 : Orpheus at the gates of hell, trap door for the Child's entrance

Scene 2 : The string room, outside of the string room, the walk to the world above,

Scene 3 : Underworld: dismantling of the string room, raining elevator

Step Six: Mood Board

A mood board, vision board, or concept collage is a physical or digital collection of ideas that is commonly used in design fields like interior, fashion, graphic and costume design. It can include anything that helps define the direction you want to take with your project; this includes color palettes, textures, photos, illustrations and anything that sparks inspiration and ties in well with your concept. Look for things to put in your board that evoke the theme, mood, and setting of your project and try to use your unity statement as well as any research you've done to influence your choices (EdTA).

Personally I like to use the mood board to refine my research, and select the images from all the research images I've collected that feel the most defining of the production. I really enjoy using Pinterest to collect and store my research images, but I usually end up with a folder full of over a hundred pins exploring a myriad of different ideas, so the mood board helps me to pull in a focus on what images I've found that are specifically speaking to me, and help to create a cohesive look. Of course I can continue to pull from my Pinterest board at any time, or even explore new ideas as they come to me. But the mood board really helps me to focus the direction of my designs.

For this production I found that I had a lot of different ideas, but the thing that was most clear to me in the beginning was the color palette. I knew I wanted a dark color palette with lots of blues and watery hues, both to help push the mood, to contrast against the characters on stage, and to tie into the water motif that is used throughout the script. This palette idea provided a great jumping off point as I examined my collection of research and inspiration images. I also knew I wanted to incorporate some traditionally Greek feeling

elements to reference the original myth, so from the very beginning I had a clear line of thought to follow. Here is the mood board I created:

Step Seven: Ground Plan

The scene designer will create many different drawings when designing for a production, but the first and most simple of them is the ground plan. The ground plan views the stage and the scenery on it from directly above; it's a bird's eye view of the set. A designer's drawings are very important because they transform ideas into finite objects that have specific dimensions and shapes. They help the designer communicate the look, dimensions and location of scenery for a production, and this information is important to the director, stage manager, technical director, lighting designer, and sound designer as well as many of the technicians and craftspersons that are working on the show (Dorn 165). The ground plan is a very important step in the design process because it is the start of putting scenery on the stage.

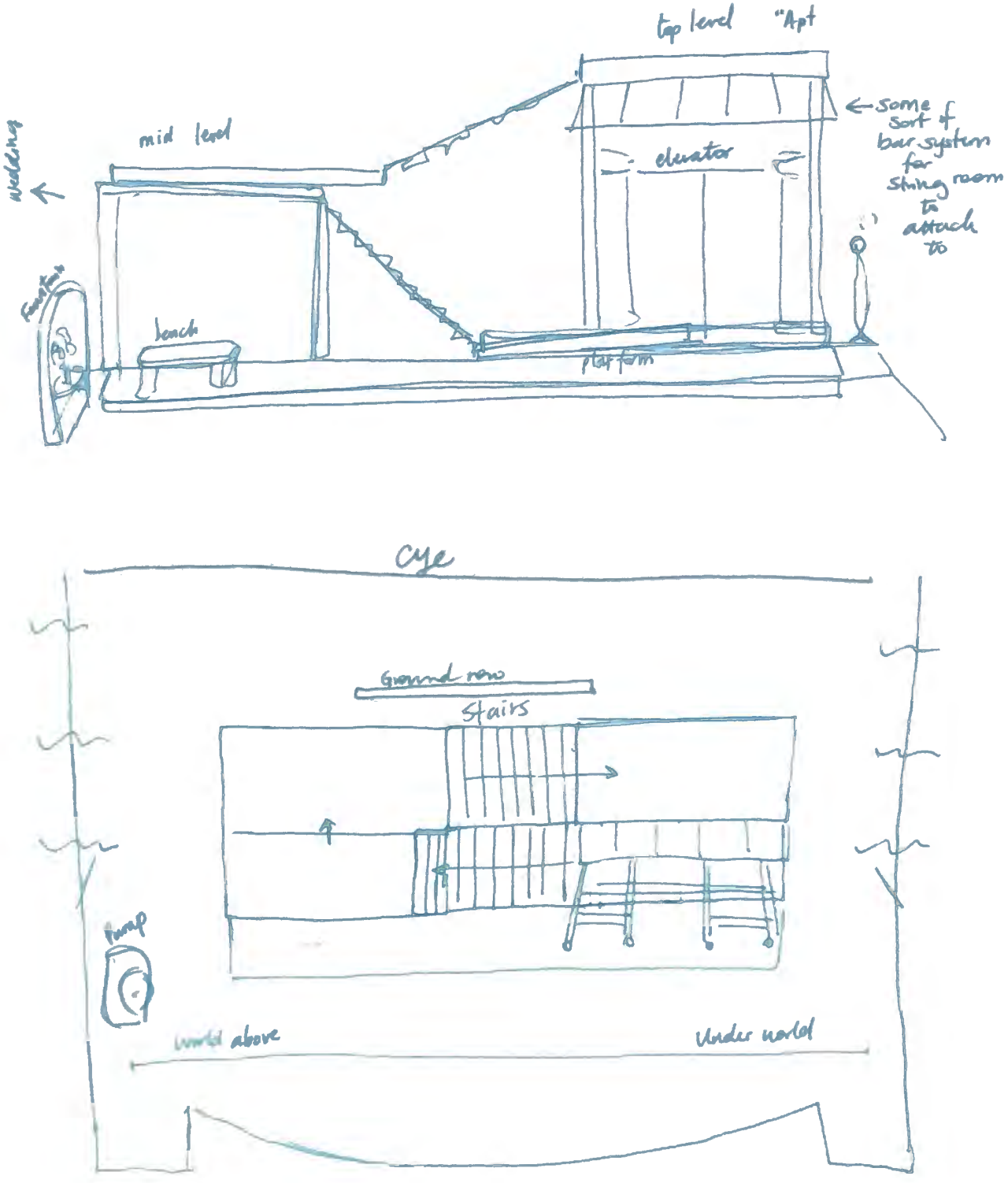
In his book on playwriting Jefferys also discusses how important it is for the script to intertwine with the scenery and he says, "A good play will create naturally dominant areas of the stage where most of the action takes place" (Jefferys 51). This idea is important to take into account as you begin to work on the ground plan. Where are the naturally dominant areas of the stage according to the script? Where are the most important positions in the set and how can you make them dominant and strong? When you are designing the ground plan, "every choice that the designer makes in the ground plan and the physical space both limits and provides opportunities for the director in terms of movement patterns and stage pictures", so it is important for you as a designer to know your script well, to have asked the important questions, and to have communicated well with your director as you begin to make decisions on the ground plan (Parker 41). Parker observes that, "the responsibility that the scene

designer has in establishing the physical space makes the importance of collaboration with the director critical when working out the ground plan" (41).

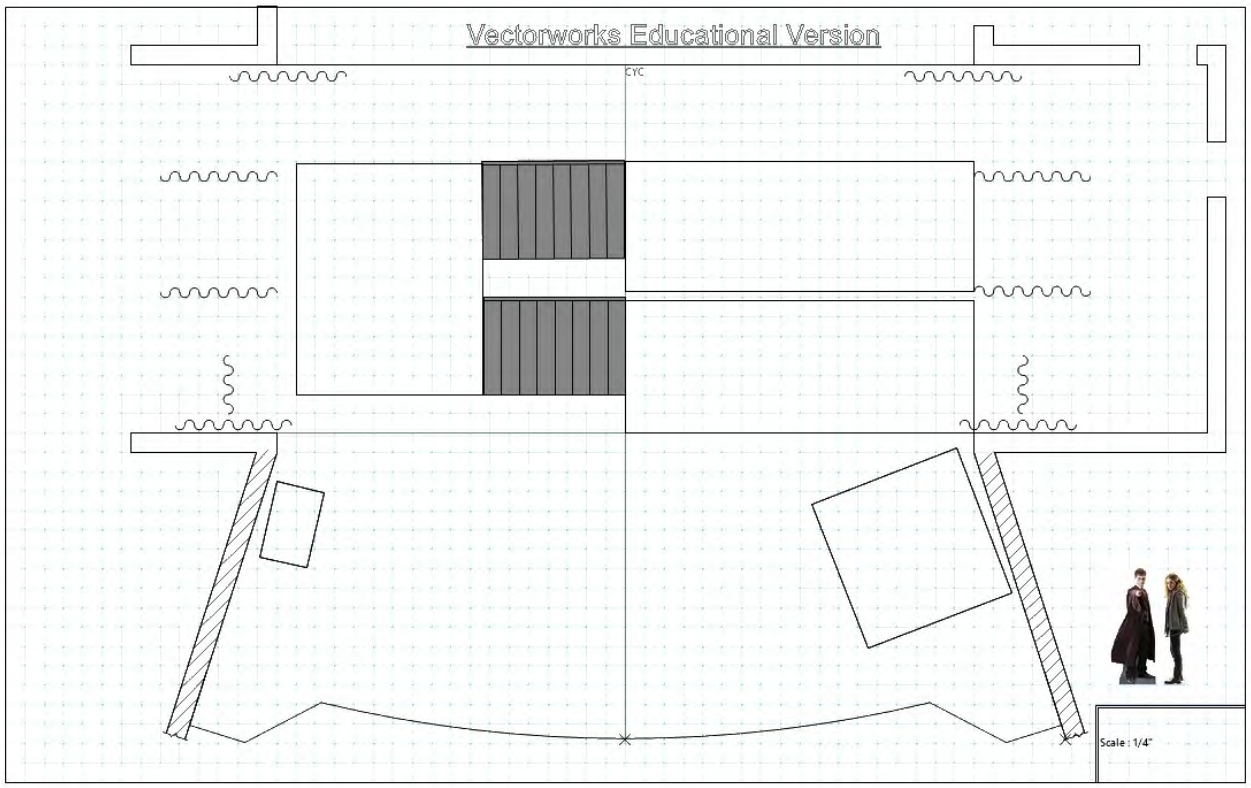
Preliminary Sketches: When thinking about the ground plan I usually start with some preliminary sketches. I put pencil to paper and just get out the ideas, no measurements, no scale drawings, not even any straight lines. These are just quick depictions I use to get the ideas that are in my head out into the world. It's helpful in beginning the process of thinking in 3D, and for seeing problem areas in my initial imaginings of the set.

Trial Sketches: After I have a preliminary sketch that I like and feel confident enough to work off of, I go into a section of trial sketches on Vectorworks. Where I use the computer program to quickly draft out different iterations of my ideas.Vectorworks is the industry standard for using CAD programs in stage design. In Vectorworks I lay everything out, and play with different measurements, different heights, different placements until I get something that feels like it is going to work. Doing this on Vectorworks as opposed to doing it the traditional way of drawing it out by hand makes it really easy to jump from the ground plan to a 3D perspective drawing of the set, so I can see what the ground plan I'm working on will potentially look like in space.

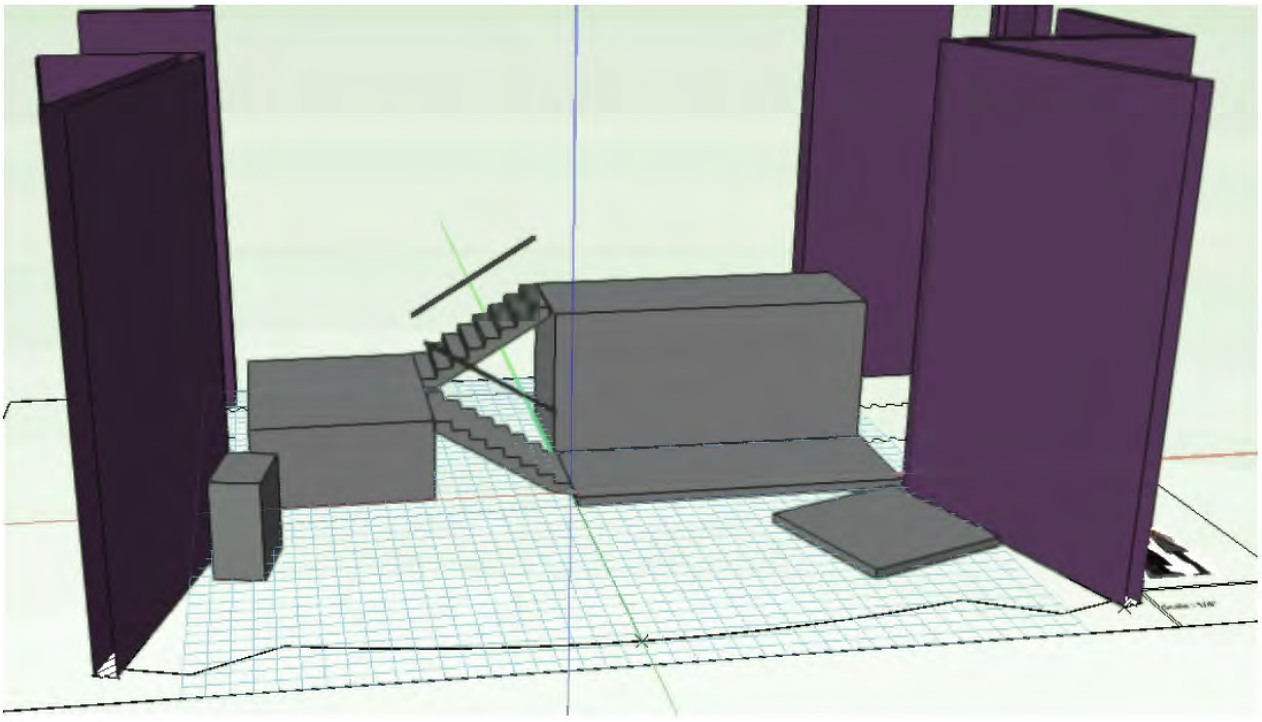
Final Sketches: Once you are fairly confident with the ground plan you have created, and have shown it to your director and gotten approval, you can take this final ground plan and move forward with your other drawings for the production. But keep in mind, until it is built onstage, nothing is completely set into stone. You could come to a myriad of different realizations as you are working on your other sketches, or as the show is being blocked, which could mean your ground plan may need some editing.



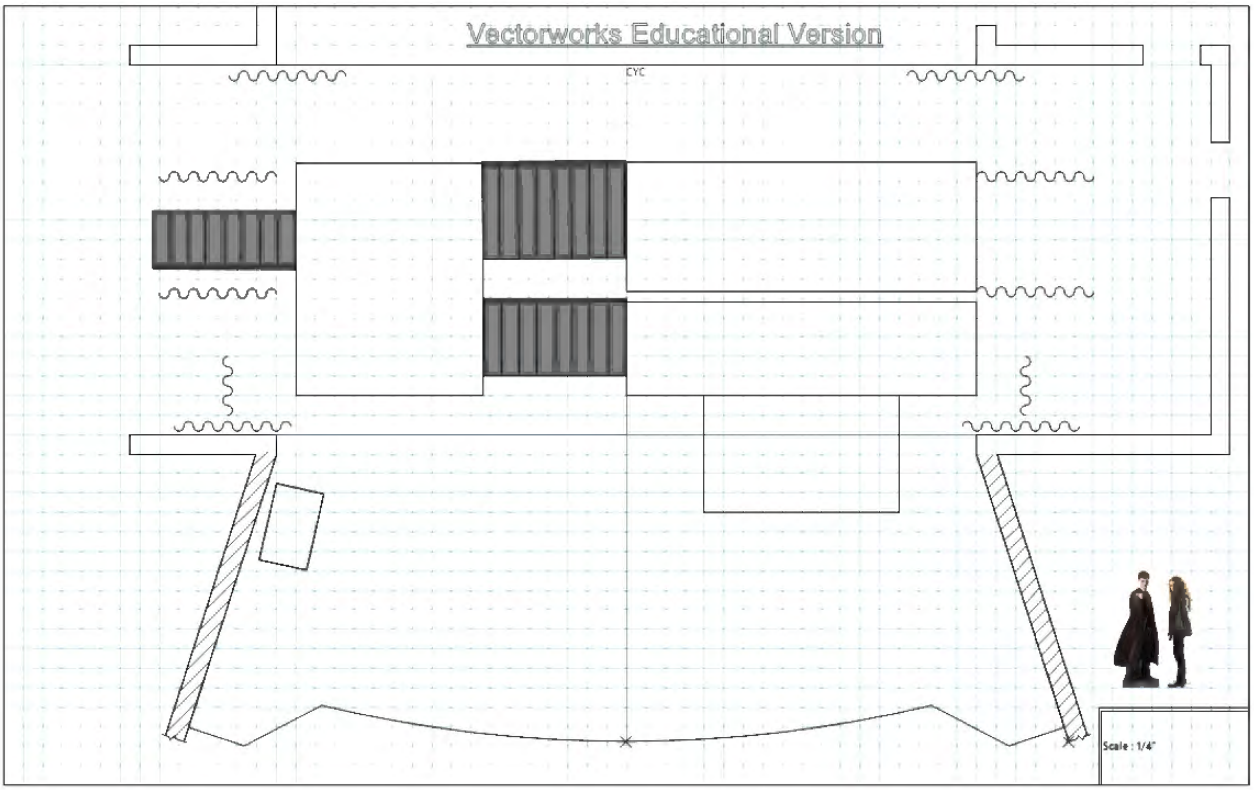
Preliminary Sketches



Trial number 1 - Ground Plan



Trial number 1 - 3D



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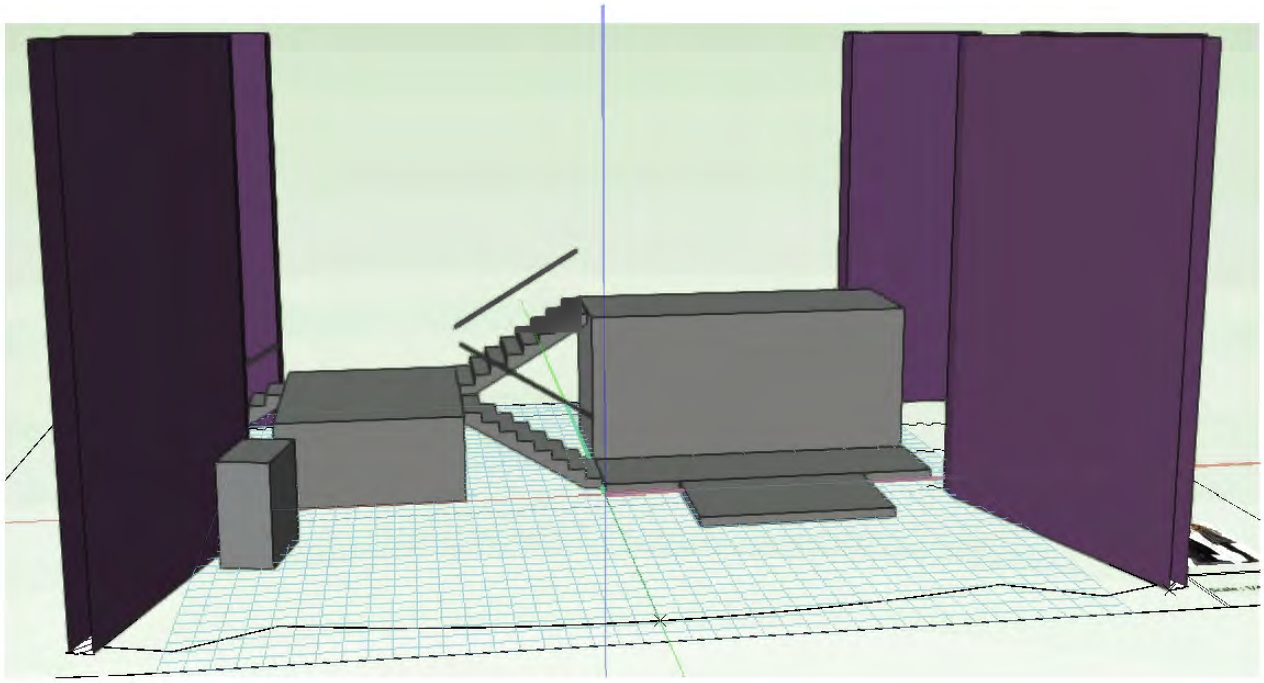

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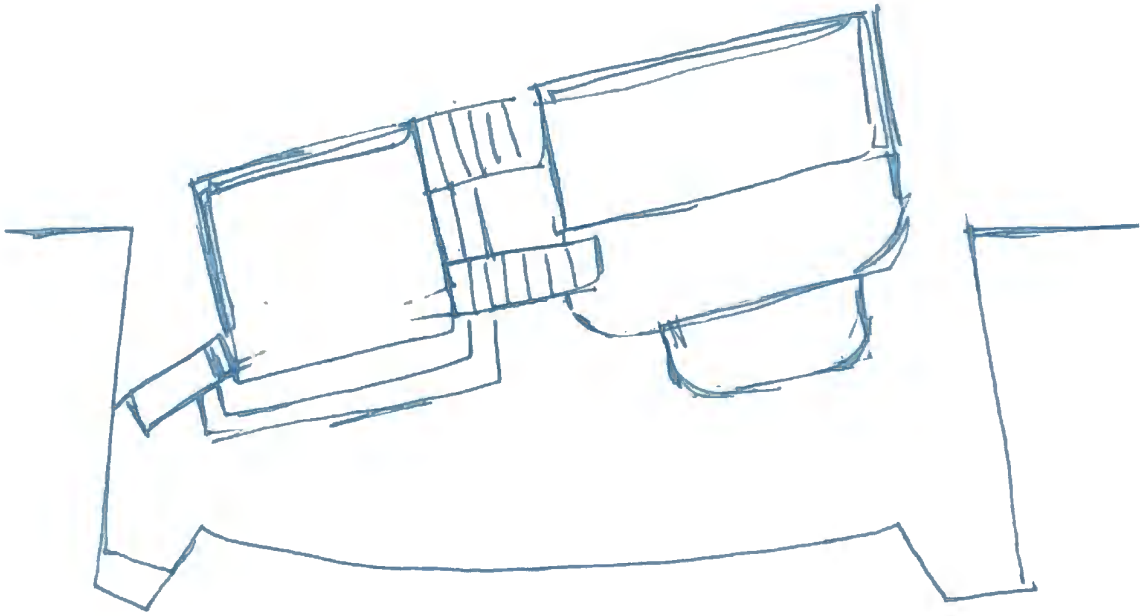

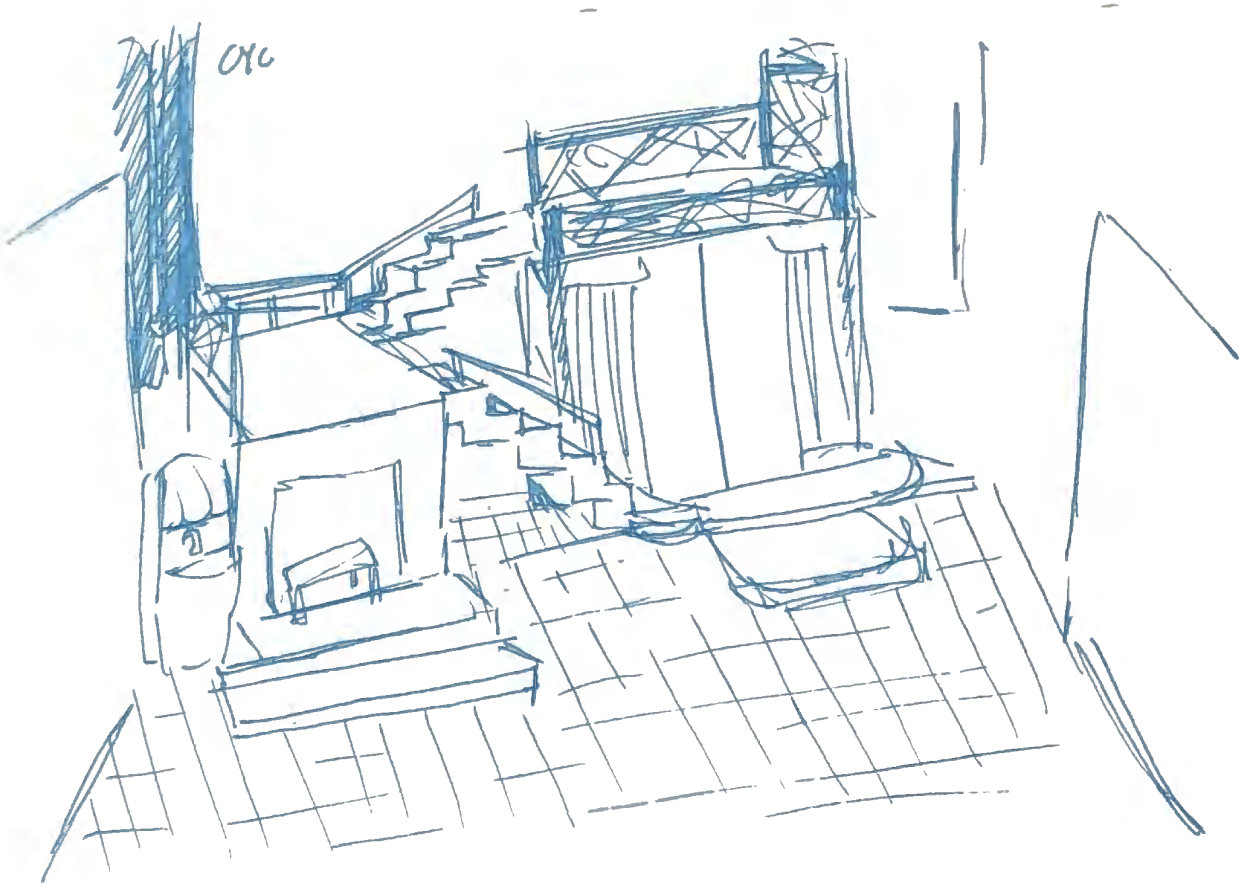

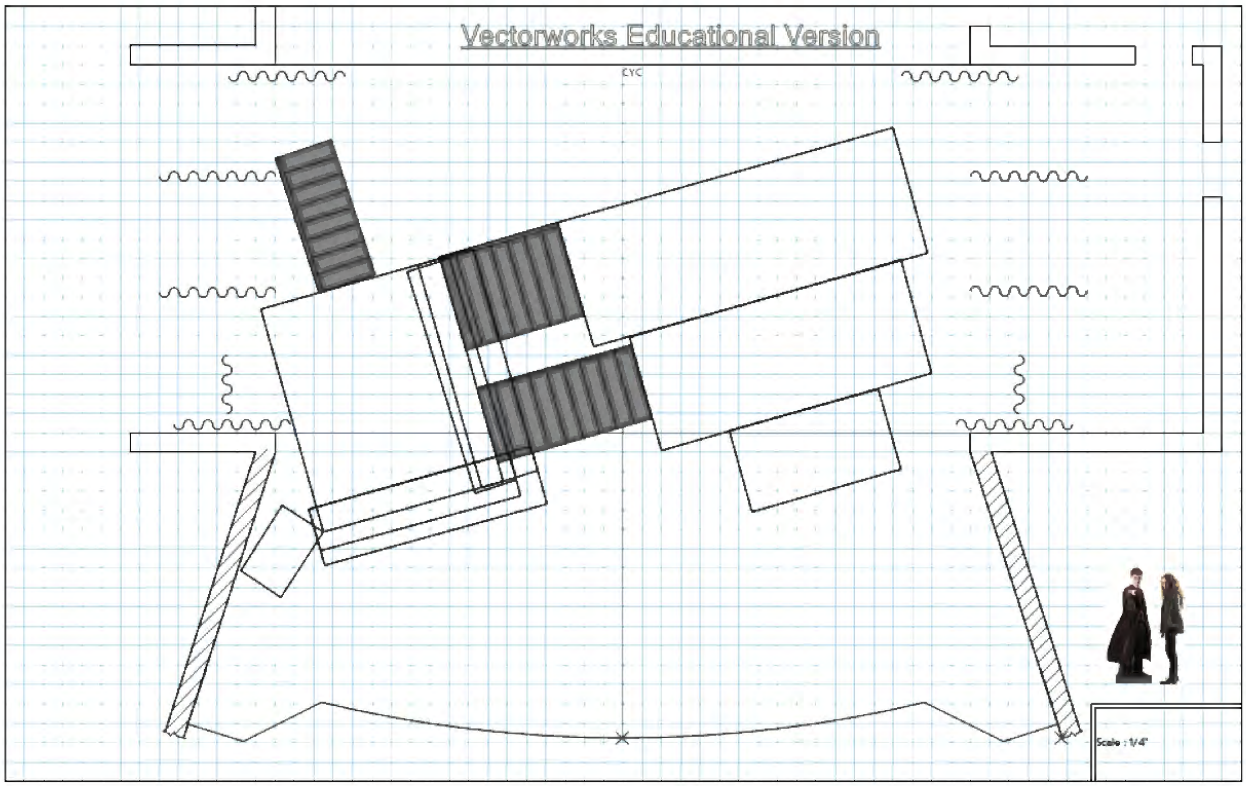

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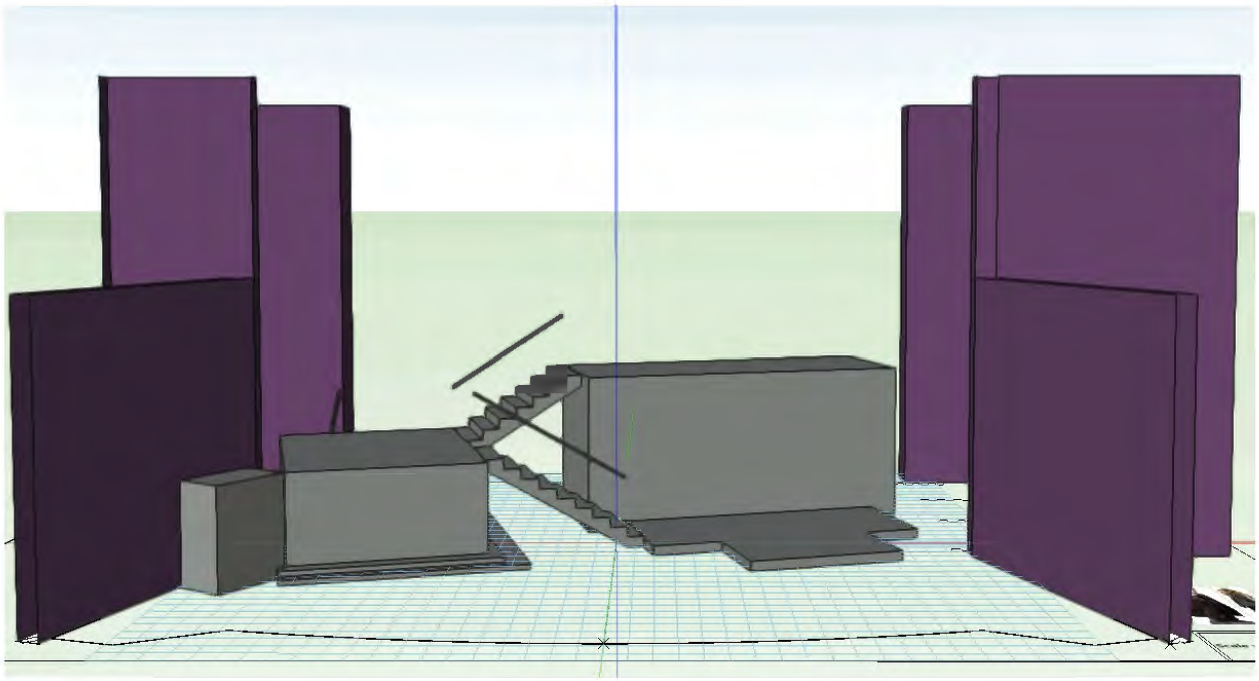

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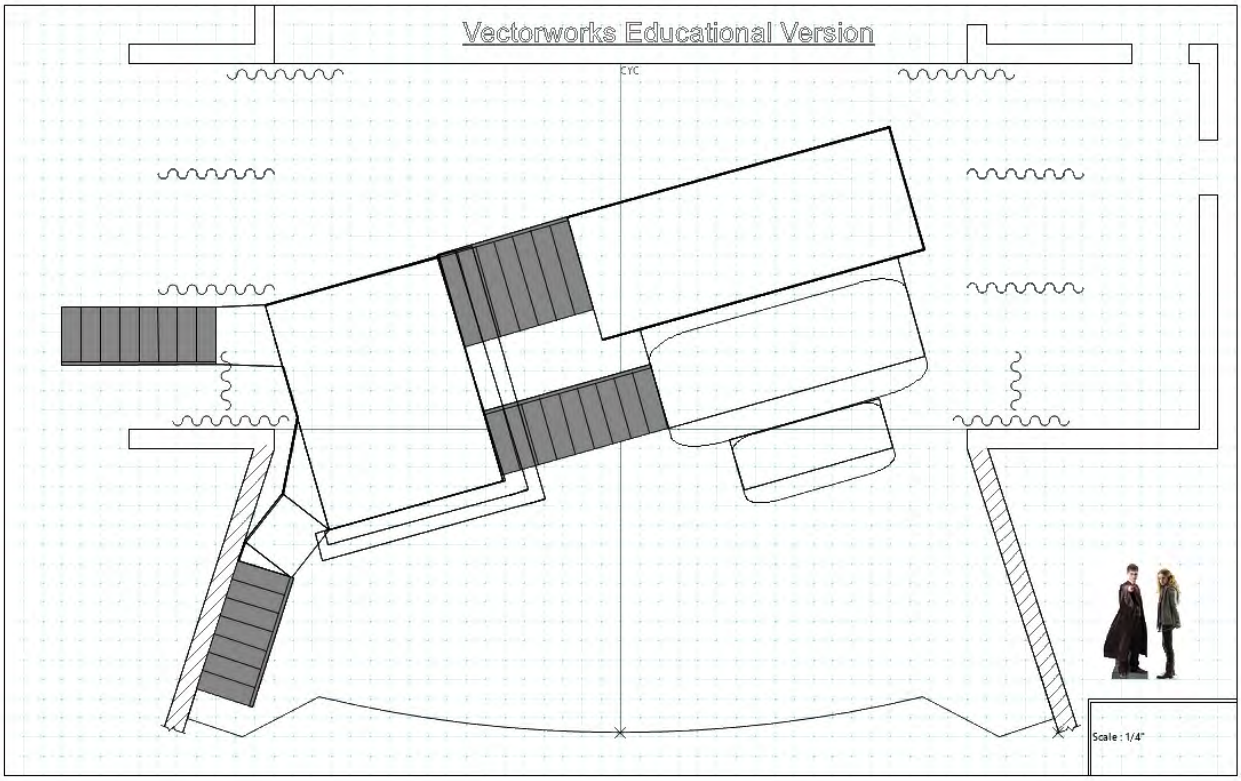
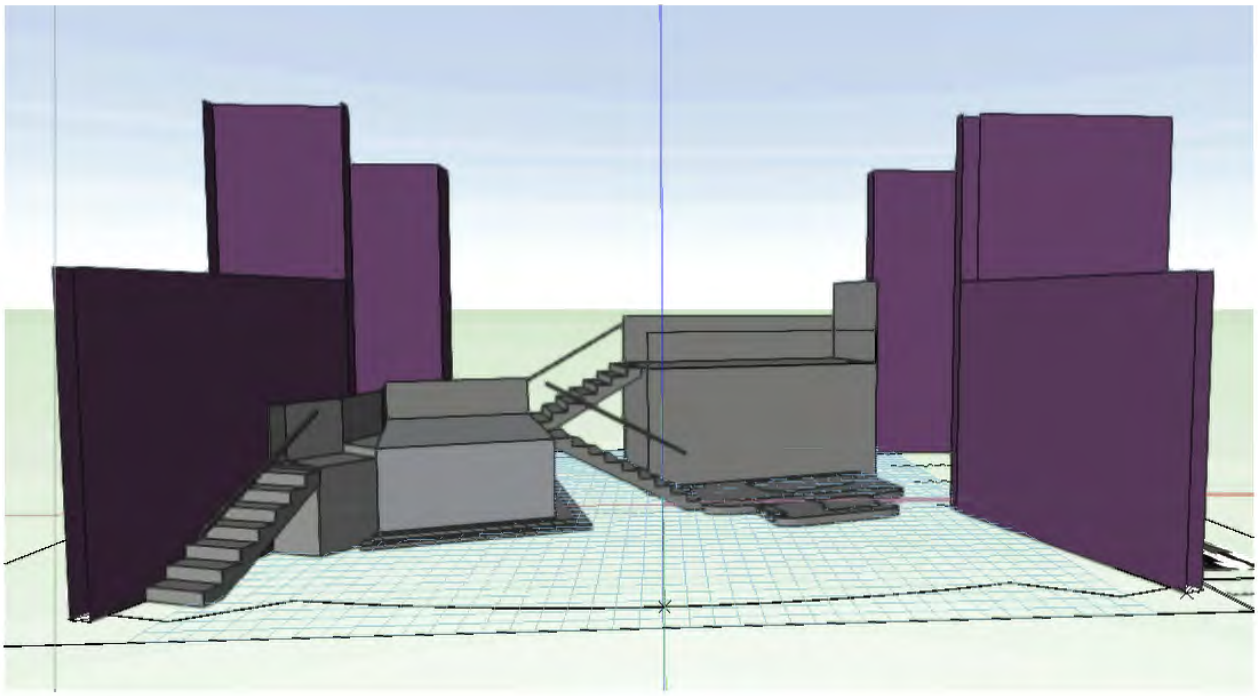


Final Groundplan



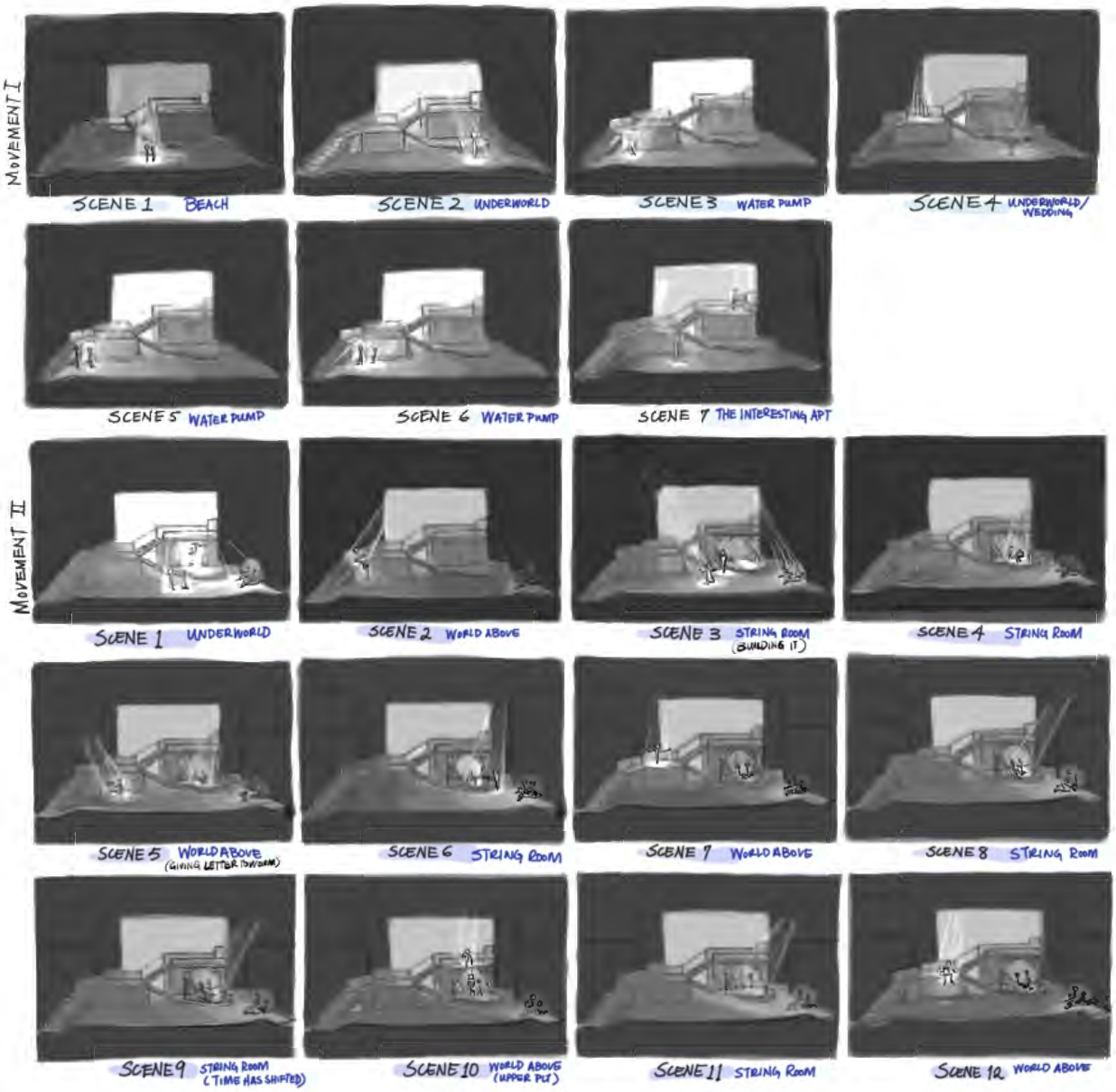
Final Ground Plan Perspective Drawing

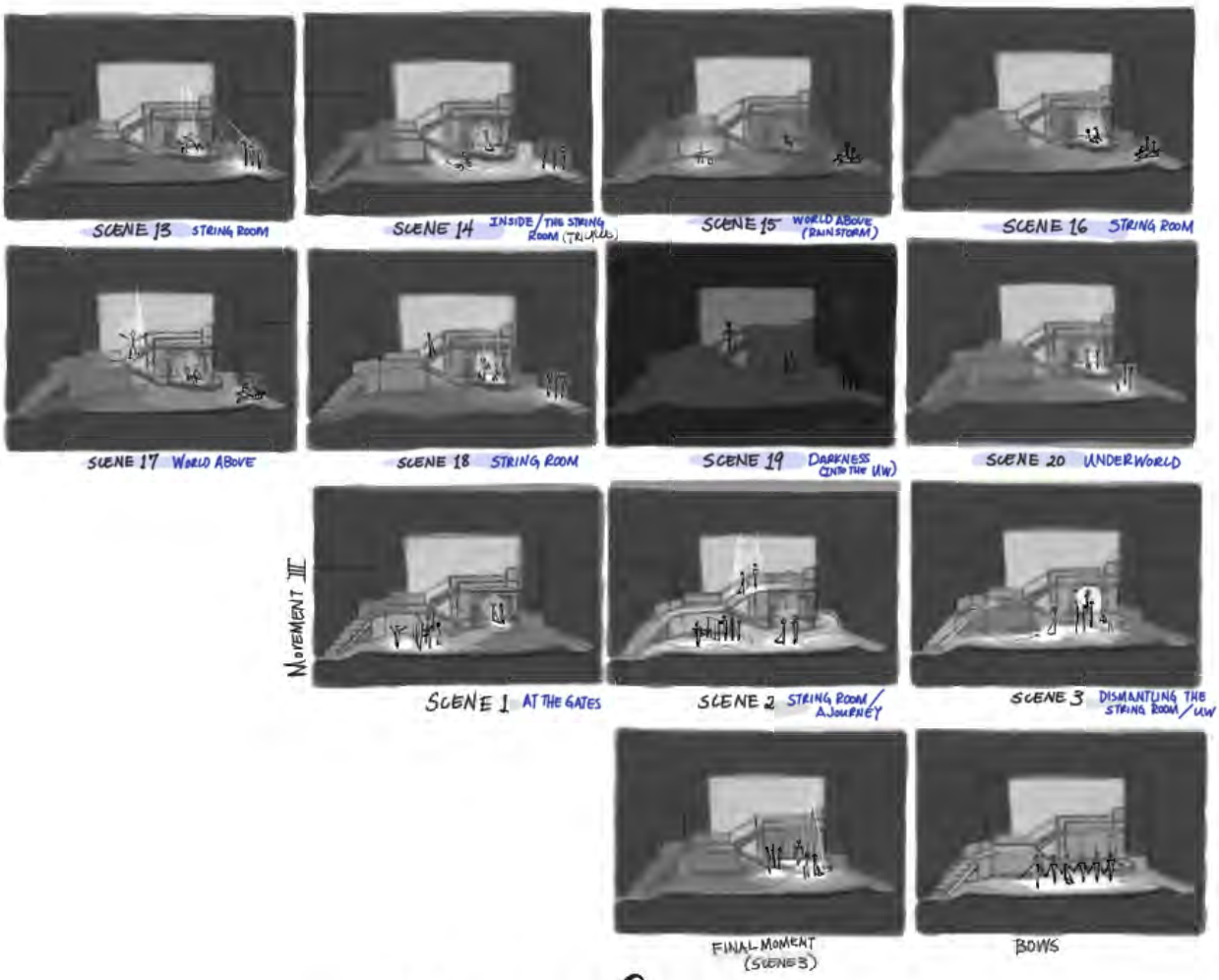
Step Eight: Scene by Scene Thumbnails

Thumbnail sketches, or the storyboard of a production, are not a required step, but are extremely useful, especially in the case of a musical, or a play that includes a lot of movement, many different locales, or any set changes throughout the show. The thumbnails reveal how the set is going to work with the movement of the actors. You think through the show like a series of still frames from film: it is a grouping of many snapshot moments in the show. Most often the view of the set is from a front on view and the designer sketches out the spatial relationships between the set and the actor in each moment. It is up to the designer on how they divide their show: it can be scene by scene, or hit the most important moments, or simply only be when the set shifts or changes. What is important is that the designer can understand how their set interacts with and frames the show as a whole. This is also the time the designer can begin to add in value to get a sense of the depth of the set, and this moment can be where the initial ideas of lighting can begin to be applied to the project (Thorne 144) . Thumbnail sketches are also very helpful in the conversation between the scenic designer and the design team as a whole because they can quickly communicate to the team their intentions with the set. Thumbnails can help directors see how the story will develop onstage and all the different possibilities they have for movement. Having these possibilities in front of them makes it easy for them to ask productive questions and helps them easily see where they think changes need to be made.

In the thumbnails I drew up for *Eurydice*, I went into more detail than I typically would because with this design project I am essentially the director and designer. I made more specific choices in blocking and the focus of the lighting because I needed to see a whole, cohesive picture to make sure the set would work. I made some very specific choices

with the blocking in my thumbnails. I also needed to see the shifts within the show, because there are so many different scenes that shift back and forth between the underworld and the world above. For the characters in the underworld, they mostly stay on stage the whole time: the Stones, Eurydice, and her father are all trapped in the underworld. Their lives are over, and they're in what feels like an eternal pause. Time is different there, the rules of the world are different there. But Orpheus is alive, he is still roaming in the world above. To contrast these underworld characters Orpheus is the only character who routinely exits and returns to stage for his portions of the show (excluding the Interesting Man and the King of the Underworld who live by their own rules, and are in very little of the show). The Stones stay in their area mostly sedentary, like stones. The father occasionally exits stage when called to in the script, but there is very little actual movement from the underworld characters in comparison to Orpheus' many entrances and exits. Through this process I realized that I am going to need to make one slight change to the ground plan for the set, I'll need to add an escape stair off the back of the tallest platform so that the characters can exit from that platform if necessary, which will be helpful at the climactic moment when Orpheus and Eurydice fail their test and must say farewell to each other. I included the updated ground plan as well.

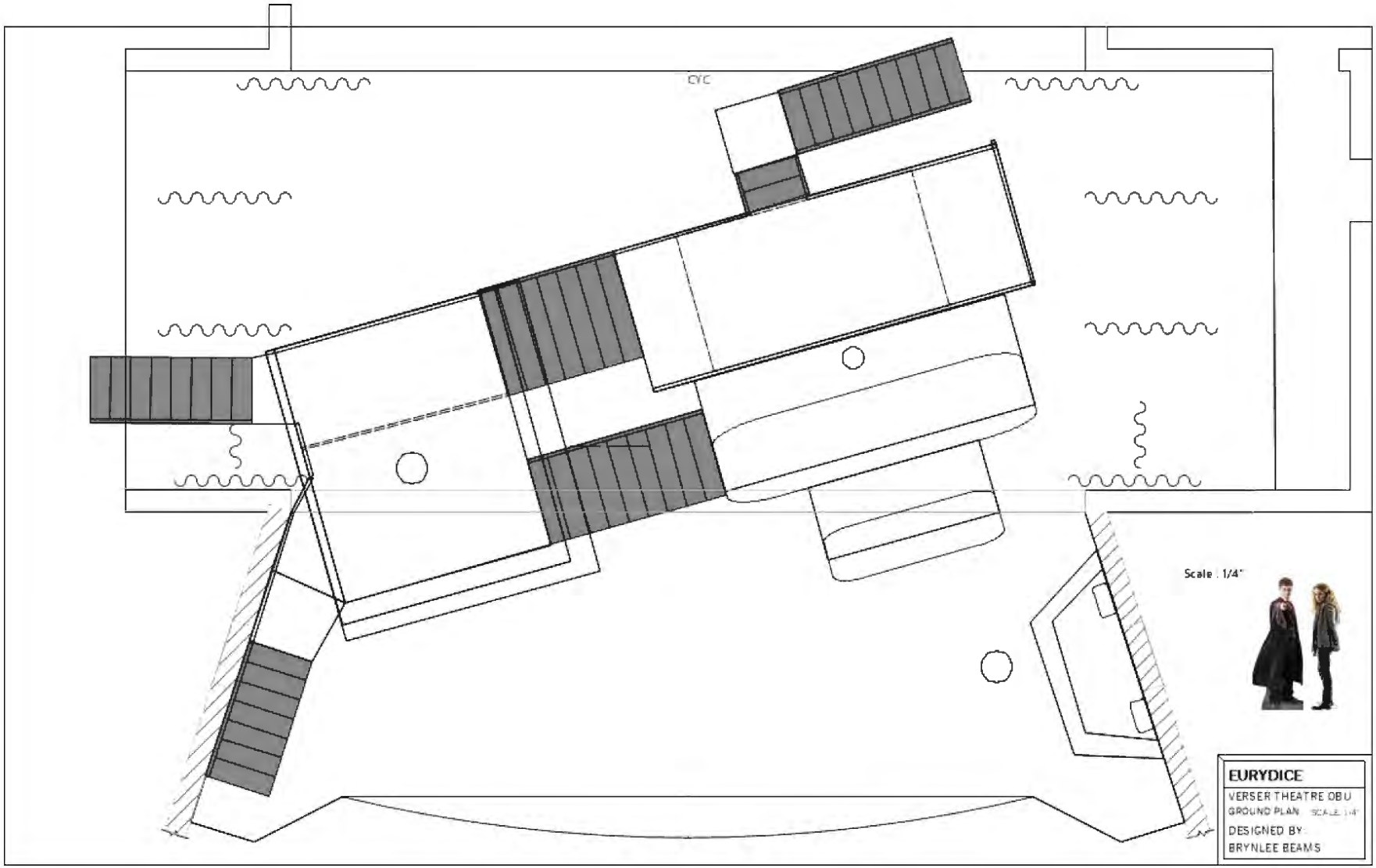

MOVEMENT I
SCENE 1 BEACH
SCENE 2 UNDERWORLD
SCENE 3 WATER PUMP
SCENE 4 UNDERWORLD/ WEDDING
SCENE 5 WATER PUMP
SCENE 6 WATER PUMP
SCENE 7 THE INTERESTING APT
MOVEMENT II
SCENE 1 UNDERWORLD
SCENE 2 WORLD ABOVE
SCENE 3 STRING ROOM (BUILDING IT)
SCENE 4 STRING ROOM
SCENE 5 WORLD ABOVE (GIVING LETTER TO MOM)
SCENE 6 STRING ROOM
SCENE 7 WORLD ABOVE
SCENE 8 STRING ROOM
SCENE 9 STRING ROOM (TIME HAS SHIFTED)
SCENE 10 WORLD ABOVE (UPPER PLT)
SCENE 11 STRING ROOM
SCENE 12 WORLD ABOVE



Eurydice

WRITTEN BY: SARAH RUHL
DESIGNS BY: BRYNLEE BEAMS

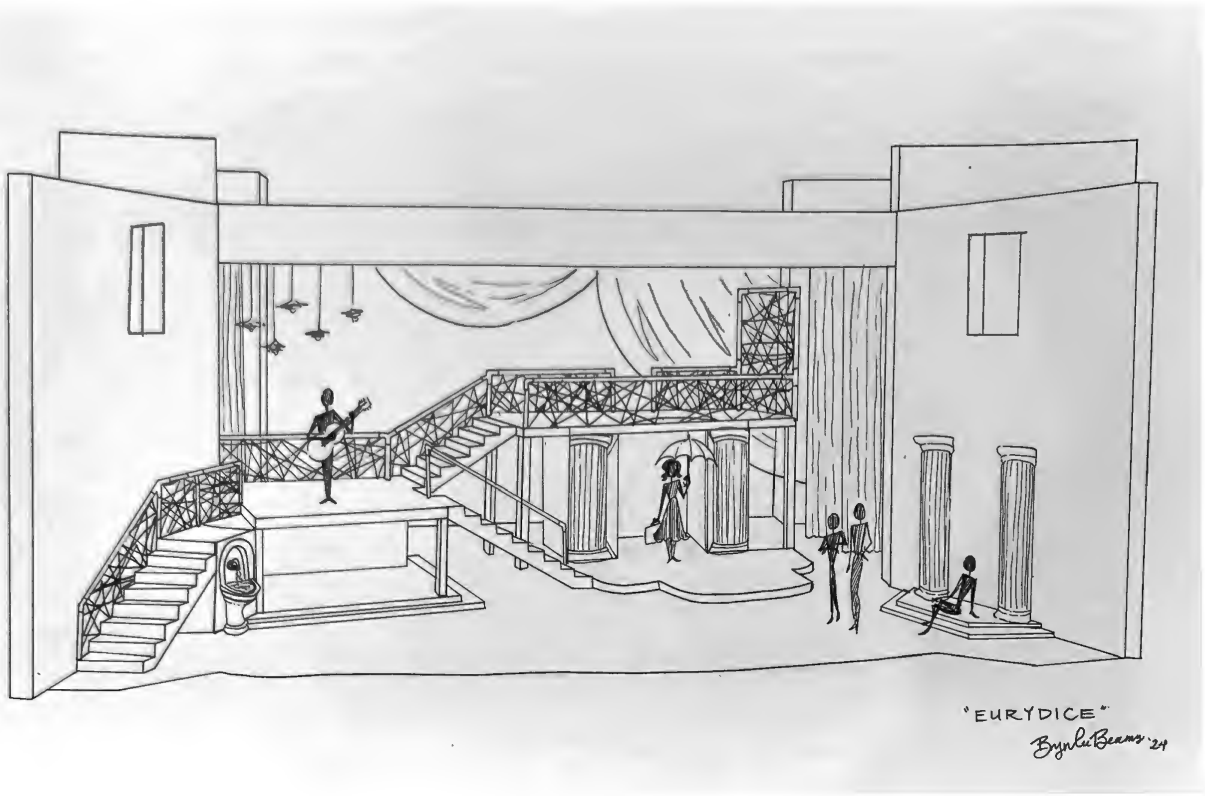
SCENE BY SCENE THUMBNAILS

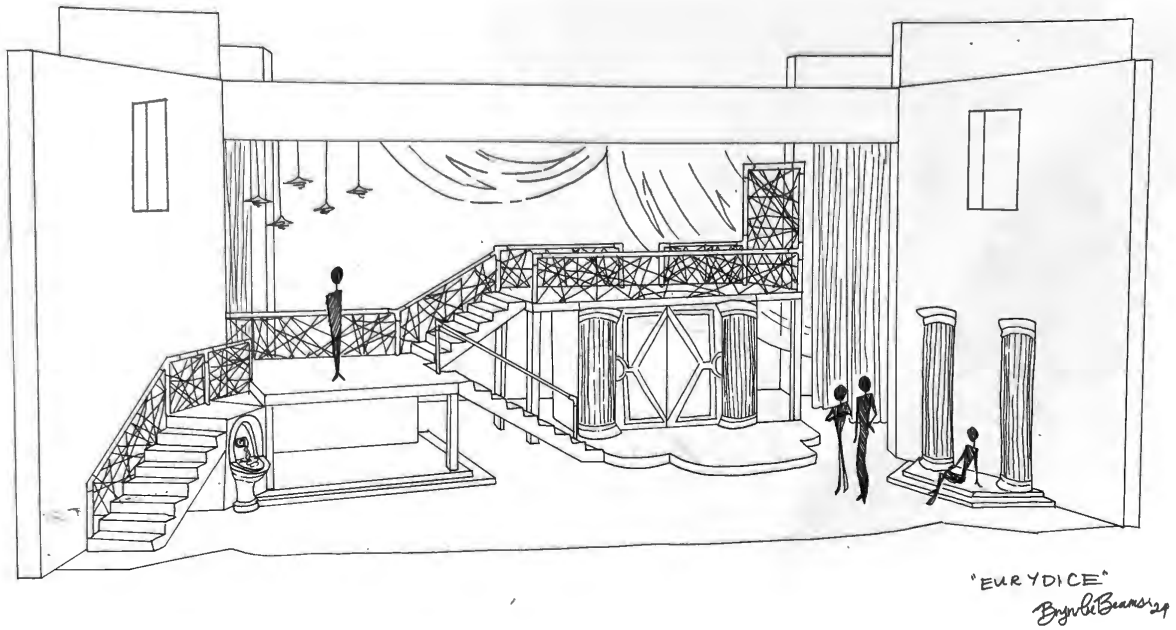

CYC
Scale : 1/4"
EURYDICE
VERSER THEATRE OBU
GROUND PLAN
DESIGNED BY:
BRYNLEE BEAMS

Step Nine: Perspective Drawing

Perspective drawings are important because they provide a single image with both the layout and all the details so your director can easily see how the set will look in the space, and can see the elements you are using to tell the story. This step is the first rendering where you begin to see everything come together. This step is also the basis for the color and value renderings which are very important.

When I came to the perspective drawing, I realized there were still some things to be added and changed, even from the thumbnails. I realized that stage left (the right side of the stage from the view of the audience) felt incredibly empty, and I needed to create something there to balance the visual weight on the stage. Putting something there would also give a space for the stones to interact with. I also realized I had a lot of flat wall space that I wanted to break up. So I added small platforms with columns to stage left, both to fill that hole and to tie in more of that Greek imagery I liked in my research. I also removed some of the walls around the elevator to make it more open, and I pushed back the wall under the stage right platform to create some depth and provide more entry points to the set. Once I had solved those issues it was time to focus on the details. I finally was able to see how the string imagery I was planning to use worked, and I really like the way it feels open and trapping at the same time: the characters feel entangled in a web that they can't get out of. I especially liked this in the upper level which becomes the apartment in the first movement where Eurydice gets trapped in the web of the Nasty Interesting Man, who is like a spider waiting to prey on her. More details will be added to the color stage, I just wasn't sure if I wanted all the tiny painted details outlined in pen, so they are going to be put in with colored pencil first.


"EURYDICE"
Brynlee Beams '24

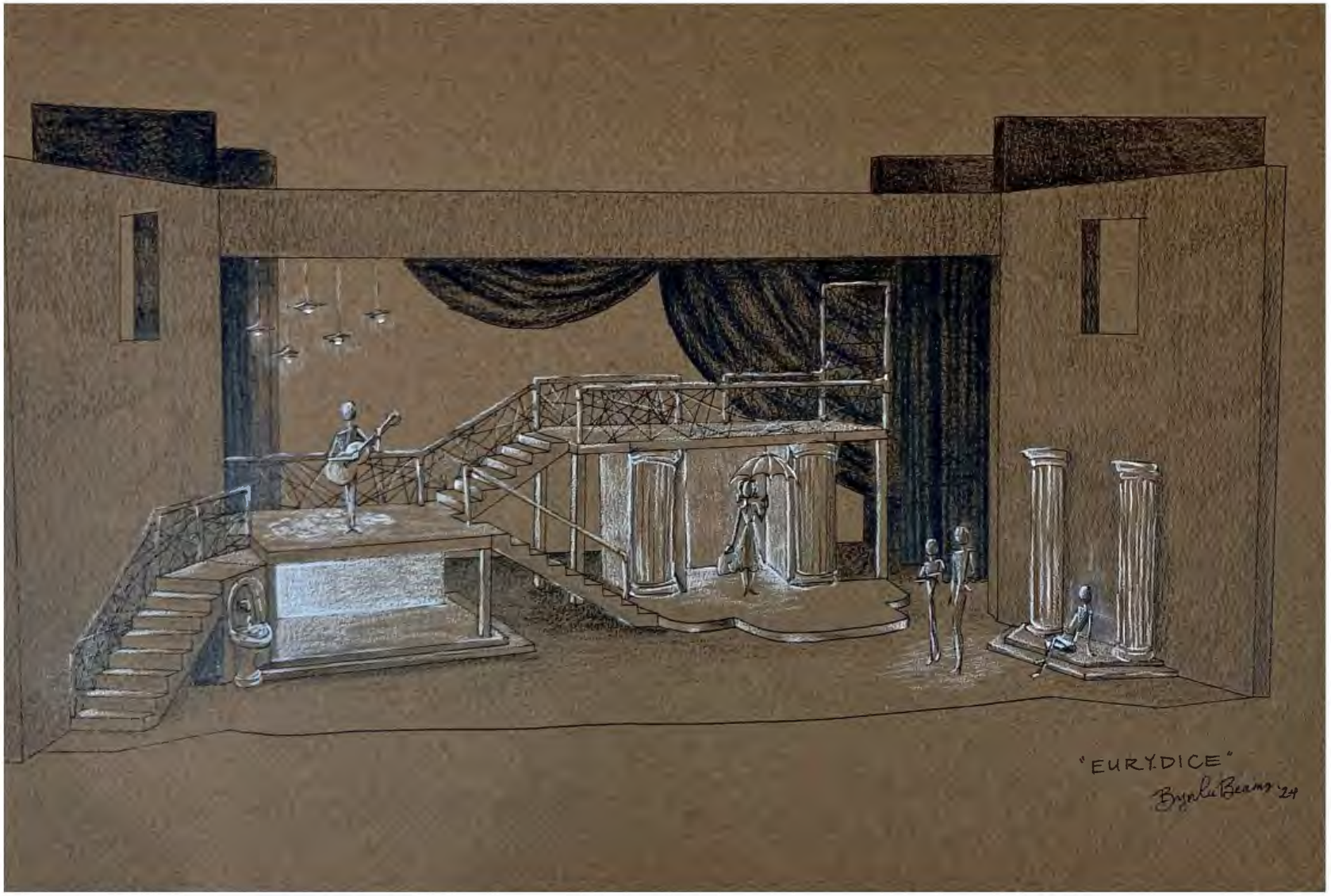

"EURYDICE"
Brynlee Beams '24

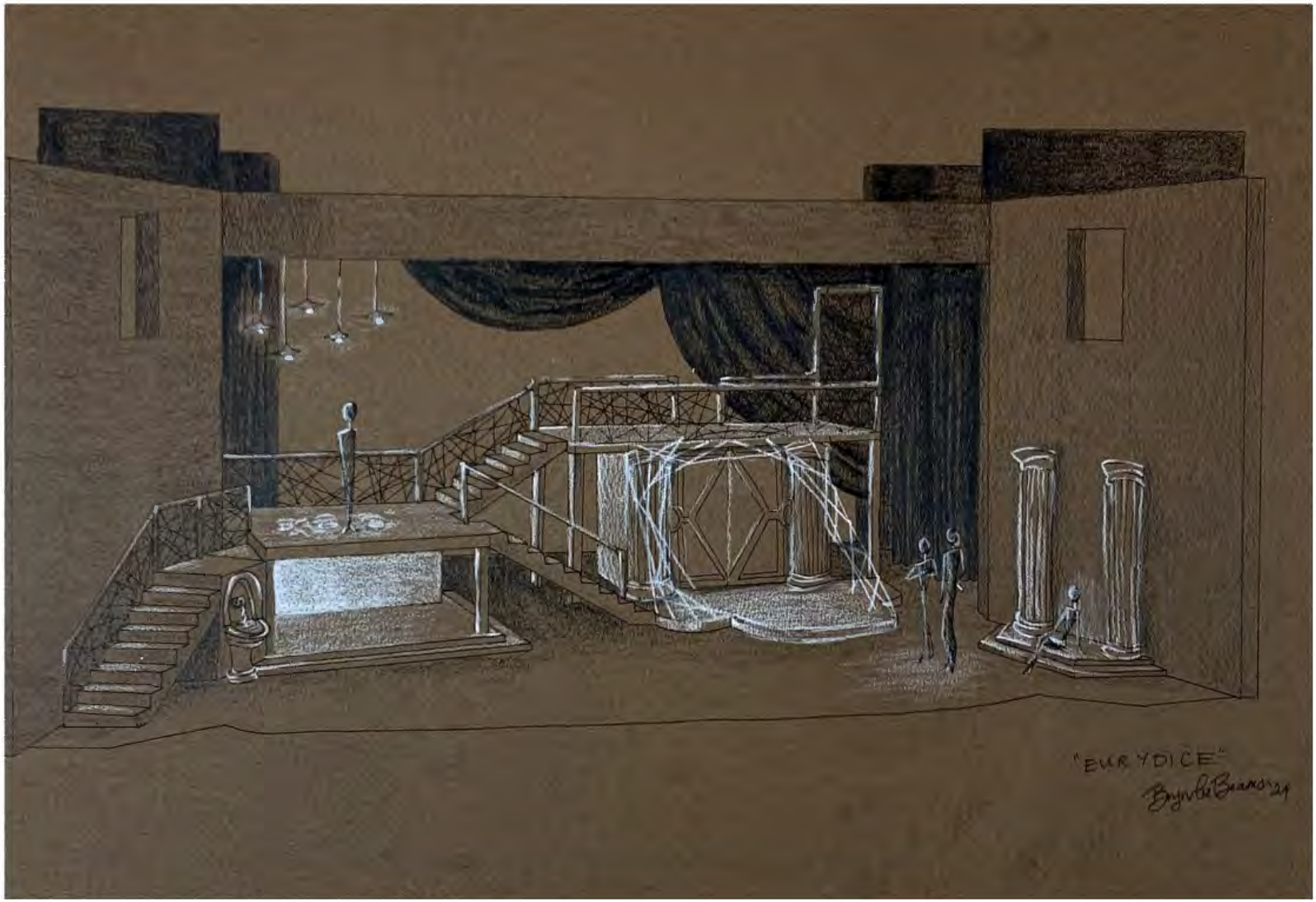
Step Ten: Value Rendering

The value rendering is a very important step of the process: it helps the designer and director to see the form of the set under the influence of stage lighting. The value rendering takes the perspective drawing of the set and, "using black and white tones to suggest light, an artist can model the forms in a design. This expressive method allows the designer to suggest the tone of the piece without worrying about the specifics of color," which helps the designer really see where the emphasis is placed within the set (Parker 83). The designer can use any medium that they are comfortable with as long as it can accurately express the values, and it is commonly done on toned paper with marker, pencil, pen or ink wash. These black and white sketches help to communicate the atmosphere and show the set in increased detail (Parker 59).

For my rendering of the set for *Eurydice* I used brown-toned paper and black and white Prismacolor pencils to get the range of values I needed for the sketch. The white popped off of the brown paper very nicely, which really helped me to see what parts of the set should be lit, and how they should be lit to best utilize the shapes they are made of and make them the most striking to the eye. There is a lot going on in this set, and side lighting will be important both in lighting the actors in various moments, and in environmental lighting so that the angles and depth of the set can be emphasized. The overall tone of the show will be dark and focused mostly on only a couple of actors at a time, so having side light helping to cut out the shapes of the set from the darkness will help provide visual interest to the stage as a whole while only a portion of it is being used. I included two different scenes in my value renderings because the stage left platform gets used for multiple things throughout the show, and the change in utilization very much changes the feel of the

set as a whole. I really enjoy the set with the elevator doors closed, and that is important because most of the show they will be. But having the sketch with them open is also important because it is a big reveal moment in the show and I really wanted to make sure that the door opening and the light pouring from it in the reveal worked with the overall image of the set.


"EURYDICE"
Brynlee Beams '24

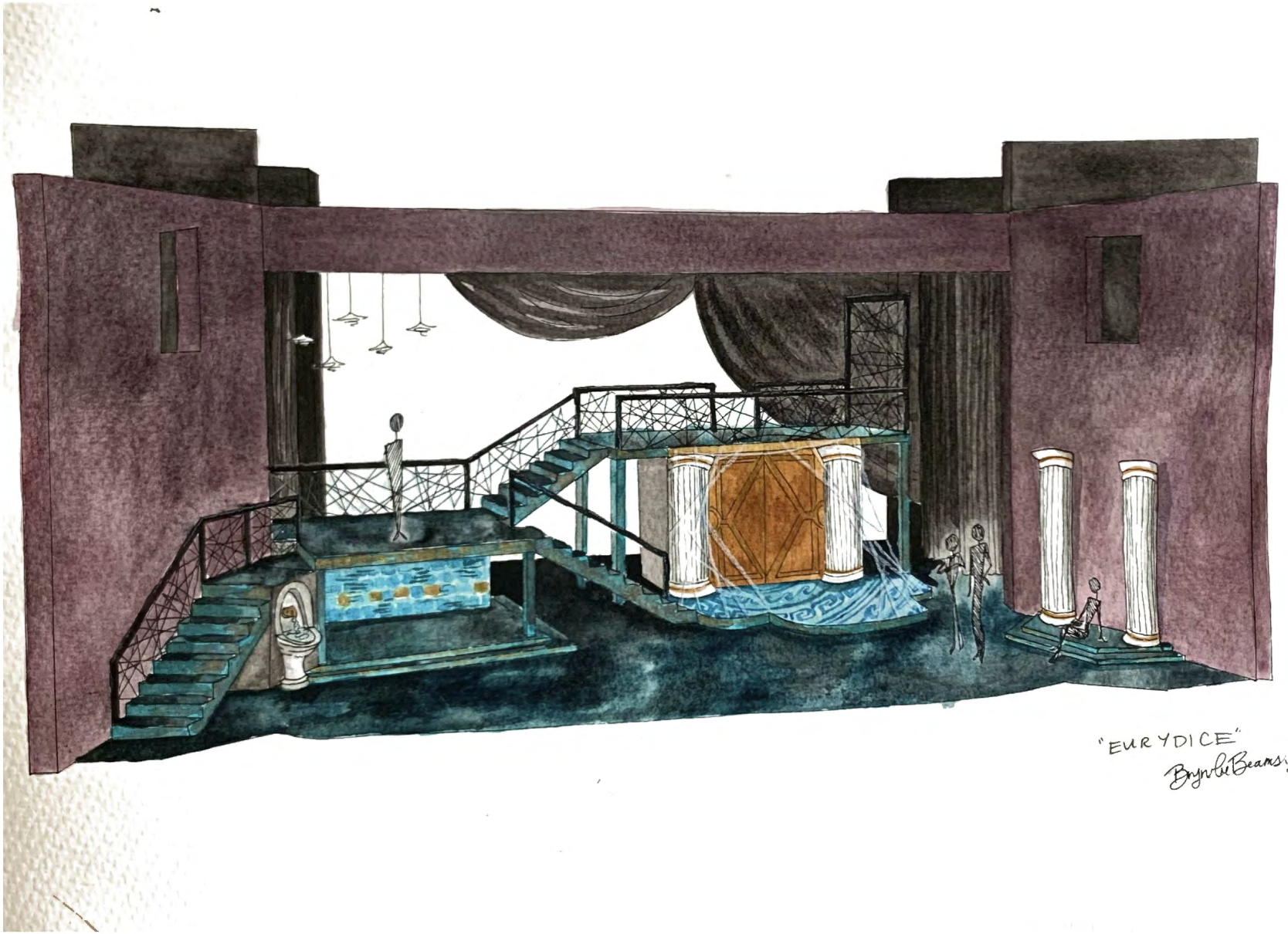

"EURYDICE"
Brynn Beamer '24

Step Eleven: Color Rendering

The color rendering, which sometimes takes the form of paint elevations, shows the front view of the set painted in the exact way that the designer wishes. Each part shows the designer's plan for the lining, colors, blending, and shading in the paint treatment of the set. Paint elevations are often notated with instructions regarding the painting techniques the designer desires, whereas a perspective drawing color rendering applies the intended painting techniques to the perspective drawing sketch taking into consideration the lighting effects one the designer used in their value rendering (Dorn 180). The choosing of the colors used in the design is incredibly important because, "Color inevitably elicits an emotional response. It is one of the strongest elements of design and the most difficult (if not the most important) element to understand," it will be one of the parts of the set that will have the most impact to how the audience responds to the design, so therefore put a lot of thought into the colors that ultimately make it as a part of the set (Parker 80). Not only is the color itself important, but the way that it is used as well is, how much you use of it, and the techniques it is applied with will affect the feel of the set as well, "Avoid the flatness of opaque surfaces by emphasizing texture and through the mingling of color. A playful movement on the surface avoids monotony. With monotony comes fatigue. Stimulate the eye and senses by adventurous color handling, but be careful not to over-stimulate by over-taxing", there is a balance to be struck with how you use color, once you've decided on the palette begin to play with how you can use texture and variation within the set (Thorne 42). There is a lot to consider when it comes to choosing the colors for the set. Try different things, don't be afraid to fail. It's important also to use your value rendering as a reference when you are working on your color

rendering, because the values you drew in will translate into your color rendering. You're still thinking about light, just adding color into the midst as well.

For the set of *Eurydice* very early on in the process I began developing an idea of the palette that I felt best fit the show. I was inspired by the water motif routinely used in the script so I chose watery hues that are applied with a wet on wet technique so that they are well blended and have a watercolor feel. I also wanted to use dark blues and blacks to create a world that felt heavy and contrasted with the lightness of the web these characters live in. When one thinks of the underworld traditionally darkness comes to mind. I also used pops of gold to bring in a contrasting color to the blues and blacks that could overwhelm the set, and intended for metallic paint to be used in some areas to catch the light and had more visual interest and texture to the set. I used gold spray paint to achieve this look in one of my wall papers in Clue and really enjoyed how it looked under the stage lights. It added some depth to the walls.



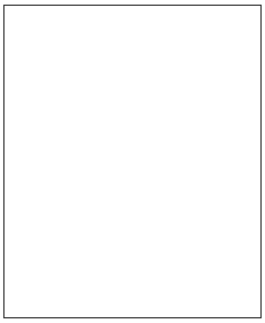
"EURYDICE"
Brynhe Beams '24

"EURYDICE"
Brynlu Beams '24

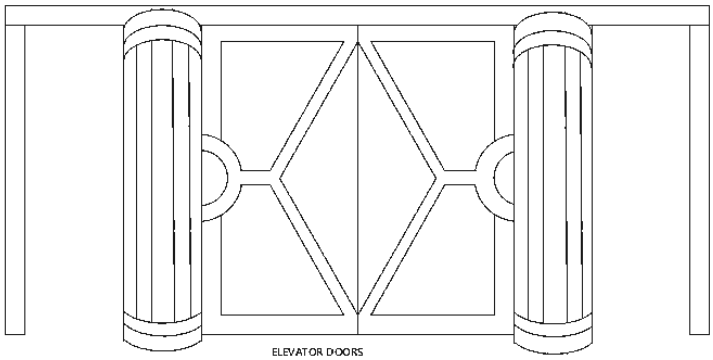
Step Twelve: Elevation Drawings

There are several different types of elevation drawings, there are compositional elevations that can be used as thumbnails,and there are painter's elevations like mentioned above that depict the paint treatment of the set, but ultimately an elevation drawing is a two-dimensional drawing of a wall or side of a structure from a straight-on viewpoint that allows one to understand the material qualities of the project (Dorn 175; MoMA).

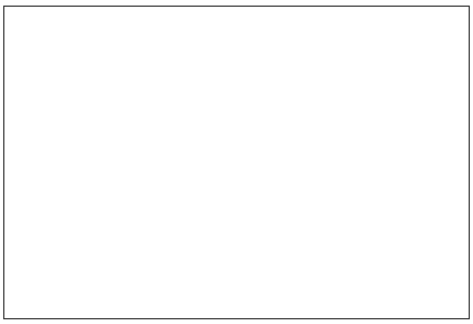
For *Eurydice* I created compositional elevations which are elevations that don't separate sections of wall, but show them attached so they can be cut out and folded into a three-dimensional model (Dorn 175). My sections are divided by floors and breaks in the walls where doors should go, and due to the nature of my set my elevations do not look like the traditional line of flats all connected to one another. The scale of my drawings is set to the scale that I want my model to be so that I can paint the walls, cut them out, fold them and tape them into my model. These compositional elevations focus on showing all details and set dressing that is directly on the surfaces of the wall and will often even include furniture and the platforming in which the walls sit (Dorn 175). It is good to also include a scale figure in these drawings to help provide a sense of the scale compared to the humans that will be in the space. In my drawings I grabbed a male and female figure and put them at 6' and 5' 9 " and made sure that they were on each page of elevations along with the title block which listed the scale of the drawings. These elevations could be then painted for painters elevations which are used in the shop. I decided to paint mine but to also cut them out so that I could have a three-dimensional model in which I could test the string ideas on.



ELEVATOR SIDE WALL SL

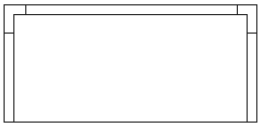


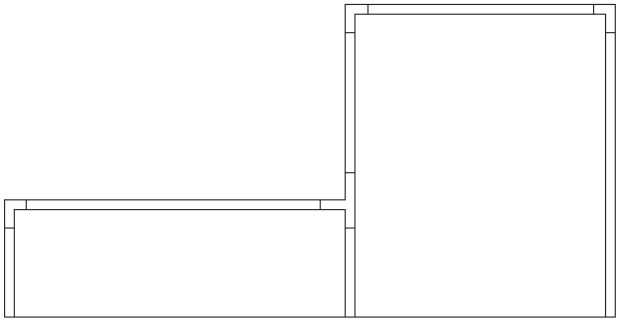
ELEVATOR DOORS



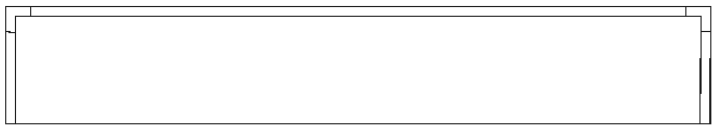
ELEVATOR BACK WALL

EURYDICE
VERSER THEATRE OBU
ELEVATION SCALE: 1/2"
DESIGNED BY:
BRYNLEE BEAMS



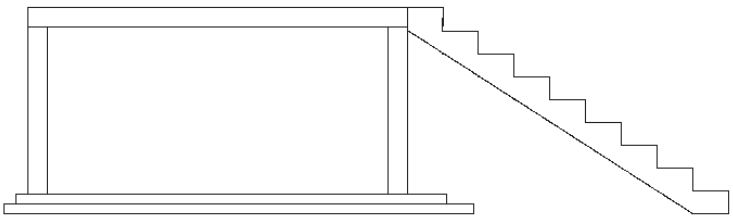


SL UPPER FLATS

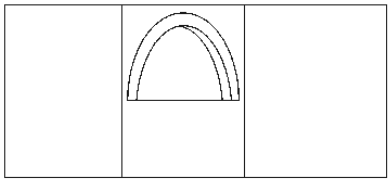


SL UPPER FLATS DS

EURYDICE
VERSER THEATRE OBU
ELEVATION SCALE: 1/2"
DESIGNED BY:
BRYNLEE BEAMS



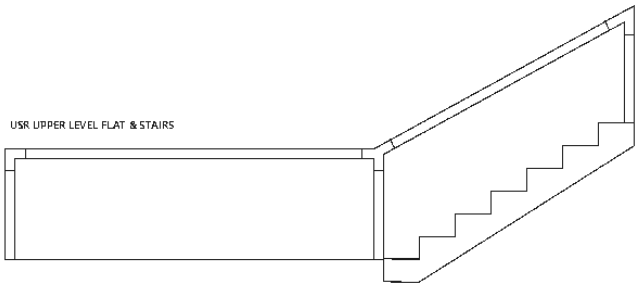
SR Platform



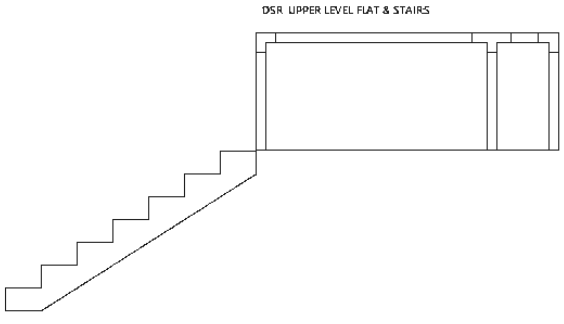
Fountain

SR Flat (under platform)

EURYDICE
VERSER THEATRE OBU ELEVATION SCALE: 1/2"
DESIGNED BY: BRYNLEE BEAMS



USR UPPER LEVEL FLAT & STAIRS



DSR UPPER LEVEL FLAT & STAIRS

EURYDICE
VERSER THEATRE OBU ELEVATION SCALE: 1/2"
DESIGNED BY: BRYNLEE BEAMS

Conclusion

Now for the purposes of this paper the process is complete. If this were a project that was truly going to be brought to reality there would still be a few more steps to follow, more elevations to complete and lots of communication with the Technical Director of the show who would be in charge of directing the building and painting of the set. But the actual design portion of the project is done, we've read the script many times to familiarize ourselves with it, we've communicated with the director and done our research. We've come up with many different ideas and built them up to a final product. We've completed a ground plan, and discovered the mood of the show. We've made many renderings exploring movement, value and color. We've drawn up elevations in order to create a model of a set and we've solved problems, generated ideas and pushed ourselves outside of the box in many ways. Although we've used *Eurydice* in this case, I hope this paper can act as a guide for whomever reads it, and that perhaps it would spark an interest in a subject they'd like to continue to explore.

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